

## CMs of Sikkim and Manipur vow to improve trade ties between the two states

IT News  
Imphal, Dec 9:

Chief Minister of Sikkim, PS Tamang, and Manipur's Chief Minister N. Biren Singh today vow to improve trade ties between the two states here in Imphal.

"Both the chief ministers discussed measures to improve trade ties between Manipur and Sikkim", a source from the Manipur Chief Minister's office said.

The chief ministers of Manipur and Sikkim also vowed to make "Northeast the growth engine of the nation".

"As Northeast Indian states get closer with enhanced connectivity, we will continue to work together to fulfil Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji's vision of making Northeast the growth engine of the Nation,"



Manipur CM Biren Singh said after meeting his Sikkim counterpart PS Tamang.

Sikkim chief minister PS Tamang arrived at Imphal in

Manipur on Friday.

The Sikkim chief minister will attend the Shandmashik Vishwa Shanti Mahayagya at Santolabari in Manipur.

Tamang is accompanied by Sikkim minister Bedu Singh Panth, Darjeeling MP Raju Bista and SD Dhakal, secretary to CM.

## MP Sanajaoba raises issues of Indo-Myanmar border at Parliament

IT News  
Imphal, Dec 9:

The lone Rajya Sabha MP from Manipur, Maharajah Sanajaoba Leishemba had raised the issue of the Indo-Myanmar Border dispute on the 2nd day of the ongoing parliament session yesterday.

"Yesterday I raised a very important matter in Parliament demanding to resolve Indo-Myanmar Border Issue & complete the fencing between Manipur - Myanmar Border to stop illegal drugs smuggling & infiltrations of illegal immigrants in Manipur due to porous border", tweeted Maharajah Leishemba by tagging the Chief Minister of Manipur N. Biren Singh.

It may be mentioned that various civil society organizations of the state have been demanding to settle the border dispute between Myanmar and India at Manipur side. Several representatives of



Maharajah Sanajaoba Leishemba, BJP, Manipur

the CSOs including MLAs and Ministers had visited the alleged disputed site and even claimed that some of the border pillars had been misplaced inside the Indian Territory. There were evidences of Indian villagers along the border alleging intrusion by Myanmar authority inside Indian territories.

Central team along

with representatives of the Survey of India had also visited some years back to take stock of the situation at Indo Myanmar border. But till today no solution has been made.

Because of the alleged dispute along the border fencing work has been put on hold on the request of the government of Manipur.

## 1000 Bru militants to surrender arms in Assam on Dec 12

Agency  
Hailakandi, Dec 9:

Around 1000 Bru militants will surrender arms and return to the mainstream at a formal ceremony in Assam's Hailakandi district on December 12, police said on Thursday.

Members of the United Democratic Liberation Front of Barak Valley (UDLFBV) and Bru Revolutionary Army of Union (BRAU), who are currently on a ceasefire, will formally lay down their arms at Katlicherra, 28 km from here along the state border with Mizoram, Hailakandi Superintendent of Police Nabaneet Mahanta said.



Assam Assembly Speaker Biswajit Daimary and Water Resources and Parliamentary Affairs minister Pijush Hazarika will attend the programme.

The Superintendents of Police of Hailakandi, Cachar and Karimganj districts have been asked to display the arms during the formal ceremony.

The Centre, the state governments of Mizoram and Tripura and the Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) had signed an agreement in 2018 for the repatriation of Bru families and had initiated negotiations with the outfits to return to the mainstream.

Both the militant outfits were active in the 90s along the Assam-Mizoram border areas, particularly in Hailakandi district, and were alleged to be involved in the killing of BJP leader Pratul Deb, who had returned to India from London after retirement, along with cases of extortion, kidnappings and other unlawful activities, the police said.

## Rajya Sabha passes Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022

Agency  
New Delhi, Dec 9:

The Rajya Sabha on Thursday passed the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022 which is intended to amend the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to incorporate more species protected under the law.

The Lok Sabha passed the Bill during the Monsoon session earlier this year.

The Bill seeks to implement India's obligations un-

der the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which requires countries to regulate the trade of all listed specimens through permits.

Replying to the discussion on the Bill, Union Environment Minister Bhopendra Yadav said that the Bill was brought because CITES requires an independent framework for protection of wildlife.

After being passed, the Bill will allow the transfer or transport of a captive elephant for religious and other purposes by a person with a valid ownership certificate.

The winter session of the Parliament began on Wednesday. The session will have a total of 17 working days.

The BJP-led Central government's agenda for the winter session of Parliament includes 16 new bills.

## Shattering of Kangleipak's Independence is an open violation of Article 1 of UDHR – CORCOM

IT News  
Imphal, Dec 9:

Ahead of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which is celebrating across the Globe under the theme - 'Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All' on December 10, the conglomerate of armed rebel groups of the region, CORCOM in its message to the people of the region said that the shattering of Manipur's (Kangleipak) Independence by India is an open violation of the Article 1 of the UDHR.

A statement issued by the media coordinator of CORCOM said that as per the Article 1 of the UDHR - all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. However, the present situation being faced by the people of this region shows that this declaration has been

suppressed and sideline by India. It said that the erstwhile sovereign nation in WESEA, that restored its independence in 1947 was forcibly annexed by India in 1949, violating all sorts of International laws.

"The 'once upon a time' peaceful nation which has been coexisting by many communities has been shattered by spewing venoms among various communities of the region after it was forcibly annexed. However, the internal bondage between each communities of the region, that has been coexisting has been resisting all form of venoms that spewed on them", the CORCOM statement said.

The statement further said that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) mention to protect the right of the indigenous people of the region. It alleged India for mischievously declaring all people of India as

indigenous people and sent them to the WESEA region to eradicate the indigenous people of the region. On the other hand, India which is a signatory to the UNDRIP has not defined who are indigenous people in its own constitution.

In connection with the armed rebel movement in the region, the CORCOM said that India is trying to mislead the armed movement by trying to portray the rebel movement as an act of terrorism.

"It is clearly mentioned in both the UN Charter and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966 that 'Right to Self Determination' is the inherent rights of all people of the world. As per the Article 1 of the ICCPR it is stated that all peoples have the Right of Self Determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely

pursue their economic, social and cultural development", the CORCOM's statement said.

It added that the Right to Self determination was supported by India and rectify on April 10, 1979. Countries around the world which have restored its independence after the World War 2 were based on the provisions of the Right to Self Determination.

The CORCOM alleged that India is segregating the RSD as external and Internal self determination and has been showing the world that the movement in Manipur is an internal issue which is related with the law and order problems.

The CORCOM also elaborated on the dirty politics of India to mislead the world in connection with the armed movement in the region. It even said that India, beside being signatory to the ICCPR

and ICESCR has been putting some reservation in the rectification of the treaty.

The statement also highlighted on how the people of the region have been struggling for their inherent rights. It mentioned about the 1528 civilians that have been killed in alleged fake encounter. The said that in the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations Human Rights Council of 2017, its has been stated that the Armed Forces Special Powers Act has been imposed in only some part of India including Manipur. AFSPA 1958, as understood is a martial law and by imposing such act, the fundamental rights enshrined in their constitution has not been guaranteed to the people of the region.

The CORCOM said intellectuals, writers, journalists and even common people who stand for Kangleipak

were often suppressed by detaining them under NSA and UAPA, 1964 without following the due process of laws. On November 10 this year, during the Universal Periodic Review of the UNHCR held at Geneva five countries - Germany, United States, Norway, Belgium and Pakistan have criticized India for imposing AFSPA. Those countries also put up matters about the inconveniences faced by the people of the region in connection with their human rights, gender based violence freedom of speech and expression and the freedom of the civil society organization and also about the harassment meted by the Human Rights defenders of the region.

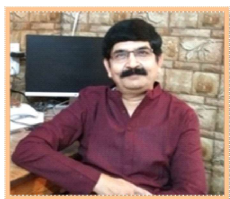
The CORCOM further said that even the Supreme Court of India has stated the AFSPA is a direct violation of the Article 13 of the Indian Constitution. It added that in

this region the directives of the Supreme Court to install CCTV in all interrogation cell of police station have not been followed so that they can commit third degree tortured to many people in custody. Journalists were often harassed by summoning them time and again by certain agencies like the NIA, CBI or the ED.

The CORCOM further ridiculed the report published on newspapers at which the Ministry of Home Affairs had stated that 80% of the rebel related cases has been reduced during 2014 to 2022 in WESEA region stating that even after the report the government of India keep sending more and more army into the region.

"If the rebel related cases has been reduced what is the rationale behind sending more and more army in the state", the CORCOM questioned.

# BJP increase its vote share in Gujarat – Creates Record



By: Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit

In Gujarat, BJP creates a history by getting 156 seats out of 182 (majority mark being 92). The saffron brigade smashed its own record of the highest 127 seats in 2002 under Narendra Modi as the CM. This has created a record in seventh consecutive term for the BJP, which has been ruling the state for 27 years since 1995. Gujarat had three chief ministers including the incumbent Bhupendra Patel since 2014 after Modi became prime minister. Modi was chief minister for 13 years. The massive verdict reflects people's trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP.

This time BJP was not fighting the Gujarat state election to avert defeat but to increase its victory margins and win a greater number of seats in the 182-member assembly. BJP was eyeing a seventh straight win in Gujarat by banking on Hindutva tones and heavy dose of developmental projects, and even after denying tickets to 38 MLAs to beat anti-incumbency. The electoral battle in Gujarat is also crucial for the BJP because it is the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has been at the helm of leadership in the state for the past 21 years, and the people of the state have expressed their unflinching support for him for over two decades. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership in the last two decades, he has always put forward an idea that is for the benefit of people in Gujarat and also nationally.

PM Modi had during his intensive Gujarat campaign urged people to help sitting CM Bhupendra Patel surpass the 2002 record. When the BJP came to power in the state in 1995, it won 121 seats; that peaked at 127 in the first election with Narendra Modi as chief minister in 2002, after the vicious riots earlier that year. In the second Modi-led election in 2007, the BJP got 117 seats; in 2012, it bagged 115 seats. The ruling party always counts on the plank of Hindutva, development and "double engine" growth.



The BJP, which had won 115 seats in 2012, had come down to 99 in 2017 primarily because of a spirited campaign waged by the Congress. The development model in Gujarat has been time and again cited by the BJP during the poll seasons over the years ever since the 2014 Lok Sabha polls were held. The grand old party's campaign in the state

was largely muted with the Bharat Jodo Yatra being held in other parts of the country. PM Modi held more than 30 rallies in the home state. Among other top BJP leaders that campaigned were UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Minister Smriti Irani. The two Gujaratis – Narendra Modi and Amit Shah – are currently the top two leaders of India also had a wide appeal among the state's voters. Further, electing the BJP is also a prestige issue for a substantial section of Gujaratis. BJP never take the elections lightly. It understands people's exhaustion with the saffron party at the state level and has been making amends from time to time. In the last state election of 2017, when the BJP's performance dipped, it was largely due to the Patidar agitation then led by Hardik Patel, that fore grounded issues of rural distress and lack of growth.

Hardik Patel has now joined the BJP, more than 15 Congress MLAs joined the BJP, and Alpesh Thakur, the leader of the Thakur community movement, joined the BJP, thus the BJP got benefit. BJP's decision to make Bhupendra Patel chief minister last year and bring the quota stir spearhead Hardik Patel into its fold has also worked in the party's favour. PM also inaugurated two key national events including the National Games and the Defence Expo 2022, both held in Gujarat. The party denied tickets to senior leaders such as former chief minister Vijay Rupani and former deputy chief minister Nitin Patel and opted for new faces such as former Patidar quota leader Hardik Patel, cricketer Ravindra Jadeja's wife Riviba Jadeja and OBC leader Alpesh Thakur, among others.

In 2022 Gujarat, there are new props, such as the world's largest stadium in Ahmedabad, named after Narendra Modi, in which Modi gave a knockout performance at the inauguration of the National Games.

BJP knows how to shield election outcomes from ground realities such as people's hardships, leaderless govt and corrupt bureaucracy. The BJP is of the opinion that young talent should be given a chance. The BJP is on a very strong wicket. Modi had worked to change that as he packaged himself as the friend of industrialists, a supporter of the free market and a protector of Gujarat. He has organised summits named Vibrant Gujarat etc.

Remember that Gujaratis are walking with confidence in the world today only because of Modi. One thing is clear that the BJP's leader, Narendra Modi, cast himself as the right man in the right place at the right time. The BJP's electoral success in Gujarat is largely attributed to Modi's and Amit Shah's charisma and the politics of religious polarisation and strident nationalism.

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# FIFA World Cup 2022 and Environmental impacts



By: N. Munal Meitei

The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar from November 20 has drawn some attention from the environmental groups. It's claimed to be the first-ever carbon-neutral World Cup hosted by a country. Qatar a country of 11,571 km<sup>2</sup> with population of 29.3 lakhs (2021) is much smaller than Manipur in terms of area and population.

Seven out of the eight venues are new stadiums costing \$6.5 billion claimed to build according to ambitious eco-construction and eco-operating standards. The Supreme Organizing Committee claims that 79% of solid waste from stadium construction sites was either recycled or re-used and the stadiums are all energy-efficient.

Almost for a month, 32 teams will represent, arguably the 'holy grail' of

footballing tournaments. In its 92-year history, every event were win pales in environmental costs. The 2016 Olympics in Rio emitting 4.5 million tons and the 2018 World Cup in Russia releasing more than 2 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. Qatar will emit some 3.6 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, that's roughly equal to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's annual emissions.

Most of those greenhouse gases will come from flights, floodlight and accommodation for more than 2.45 million visitors, as well as on construction of new stadiums among other infrastructures. 1300 flights will take off during the FIFA Cup daily. Some 51% of emissions will come from transport including the shuttle flights set to ferry spectators into the desert city each day because of a shortage of accommodation in Qatar, from neighboring countries, including Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Only about 200,000 of the planned 1.8 million tons of credits have been issued. They all come from renewable energy projects in Serbia, Turkey and India that are actually are excluded from the global carbon market.

Water use is another problem which Qatar expected to increase 80% during this Cup amidst country's already water scarce situations. The

tournament's pristine pitches from North America and the 136 practice fields reportedly requires around 10,000 liters of water in winter and 50,000 liters in summer daily. Most of Qatar's fresh water comes from desalination plants using the fossil fuels. The plants also release salty, hot brine that is toxic to marine life when back into the sea.

Waste is also another problem. About 60% of the waste generated during the event will be recycled, while 40% will be turned into energy. But burning waste for energy is worst for environment. While the carbon footprint of 64 soccer matches played over a single month's time might appear trifling, to hoodwink people while instead doing little.

Annual carbon footprint of English Premier League players, estimated at 29 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is nearly three times the annual carbon footprint of UK citizens and far exceeds the global target of two tonnes per person, set to meet the commitments of COP21- Paris Agreement.

FIFA was one of the first international sports federations to commit to the United Nations for a Climate Action Framework by developing its own climate strategy. FIFA has established several initiatives with three main objectives: 1) making soc-

cer ready for climate action, 2) protecting iconic tournaments from the negative impacts of climate change and 3) ensuring the development of resilient soccer.

World Cup is the world's most popular sporting event which has the highest emissions. Apart from the environmental impact, FIFA World Cup and ecology is not always obvious. Like any human activity, sport takes place in a physical environment. Thus, World Cup can contribute a lot to protect the environment.

To this end, the FIFA World Cup's 'Green Goal' need to have more meaningful action for a green environment. FIFA countries should make maximum investments to improve environmental quality. Football players and Athletes are the most influential people on the planet who can act as ambassadors on the myriad of social causes including the environment.

It is important to note that all aspects of sport should link with the natural environment. Therefore, with development of sports and football, we should improve and safeguard our environment for a green and beautiful planet.

(The author is a Environmental-ist, Email-nmunall@yahoo.in)

# The system of education behind the curtain of beautiful lies

By: Nongpoknganba Soram

Ever wondered how effective the education system of colleges will be in our state? We are said that we lived in a democratic nation. Therefore, I would like to use the power of expression to some extent to expose the burial mistakes of the college education that made us feel like it can never be corrected.

The days during graduation is one of the most important part in a life of a person. However, in this moment the system of education conducting in various colleges existing in our state is being synonymous to mockery.

The Dhanamanjuri University is considered to be one of the best university in Manipur and rumored for its strict conduct of examination.

However, even in this university several issues still goes on like a trend every year such as conducting examination without regular classes, incompleteness of syllabus, shortage of teacher and so on. I hate to say it but the truth has to be said and the truth is currently, still exist many other colleges in our state that accepted the appearance of semester examination through various means of cheating.

The major cause which leads to popularity of cheating in our state is because of the modern education that evaluate the success of the students in terms of grade rather than the learning process itself.

The other undeniable cause is the allowances of being cheated

freely in examination by certain colleges. Such colleges became the center of attraction for those who only wants to have the bachelor certificate without effort.

We came across the stories about being acted proper conduct of examinations in such colleges at times when Student Union went for inspection. Just like the saying there is no smoke without fire, we came through the above stories as it happened for real. In such colleges cheating had been existed deeprooted as like a tradition, it may be due to the reason of its long existence that many ignored cheating as something that can be fixed which paved the way to the perception of cheating as acceptable in our

society.

There is a saying that to destroy a nation there is no need to drop the bomb, just simply drop down the education. So, what will be the fate of our society if ignorance is the permanent nature of the people? Although there is in need of urgent initiatives from the side of government, the individuals should also be matured and must engaged actively in solving the mistakes for to ensure the sustainable solutions.

Last but not least, Democracy is one of the best form of people's government however if people are not well aware of what it is and does not have the desire for correction of mistakes then it may turn to be the worst form of government.

# Winners, Losers and the Mega Battle 2024



By: M.R. Lahu

Amid his celebrated Bharat Jodo Yatra, Rahul Gandhi stayed away from campaigning in Himachal Pradesh and he ensured his presence be minimal in Gujarat. As the results are out, the emerging scene is interesting. The BJP, as expected, has swept the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This time the party, under his leadership made a humongous victory by breaking all its past records but the number that the Congress party managed to gain in its casket seems to be a shrieking reality about its future prospects. Another interesting aspect of the result is that Rahul Gandhi did not put his legs in Himachal Pradesh but his party won with a comfortable margin and is all set to form the government. The state has, as usual, changed its mind by changing the government. The BJP has to wait another five years for its next turn. Though Rahul Gandhi's presence in the Modi turf was minimal, his critics would go at him hammer and tongs narrating his inefficiency to translate the party machinery into election victories. For Himachal Pradesh, he would not be eulogised for the victory but his detractors would probably giggle it out

by saying his absence could propel the party's triumph. To be precise, the estrangement that the family high command would face in the party is certain.

Rahul's absence from the electioneering is narrated as a strategy that the Congress thought to deliberately come up with. If that is to be believed, it should be seen as an effort to conceal its leader from the potential damage that the party's failures would cause. Rahul Gandhi, capturing media headlines through his yatra, is ought to gain a distinct reputation as a catalyst who would surface as a consensual candidate against Narendra Modi in the battle 2024. The BJP's victory in the state of Gujarat is unprecedented also its decrement defeat in Himachal Pradesh. While the Modi factor played a pivotal role in its Gujarat victory, the entry of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) into the fray had contributed to increase its tally. The AAP dented the roots of the Congress by splitting its vote share and its false narratives seem to have turned out to be a boon for the BJP.

The failure of Congress in the state of Gujarat is not only the failure of its defective electioneering but also its failure in understanding Modi's persona in his home turf. Defamatory vocabularies shot against him by the Congress had always helped him change the scenario. From the 99 seats it won in 2017 the BJP's gigantic leap to 156 this time is an indication of the indomitable power that Narendra Modi would fight the national elections with. The party not only man-

aged to increase its seats but there has also been a 4 percent increase in its vote share. Narendra Modi, with his three enormous road shows and 30 campaign meetings shattered the hopes of all his opponents. But the factor that should worry both BJP and Congress is the inroads that the AAP could make in Gujarat's spectrum of politics. Gujarat was a different space for the AAP to replicate a Punjab victory. The Congress on the other hand had a huge fall from its 40 percent vote share of 2017 to a trifling 27 percent this time.

The election results of Gujarat have some surprising elements. The state government was severely criticised for the Morbi tragedy and the results were expected to be reflective of the horror that the heartbreaking incident brought to the state; especially an incident of such magnitude occurred when the state was gearing up for the assembly elections. Predictions spoke of a probable backlash exposing a deceptive Gujarat Model of development. But the voters proved such assumptions wrong. Though totally vanquished in Gujarat, the Congress victory in Himachal Pradesh would give it a breath of hope. Priyanka Gandhi, the party General Secretary is sure to be lauded for its victory. She led the party's campaign in the hill state and the victory, no doubt, would be seen as an outcome of her strategising the campaign. Besides being a door to door campaigner, she had been a crowd puller holding the "Vijay Ashirwad Rallies" and many other small rallies. Will this victory put

her in a better position in her party? Himachal Pradesh is her first electoral success and her defeat in Uttar Pradesh heading the campaign charge was her biggest nightmare. Totally decimated from the Gujarat scenario, the Congress should now focus on the facts that it failed to take notice of and try to mend the party's dishevelled electoral reputation.

Gaining more confidence from the Gujarat victory, Modi and his party would prepare for the mega battle 2024. The preparedness in the opposition camp seems to be too delicate to counter the dominance of Modi. Rahul Gandhi's fresh narratives and his political manoeuvres were justified as an ideological barricading against the BJP's saffron agenda. Identifying the RSS as his principal enemy, he gestured his intentions further. The bigger battle that he is promulgating loudly against the RSS is evidently highlighting his limited scope and an act of political escapism from the challenges that Narendra Modi is placing in the present context. With Himachal Pradesh proving its trend of not repeating the same party, the Congress high command should hugely be thankful to the local leadership which kept the pot boiling on the ground. And the Priyanka factor being pronounced as an ethical element playing a significant role in the Congress victory, the party cadres would have their eyebrows twitched again in contempt of Rahul Gandhi's efficiency.

(The author is a Freelance Journalist / Author of the book)



# G20 presidency coming to India is no small thing: RSS chief

Agency  
Nagpur, Dec 9:

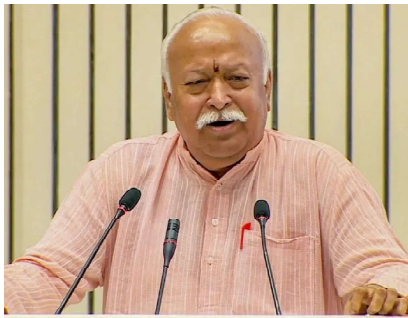
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday said the presidency of G20 coming to India is not an ordinary thing, and the world "needs India now."

He was speaking at the concluding function of the 'Sangh Shiksha Varg' or third-year officers' training camp at the RSS headquarters here.

"The world needs India now... India figures in global discussion and Indians have also become confident that they can lead the world," Bhagwat said.

"The chairmanship of G20 coming to India is not an ordinary thing. But it is just a beginning and we have a long way to go and the entire society has to work towards making India 'Vishva Guru' (world's guide)," he added.

There were many efforts to seek happiness for humanity in the last 2,000 years but



none of them succeeded, and now the world will have to turn to India, the RSS chief added.

Only India can show the way to universal happiness as we have always believed in the principle that the whole world is one family, Bhagwat said.

Hinduism does not denote a single way of worship, he said.

A Hindu is every person who is traditionally a resi-

dent of India and is accountable ('uttardayi') for it, he said.

"We can live with diversity, all diversities can walk (live) together, because diversities are the multiple expressions of the same unity. The one who understands this, is Hindu," he said.

Bhagwat also cautioned that even today there are "cruel forces and their agents" who are working to ensure that India breaks up

and does not progress.

A country does not prosper and progress only because of talent and technology, he said.

The most important thing needed for a country's progress is that the society should want the country to become great, Bhagwat said.

Talking about the RSS's beginnings, he said the Sangh's founder K B Hedgewar was involved in the freedom struggle since his childhood, but later he realised that the struggle for freedom can be waged in many ways.

He thought that the society must be improved and brought together if India is to remain free forever, Bhagwat added.

"For eight-ten years, he experimented... on what basis society can come together. What is the formula for bringing society together it is our culture, our devotion to our motherland, our traditions. This is Hindutva," Bhagwat said.

# Active Covid cases in India decline to 4,228; recovery rate at 98.80%

Agency  
New Delhi, Dec 9:

India has logged 249 fresh coronavirus infections on Friday, according to Union health ministry data. This slight rise comes a day after the country reported 241 cases.

The active cases in the country has further declined to 4,228 from 4244.

With this, the total number of COVID-19 cases in the country now stands at 4,46,74,439. The death toll has climbed to 5,30,653 with six fatalities reconciled by Kerala, the data updated at 8 am stated.

No deaths were reported in the last 24 hours.

The active cases comprise 0.01 per cent of the total infections. The national COVID-19 recovery rate has increased to 98.80 per cent, according to the ministry website.

A decrease of 16 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The number of people who have recovered from the disease surged to 4,41,39,558, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.19 per cent.

Under the nationwide vaccination drive, 219.96

crore doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered so far.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one crore mark on December 19.

India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 last year, three crore on June 23 and four crore on January 25 this year.

# Cyclone Mandous likely to intensify over next 4 hours; Schools in Puducherry, TN to remain closed

Agency  
Chennai, Dec 9:

Cyclone Mandous is likely to intensify into a more severe cyclonic storm over the next 4 hours, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Thursday. It will make landfall between Puducherry and Sriharikota in light of which, schools and colleges in Puducherry and Karaikal will remain closed on Friday.

Schools in several districts of Tamil Nadu including Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu, Vellore, Cuddalore, Villupuram, Ranipet, Perambalur, Thanjavur, Pudukottai and some others will remain closed

on Friday.

"The cyclone moved nearly west-northwestwards with a speed of 12 kmph during past 6 hours and lay centred over Southwest Bay of Bengal as of Thursday," IMD said. The cyclone storm is 390 km east-southeast of Karaikal and about 480 km southeast of Chennai.

Earlier on Thursday, IMD said heavy rainfall is predicted over several parts of the state as cyclone 'Mandous' over the Bay of Bengal is expected to cross the coast between Puducherry and Sriharikota in AP on the midnight of December 9.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan

Reddy has directed the Collectors of various districts to be vigilant in view of the cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal. He held a review meeting with the officials concerned here over the cyclone, an official release said.

He said adequate precautions should be taken by the authorities reviewing the impact of the storm from time to time. The officials informed the Chief Minister that rain is predicted in Nellore, Tirupati, Chittoor and other districts.

Jagan asked the agriculture department officials to take awareness about the precautionary measures to be taken by the farmers and be helpful to them.

# 2019 Tarn Taran Bomb Blast Accused Arrested in Delhi after extradited from Vienna

By Raju Vernekar  
Mumbai, Dec 9:

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Bikramjit Singh, the mastermind behind the 2019 Tarn Taran (Amritsar, Punjab) bomb blast on Thursday in Delhi after he was extradited from Vienna, Austria.

Bikramjit Singh was absconding in NIA case No RC-20/2019/NIA/DLI. The NIA had sent a team to Austria to bring accused Bikramjit Singh alias Bikkar Panjwar alias Bikkar Baba back to India, an NIA statement read.

The extradition was facilitated by the competent authority of Linz (Austria) in co-

ordination with Interpol authorities. According to the NIA, Bikramjit had formed a gang to carry out terror attacks in Punjab. He had been absconding in a case related to a bomb blast in a vacant plot in Tarn Taran district.

On September 4, 2019, a powerful explosion took place at a vacant plot on the outskirts of Pandori Gola village in Tarn Taran in which two people were killed and another was grievously injured. They were digging a pit to retrieve concealed explosives.

The NIA said that Bikramjit Singh was the key conspirator in the conspiracy to target Dera Muradpura in Tarn Taran. Bikramjit Singh

and co-conspirators held a series of secret meetings before choosing the date of the attack. The explosion took place when the co-conspirators were retrieving the buried explosives.

On the strength of non-bailable warrants issued by the NIA special court, Mohali, and subsequent Red Corner Notice against him, Bikramjit Singh was detained in Linz on March 22, 2021. After completion of legal proceedings, Linz Regional Court extradited him.

The NIA probe had revealed that Bikramjit Singh not only instigated the co-accused and others to commit terrorist acts, but also conducted training for fabricating

improvised explosive devices and using them. During various processions/agitations, he carried bombs and instigated other participants to attack government agencies to strike terror in the population at large.

The accused were "radicalised pro-Khalistan" youngsters who had formed a terrorist gang under the leadership of Bikramjit Singh.

The members of the terrorist gang carried out secessionist activities on the ground as well as on social media to instigate members of the Sikh community to agitate for the secession of Punjab from India. Further investigation is on.

# The Benefits of Reading a Book over an e-book



By: Vijay GarG

The trend of accelerated digitisation today has taken over every sector of the economy. Although it has proved beneficial in most cases, its effects have become a topic of debate in some sectors. One such sector is the publishing industry. While e-books have been lauded for their various advantages, like the ease of carrying them, lower costs, and greater accessibility, experts are not so sure about their impact on children.

Many studies have contended with the proposition that e-books are better than physical books. For example, a recent survey indicated 69% of children prefer reading physical books as opposed to electronic versions.

In addition, some experts have even suggested that e-books may have detrimental effects on imagination and the parent-child bond. This article discusses some advantages of reading physical books instead of e-books for children.

## Increasing The Quality Of Caregiver-child Interaction

Reading to children has been recognised as an activity that increases parental bonds by facilitating communication between caregivers and their children. According to a study that provided an analysis of the patterns of interaction of parents with their toddlers, parents engaged more with their children while reading print versions as opposed to e-versions of books. Another study postulated that children prone to emotional outbursts responded better to physical books than e-books. Such interactions are vital in promoting language development and facilitating social bonds, especially in schools. These parameters can significantly impact the overall growth and development of the child and the quality of their relationships in later life.

## Physical Books Aid Retention Of Material

Cognitive psychologists across the world are of the view that reading from physical books can promote better retention of the material. This claim has been authenticated by several studies showing that people reading from physical books remember the story's plot points better. There are multiple reasons for this, including the shift of the weight of the book from right to left. This shift provides tactile and visual cues that help visualise plot points and the story's details.

Several studies illustrate the adverse impact of screen luminance on the eyes of the user. Long-term exposure to screens, even low light-emitting screens, can strain your toddler's eyes and may incur long-term damage. This is not the case with physical books, read in good lighting conditions.

In addition to this, exposure to screen light, especially before sleeping, can hamper melatonin production in the body and consequently interfere with circadian rhythms. This is also suggested by a study published in 2014. This study illustrated that reading e-books before sleeping has a

detrimental effect on the quality of sleep and may result in crankiness or diminished alertness in the individual. In the case of young readers, these harmful effects are further exacerbated.

## Bottom Line

Reading and storytelling have several advantages for children, including facilitating imaginative thinking and problem-solving abilities, lowering stress, and augmenting language skills. However, the format of the books and the kind of stories read play a moderating role in this. Although popular with adults, E-books may be less advantageous for young readers. In addition to the mentioned benefits of physical books, a drawback of e-books is that it increases the time the child spends online or with a digital device. Excessive impressiveness in these devices may limit opportunities for social contact and exploration. In addition, it may be challenging to supervise the child when s/he is constantly online. Therefore, one needs to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each format before making a choice.

Agency  
Guwahati, Dec 9:

The Meghalaya High Court on Thursday put an interim stay on an agreement between the state and Assam to resolve border disputes at six of the 12 contentious locations. The stay order will stay in effect till the next date of hearing on February 23, the court said.

On March 29, the chief ministers of the two states had signed an agreement to end the disputes. Home Minister Amit Shah had described the development as historic.

The two states are embroiled in a border dispute which started when Meghalaya was carved out of Assam on January 21, 1972, under the Assam Reorganisation Act, 1971. Disputes arose at 12 locations after Meghalaya challenged the law.

Assam is the only state with which Meghalaya shares an internal border.

An area of 36.79 square kilometres was disputed between the two states. According to the agreement signed on March 29, Assam will control 18.51 square kilometres of the land and Meghalaya 18.28 square kilometres.

After signing the agree-



ment, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma had said that both the states, along with the Survey of India, will conduct a survey, after which demarcation would take place.

The Meghalaya High Court stay order came on a petition filed by four heads of Syiemship and Sirdarship, former independent native states of the Khasi ethnic groups that function under the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, reported IANS.

The petitioners have argued that the memorandum of understanding between the Assam and Meghalaya governments was signed without consulting them. They claimed that the MoU violated provisions of the Sixth Schedule as the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council has been con-

ferred powers on subjects such as land, water, soil, local customs and culture.

The Sixth Schedule deals with special provisions for administration of tribal areas.

At the hearing on Thursday, Advocate P Sharma, appearing for the petitioners, argued that if the demarcation is done as per the agreement signed in March, the plea to stop the exercise would become infructuous.

Advocate General A Kumar, however, urged the High Court not to pass any interim order arguing that the petitioners would not face any "irreparable loss" if the agreement is put into effect. The High Court then directed the Union government file an affidavit on the petition on the next date of hearing.

# BJP's big victory in Gujarat does not mean any sweep of Narendra Modi in Lok Sabha Polls

By Nitya Chakraborty  
New Delhi, Dec 9:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has led the BJP to a massive victory in his home state Gujarat in the latest assembly elections. The Congress has faced its worst disaster in the state of Mahatma Gandhi in 2022 polls. Certainly, there are reasons for the BJP to rejoice but the way the BJP leaders including the PM as also the national media are projecting the results as the end of the Congress and possible sweep of the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, lacks basis.

In fact, the lessons from the latest two assembly elections and the MCD polls are that the BJP, despite all the campaign by its top leaders including the Prime Minister and mobilisation of massive resources, has lost in Delhi at the hands of the AAP and in Himachal by the Congress. Gujarat was already with the BJP and no Congress leader thought that the Party would be able to defeat BJP in Gujarat this time. The Congress was in a mess in the state in terms of organisation. There was little central help and Rahul Gandhi virtually skipped Gujarat campaign excepting one day. Yes, the big erosion of Congress votes in the assembly elections is a cause for worry for the Congress leadership but Gujarat is a different case, it can not be compared with the other states of India excepting Uttar Pradesh which is also witnessing the success of Hindutva experiment.

That way, the Himachal results are far more significant. The Congress has got back a hindi speaking state. This was the first victory of the Congress in the last four years in the assembly elections. The victory was achieved despite massive propaganda and central backing to the BJP campaign by announcing a number of mega projects before the elections. It was really creditable for the Himachal Congress

leaders that they did withstand the Modi juggernaut and extract win. The central leaders excepting Priyanka Gandhi rarely took part in the campaign. This Himachal win is a positive sign for the Congress in its fight against the BJP in the state assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and take the battle forward to the Lok Sabha elections in 2024.

Now what is the signals given by 2022's last assembly elections to the opposition parties as also to the BJP? There is a positive development that both Trinamool and AAP joined the strategy meeting in Parliament this week called by the Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge. For a long time, these two parties were avoiding meetings convened by the Congress as the largest opposition party. Now this joining means that these two parties have some rethinking that for fighting the BJP and the Modi Government at the national plane, an understanding with the Congress is necessary.

The most important thing for the opposition parties following the latest assembly poll results is that there should not be any third front, there will be only one anti BJP front and that will include Congress. But this does not mean any electoral front. The anti-BJP electoral front will vary from state to state depending on the respective strength of the anti-BJP parties and the ground reality. The political reality in the states is so varied that any talk of total joint front of the opposition against the BJP in 2024 polls, will only spoil the efforts of minimum achievable unity before or after the polls.

Rahul Gandhi is going ahead with his Bharat Jodo Yatra which has entered its fourth month. Another nearly two months will be taken by the Yatra which is supposed to end in the first week of February next year. Rahul is looking at the Yatra as the part of

a long term ideological battle against the RSS without bothering much about the electoral gains in short term. The Gujarat elections results have not disturbed his understanding, he is thinking of the long term impact of Yatra when more and more non politically attached people will opt for the ideals of Congress. If that takes place, that will be good for the opposition as a whole as still now, the Congress is the main political party taking on the BJP electorally in most number of states.

The success of Bharat Jodo Yatra should not lead the Congress leaders to constantly talk of projecting Rahul Gandhi as the Prime Minister candidate in 2024 polls. The important point is that there is no need for projecting any opposition leader as the Prime Minister candidate before the polls and the common minimum programme also can be drawn up after the 2024 poll results are out. The issues concerning PM candidate and CMP will be relevant only if the opposition wins or there is a hung Parliament. If the BJP and its allies get majority again, all such exercises before the polls, will be futile.

It is no coincidence that the BJP high command under Home Minister Amit Shah discussed the plan of action for 2024 Lok Sabha polls on December 8 itself after the declaration of the assembly election result. They identified 144 seats for special focus which they lost in 2019 elections. They worked out the strategy on how to retrieve many of these losing seats. BJP is in a back foot because it has lost most of its powerful allies in the Hindi-speaking states. Especially, the loss of JD(U) and the SAD has given a big jolt to the saffrons electorally. BJP's strategy is to keep the losses from its existing 303 seats at minimum and make up this loss from the gains from last year's losing seats. But this BJP strategy can be ably chal-

lenged by the opposition parties if they move with a flexible electoral strategy from state to state ensuring maximum mobilisation of anti-BJP votes in favour of the strongest opposition candidates in that state.

For opposition it will be wise for it to ensure that the strongest anti BJP opposition party in each state, will be the decider of the nature of alliance in that state to take on the BJP. As of now, there are no problems in Bihar and Tamil Nadu. The opposition fronts are model front taking most of the anti-BJP parties. Such fronts cannot be repeated in other states. The Congress is the major opposition party in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Himachal and Gujarat and it will have the main responsibility to fight BJP in these states. If the Congress feels it necessary to have alliance with smaller anti-BJP parties, its decision will be final.

In Karnataka, the Congress is the major opposition party but the JD(S) has good influence in some districts. It will be in the best interests of opposition unity if the Congress and JD(S) work together to take on BJP both in state assembly polls in 2023 and the Lok Sabha elections in 2024. Similarly in Jharkhand and Maharashtra, the Congress is an active part of the alliances and the party can fight BJP only through these alliances.

In Assam also, the Congress is the main opposition party and it will be in the best interests of the opposition if there is a total alliance against the BJP comprising Congress, Trinamool and the other anti-BJP regional parties as also the left. The defeat of the BJP is possible if such composite combination emerges in Assam. For the opposition as a whole, the losing of BJP in 2024 Lok Sabha polls is of crucial importance since this defeat will lead to the collapse of the BJP control of other North Eastern states.

In West Bengal and Kerala, the political scenario is very clear. In Bengal, Trinamool Congress led by Mamata Banerjee is sufficiently strong enough to take on the TDP led by Chandrababu Naidu in the Lok Sabha polls. In Odisha, the BJD led by Naveen Patnaik will fight both the BJP and the Congress in the polls to maintain BJD's regional domain. In fact post 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the developments might have some similarities with the post 1996 Lok Sabha poll scenario. But there will be a crucial difference. Before 1996 elections, the opposition parties fought as being anti-BJP and anti-Congress. The united front government was formed by the non-Congress parties keeping the Congress outside as a supporting party. In post 2024 Lok Sabha situation, it is possible that the Congress will be a very important part of the Government of the opposition, if BJP is defeated.

Presently TRS led by K Chandrasekhar Rao is firmly with the anti-BJP opposition. He is even reconciled now to the idea of having the Congress as an ally in the anti-BJP opposition. But in Telangana, TRS will fight the Lok Sabha polls on its own against both the BJP and the Congress. Similarly in Andhra

Pradesh, YSRCP led by Jagan Mohan Reddy will fight both the Congress and the BJP. There is a possibility of BJP aligning with the TDP led by Chandrababu Naidu in the Lok Sabha polls. In fact post 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the developments might have some similarities with the post 1996 Lok Sabha poll scenario. But there will be a crucial difference. Before 1996 elections, the opposition parties fought as being anti-BJP and anti-Congress. The united front government was formed by the non-Congress parties keeping the Congress outside as a supporting party. In post 2024 Lok Sabha situation, it is possible that the Congress will be a very important part of the Government of the opposition, if BJP is defeated.

For Congress to bid for Prime Minister position of the opposition alliance, the decision will

depend on the number of seats it gets as also its acceptability by other parties of the opposition Congress has to get minimum 100 to 120 seats in 2024 Lok Sabha as against its 2019 tally of 52. Apart, there is another crucial factor, if there is a hung Lok Sabha and the need for seeking support of the fence sitters like BJD and YSRCP becomes urgent, then their choice of future PM will also have a bearing on the selection of final PM candidate. The non BJP political parties may fight among themselves in the states in assembly elections, as also in Parliamentary elections, but in post 2024 elections, it has to be ensured that common understanding is arrived at about a non BJP government, in case the BJP loses. The political path for the next sixteen months before the Lok Sabha elections will, have to be travelled with strong common sense and vision by the opposition parties, if they are really serious to unseat Narendra Modi as PM. (IPAService)

## Nupilan observation at Hojai



IT News,  
Imphal, Dec 9:

A 12-Member Team of Poirei Leimarol Meira Paibee Apunba Manipur,

AMAWOVA and AMUCO left Imphal today for Hojai to take part in the 83rd Observation of Nupilan Ningning Thouram, organised jointly by United Manipuri Associa-

tion Assam (UMAA), Handloom Committee, Hojai District and Manipuri Women Association (Manipuri Nupi Lup) at the premises of the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad.

## Sports

### FIFA World Cup 2022 quarterfinals:

## Argentina face unbeaten Netherlands, Brazil take on Croatia

Quarter-finals		
	Croatia	Today 8:30 pm
	Brazil	
	Netherlands	Tomorrow 12:30 am
	Argentina	

Agency  
Doha, Dec 9:

The FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar has entered its business end as the Round Of 16 matches produced a lot of drama and the exit of former World Champions.

Spain were knocked out by an energetic and resolute Moroccan side, who are continuing their fine run in the competition. Portugal and Brazil recorded big wins over Switzerland and South Korea respectively, while the Netherlands, France and England had comfortable victories as well.

Argentina were made to earn their win by Australia with Lionel Messi once again stealing the spotlight. Croatia defeated the giantkillers of the tournament, Japan, in a memorable penalty shootout where Croatian goalkeeper Dominik

Livakovic was the true star. Now the field is set for the exciting quarterfinal stages and the lineup for the matches has to be one of the best in the history of the World Cup. The festivities of the final 8 round of games will kick off with South America versus Europe clashes on Friday.

The full schedule for 9th December is as follows:

Brazil was just all class in their Round Of 16 clash against South Korea. The match was effectively over in the first half as the Selecao put four past the Asian giants to put behind the disappointment of the defeat to Cameroon in their final group game.

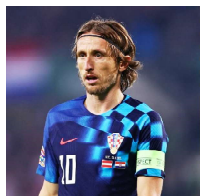
The dance celebrations of the players may have grabbed all the headlines at the end of the day in the Round of 16, but it does look like Tite's men have switched gears for the business end of the tournament.

Neymar's return has also been a timely boost for Brazil, with the likes of Richardson, Vinicius Jr. and Casemiro also being in top form.

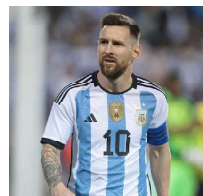
They have another tough test in front of them in the form of Luka Modric and Croatia. The 2018 World Cup runners-



Brazil captain  
Thiago Silva



Croatia captain  
Luka Modric



Argentina captain  
Lionel Messi



Netherlands captain  
Virgil van Dijk

up have been resilient throughout the tournament and will be up for a big fight on Friday.

The second match of the evening is one that would be hard to predict as Lionel Messi and Argentina go up against the unbeaten Netherlands side, who have been phenomenal throughout the campaign.

Argentina once again needed a bit of Messi magic against Australia in the Round Of 16 and their defence soaked all the pressure thrown at them by the Socceroos.

The Netherlands were clinical in front of goal against USA, although manager Louis van Gaal wasn't fully pleased with the performance of his

team as he felt they lost a lot of ball possession.

Keeping the ball in control could prove to be one of the decisive factors in this clash as Messi looks to trump the Dutch side and edge closer to completing his World Cup dream.

Seven-time Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi is hoping to finally end his wait for a World Cup title with Argentina, after losing the final to Germany in extra time eight years ago.

The Copa America holders go up against the Netherlands in Friday's second quarter-final at Lusail Stadium, the venue for the December 18 final.

The two countries have

met five previous times at the World Cup, including in the 1978 final, which Argentina won 3-1 after extra time. Argentina have never beaten the Dutch in 90 minutes.

It is a repeat of their 2014 semi-final clash in Brazil, where the South Americans won on penalties following a 0-0 draw after 120 minutes.

"In 2014 I was there and things ended slightly differently (to how we wanted) but I'd like to change that now," Dutch forward Memphis Depay said at a pre-match press conference.

After Argentina's shock loss to Saudi Arabia in their first match, Messi has dazzled in Qatar and the Dutch will have to nullify his effect on the

game.

"We're not going to reveal our tactics to you (about stopping Messi). It would be pretty stupid to reveal your own tactics," coach Louis van Gaal told reporters.

"Messi is the most dangerous creative player, he is able to create a lot and to score goals himself. But when they lose the ball he doesn't participate much, this gives us chances," he said.

England received a boost ahead of Saturday's showdown with reigning champions France as Declan Rice returned to training following illness.

Raheem Sterling is also set to rejoin the squad on Friday after spending time in England

following a robbery at his home.

Portugal have denied reports that Cristiano Ronaldo threatened to walk away from the team after he was benched for their 6-1 rout of Switzerland in the last 16.

Ronaldo later took to social media to say that Portugal were "too united to be broken by outside forces" ahead of their game with first-time quarter-finalists Morocco.

The all-time top scorer in men's international football with 118 goals, Ronaldo was dropped in favour of Goncalo Ramos against Switzerland.

The 21-year-old Ramos justified Fernando Santos' bold decision by scoring a hat-trick and providing an assist on his full Portugal debut.

Morocco are trying to become the first African team to reach the last four at a World Cup.

Thousands of Morocco fans descended on the streets of Doha after the Atlas Lions knocked out Spain on penalties in the last 16.

"We succeeded in creating a family, and we feel there's a whole country behind us," said coach Walid Regragui.