

## BJP gear up election campaign: Union Minister Smriti Irani hits hard on Congress and Rahul Gandhi Boycott Rahul Gandhi's visit to Manipur – Sambit Patra

IT News  
Imphal, March 18:

The Union Minister of Women and Child Development, Smriti Irani arrives in the state today and attended various BJP election campaign in the state of Manipur. She was accompanied by Dr. Sambit Patra.

Dr. Sambit Patra speaking on a public meeting at Chingmeirong appealed the public to boycott the upcoming visit of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to Manipur, stating that Mr. Gandhi did not include Northeast states of India in his idea of India.

The Union Minister who is also in charge of Women and Child Development attended the flag hoisting ceremony of BJP candidate S. Rajen who is



contesting from Lamsang Assembly Constituency. Speaking on the occasion, Smriti Irani hits to Congress party said that the Congress Leader did not even know Manipur, re-iterating the

similar statement by Sambit Patra. Smriti Zubin Irani also attended a public meeting at Sinam Playground in Chingmeirong along with Dr. Sambit Patra. Smriti Irani spoke about Women

empowerment and child education at the meeting. Irani in her speech promised free laptop and Scooty for every eligible beneficiary if voted to power.

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## PIL impact – IMC says streets are almost free from unauthorized haordings, accept those related with CEO

IT News  
Imphal, Feb 18:

As directed by the Manipur High Court in connection with the displaying of hoardings and election-related bill boards along others at government land, the executive officer of the Imphal Municipal Council which is one of the respondents submitted affidavit to the court saying that "Steps shall be taken to see that the aforesaid order is complied with in true letter and spirit. A reply shall be filed in evidence of such compliance by the next date of hearing."

The State authorities and more particularly, the police department, shall render all necessary assistance to the Municipal Corporation in the removal of all such unauthorized hoard-

ings, flexies, signboards etc."

It said that That, after maximum removal of all the Election banners and hoardings from the streets, the applicant published a notification dated 10/2/2022 in leading local dailies for removal of all the unauthorized hoardings/ advertisements.

However, at present, the advertisements published by the Chief Electoral Officer is yet to be removed. In this regard, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer submitted office letter dated 9/1/2022 to Imphal Municipal Corporation, seeking permission for hoisting up hoardings/ advertisements/ display boards to inform and educate voters towards Covid appropriate behavior. Further, the said letter also indicated that, the advertisement is to spread social messages, educate & fa-

cilitate voters, the Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur with vision to conduct free, fair, peaceful, participative, accessible, inclusive, transparent, ethical and safe elections.

The affidavit submitted to the court also stated that the office of the Chief Electoral Officer again requested the Imphal Municipal Corporation to allow display of hoardings/ advertisements till the completion of the election process i.e. upto 1st Week of March, 2022. Office letter dated 14/2/2022 was submitted to the Imphal Municipal Corporation from the ends of the Chief Electoral Officer.

And thus, at present, the streets under the jurisdiction of IMC are almost free from unauthorized hoardings/ advertisements, accept few advertisements of Chief Electoral Officer.

## Biren, Biswajit, Sharda spend sleepless night campaigning in all Assembly constituencies

By: Sh. Ajit  
Imphal, Feb 18:

With a mission to win 40+ seats by the BJP in the upcoming Manipur Legislative Assembly poll, National and state leaders of the BJP has been conducting non-stop election campaign in all assembly constituencies of the state.

When Chief Minister N. Biren Singh started visiting the south Minister Thongam Biswajit went towards North reaching out Hill area assembly constituencies to make sure that the BJP win the seats. Sharda Devi, the only women state BJP President in the country also spare no pain in organizing camera meeting at various assembly constituencies for the BJP Candidates.

In addition to the state BJP leaders who are working for the success of the BJP to form the next government, National leaders and in-charge of



Manipur including Dr. Sambit Patra, Union Minister of states Pratima Bhumik, Union Minister of state Dr. RK Ranjan among others also assisted the state BJP leaders in their campaign for the BJP at various assembly constituency.

Th. Biswajit, who is also contesting from Thongju Assembly constituency hardly gets time to meet voters of his constituency as he is occupied

with the work of making sure that the BJP win in 40+ seats in the upcoming assembly poll. When Imphal Times visited Thongju Assembly constituency and interviewed many of the political workers, the answer was same from all. "We believe in him and we advice him to work for the party at other constituencies as we are all here for him for his constituencies", around

180 persons out of 200 political workers told Imphal Times.

Every time when Imphal Times representatives went to interview Minister Thongam Biswajit, he was always occupied with BJP workers planning strategy for the election at as early as 6 am in the morning. Than after finishing the meeting he started venturing out to meet electorates at different assembly constituencies. He continued

till visiting various assembly constituencies and campaigning till late hours. Then till 3 am in the morning he keeps continuing meeting various people at his official quarter.

At around 3 am, Imphal Times waited and when asked when didn't you sleep, the exhausted Minister with a smile said that he sleep at 3 and wake up at 6 am. When asked about when he took his break for taking rest, the Minister said that all this five years, he had never known when he was tired to take a rest.

The same is with the Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, since the announcement of the BJP candidates, N. Biren Singh was also seen visiting various assembly constituency meeting people to vote for the BJP.

For A Sharda Devi, she had started the campaign long before the announcement of the party ticket.

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## Two Days Craft Demonstration programme held



IT News  
Imphal, Feb 18:

Two Days Craft Demonstration programme for adopted cluster of artistic textiles & crocheted craft under Ambekar Hastashilpa Vikash Yojna Scheme for Handicrafts artisans held on 18 and 19 February, 2022

at Imphal East, Manipur under the sponsorship of the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, New Delhi which has been organised by Chingsanglakpa Handicrafts Cooperative Society Khurai Sajor Puthiba Leikai, Imphal East, Manipur.

## Haobam Paban Kumar's *Nine Hills One Valley* to vie for Golden Gateway Award in Jio Mami Mumbai Film Festival 2022



Haobam Paban Kumar

IT News  
Imphal, Feb 18:

Haobam Paban Kumar who clinched the Golden Gateway award for the best Indian film in the 18th Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival 2016 for his debut feature-

*Loktak Lairembee* (2016), again entered into the India Gold section of the forthcoming 22nd Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival 2022 with his second narrative- *Nine Hills One Valley*.

The 75-minute long bilingual film in Tangkhul and Manipuri- *Nine Hills One Valley* will vie for the title of Golden Gateway Award in the festival with other 13 films namely, *A Night of Knowing Nothing* (Hindi/Bengali) by Payal Kapadia, *Adh Chanani Raat* (Punjabi) by Gurvinder Singh, *Bela* (Bengali) by Prantik Basu, *Dhuni* (Hindi/ Maithili) by Achal Mishra, *Dug Dug* (Hindi) by Ritwik Pareek, *Fire in the Mountains* (Hindi/Kumaoni) by Ajitpal Singh, *Invisible*

*Demons* (Hindi/English) by Rahul Jain, *Ladies Only* (Hindi/English/Marathi) by Rehana Liz John, *Once Upon a Time in Calcutta* (Bengali) by Aditya Vikram Sengupta, *Pedro* (Kannada) by Natesh Hegde, *Shankar's Fairies* (Hindi) by Irfana Majumdar, *The Cloud Messenger* (English/Malayalam/Sanskrit) by Rahat Mahajan and *Two Friends* (Bengali) by Prasun Chatterjee. The festival will be held from March 11 to 15, 2022.

*Nine Hills One Valley* tells the story of Anam Ahum, a Tangkhul from the hills, who travels to Imphal city in the valley to meet his daughter before she leaves for New Delhi in search of job. During the course of the journey, he encounters different people



and their stories, making us witness to the brutishness of ethnic conflicts. Yet, in the face of distressed memories,

hope thrives.

Reacting on the selection, Paban says, "I am thrilled that *Nine Hills One Valley* is hav-

ing its Indian premiere at the prestigious India Gold Section (Competition) of MAMI 2022. If everyone remembers, my

first feature *Loktak Lairembee* won the India Gold Award in 2016."

About the film, he states, "It is my personal journey about my intrinsic dilemma of being born in a place like Manipur which is absorbed with a tapestry of diversity of indigenous people. Here people aspire to reach out to the elusive harmony while stand-up each day for their forest, land and culture. The film was made during the distressing solitude of the Covid pandemic."

The following prizes are awarded to the feature-length films screening at the MAMI festival. Golden Gateway Award: Films screening in the India Gold section are eligible for this award.

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# 10 thousand steps a day can keep you fit & fine

## Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



It was a rainy day and I had to stay for a long time while waiting for my flight at Bangalore airport. The flight was getting delayed due to bad weather. While walking to the bookshop, a poster caught my sight, which read – 'If you don't take time for your wellness, you will be forced to take time for your illness.' It was rightly said, because I myself have suffered a lot because of lack of exercise. Being in a newspaper job for many years, made me sit on the desk for long hours at a stretch without any movement or break. The sedentary lifestyle created problems in my backbone and caused cervical pain, for which I had to undergo a serious surgery also. However, now I am quite aware of the benefits of physical movement and exercise. My all time favorite exercise has been walking in the courtyard or in the park surrounded with greenery and trees. After a balanced diet, if anything is important for fitness, it is exercise. Some people prefer the gym, some do yoga, and many others like to walk in the park. Walking is considered the best habit, as it does not cost anything and does not even require any tools.

Walking is a complete exercise in itself. Walking half an hour a day is a great way to maintain good health. This routine can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen bones, burn excess fat and increase muscle strength. It can reduce the risk of heart diseases, diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers. For people who are overweight, older, or who haven't exercised in a long time, walking is a good form of physical activity. When you walk, you carry your own body weight, that is, it's a kind of weightlifting exercise. This keeps the heart and lungs healthy. In addition, walking can help manage conditions such as high blood pressure, cholesterol, joint and muscle pain or stiffness. Bones become strong and the balance of the body improves.

If there is no time for a regular walk in the park, then take some small measures at home or office, such as using stairs instead of a lift to cover short distances. If going by bus or metro, get off one stop before and walk to work or home. Instead of going by car, prefer to walk to nearby shops. Make it a habit to walk regularly. Whenever you get a chance, take a walk. If you have a desk job, get up from the seat every hour and take a walk for two minutes. Doctors are of the opinion that for a good workout, at least 10,000 steps should be walked every day. To keep a record of how many steps you have taken, download the step tracker app on your mobile. As your fitness improves, you will be able to walk longer distances and can burn more calories. The body gets used to the exercise, so keep increasing your walking speed. By climbing on hills, carrying weight in hand and walking for a long time, you will get more benefits and increase the stamina of the body. It is good to wear comfortable sports shoes and loose clothes for a walk.

# Congress-Left Alliance working hard to defeat BJP in Manipur Assembly Polls

*CPI could have extracted a few more seats from the weakened gop*

By: Sagarneel Sinha

The polling for the Manipur assembly poll is due in two phases on February 28 and March 5. The Congress has arrived at an understanding with the four Left parties for electoral alliance on the basis of a common minimum programme. The campaign has been intensified and the Left workers are working hard for BJP's defeat. On the other hand, the BJP has mobilized huge resources to retain its power in this 60 member assembly.

In Manipur, among the Left parties, only the CPI has a base on the ground. The other Left parties — CPI(M), RSP and Forward Bloc — only exist in names. The four Left parties have entered into an alliance with the Congress. The other constituency is the Karnataka based HD Devegowda's JD(S). The alliance is called the Manipur Progressive Secular Alliance. The constituents have even released a Common Minimum Program to portray that the alliance is based on principles. Although what appears is, the only principle of all the constituents is to anyhow defeat BJP in the state.

The considerably weaker Congress has taken the right decision to ally with CPI. The two parties had allied in the past too. In fact, the CPI was once a junior partner in the Congress-led Secular Progressive Alliance government in the state. After sharing power from 2002 to 2012 along with Congress, CPI withdrew support from the Okram Ibobi Singh led government. The Left party was unhappy for being ignored by Con-



gress on many issues. In the assembly elections held in the same year, CPI failed to even open its account. Again in the last assembly elections, the Left party failed to send a representative to the assembly.

That's a story of the past. This time CPI once again has decided to ally with the grand old party, which also knows that although weakened, the Left party still has votes in some pockets. However, the alliance is a very weak one if seen from CPI's perspective. The Left party is contesting only on two seats — Kakching and Khurai. But in the assembly constituency of Kakching, CPI will have a friendly contest with its ally Congress. It means that Congress will support CPI only in one constituency.

In utter desperation to only see the defeat of BJP, CPI has committed a big mistake in Manipur. The Left party could have extracted at least half a dozen of seats from Congress. Also, the party could have ensured that Congress wouldn't

field any candidate against the CPI candidates. After all, in an alliance, sacrifices should be made from all sides.

Already this has resulted in discontent among the CPI workers. According to a news report by the New Indian Express, around 48 CPI workers from the Wangjing-Tentha constituency have resigned from the party. The workers were unhappy that the CPI didn't field a candidate from this constituency. The same report says that the party aspirant Haobam Robindro, party's state executive member, is unhappy and even criticised the party for allying with the Congress. Notably, Haobam contesting as CPI candidate garnered 18.8% votes and came third. The seat was won by Congress.

True that CPI has been unable to win a single seat in the last two assembly elections. In fact, the party has even failed to find candidates in the last two elections, particularly in the last election when it had to contest only 6 seats. But the Left

party isn't uncommon in the north-eastern state. The Lok Sabha polls of 2014 and 2019 showed that CPI has an influential base in the state. The party got 14% votes in 2014 while it garnered 8.3% votes in 2019. Party's M. Nara is a well-known leader in the state. In fact, the party was leading in 3 assembly seats in the 2019 elections. True that some of these votes were from NPP, which supported CPI's M. Nara in the Inner Manipur Lok Sabha constituency. The Inner Manipur constituency has seats from the plains and CPI got 17% votes in the 2019 elections from this constituency.

In the last assembly elections, the six assembly seats the party contested were — Kakching, Khurai, Lamai, Wangjing-Tentha, Langthabal and Yaikul. It got 9.2%, 2.7%, 6.7%, 18.8%, 7.4% and 0.7% votes respectively. In the Lamai assembly seat, CPI was leading in the 2019 elections. The other two seats where CPI was leading were Uripok and Keisamthong. There were 9 seats where CPI was the second-largest party in the 2019 polls. — and Yaikul assembly seat was one of those.

The CPI says that the decision to contest only two seats is taken by the party. Whatever it is, the truth is that the Left party has completely surrendered to Congress. It has committed a big blunder by not asking the grand old party to cede at least half a dozen seats. This time CPI actually had a chance to regain its lost base in Manipur. But it has failed to do so.

# Water Conservation- Needs and Methods

Water is a simple liquid that is of great importance for human life and sustenance. Water is a very large part of our lives. In fact, 57% to 75% of our body is made out of the liquid. Water is very important for everyone living in this world, and to imagine life without water is impossible. There are about 1.4 billion people who don't have access to clean drinking water, in the world of 6.8 billion people, 20.59% don't have clean drinking water. Obviously, water is a huge part of our daily lives and without it, you cannot live. Our daily activities are so much dependent on water that we cannot even live without water for a single day. We use water for many purposes such as drinking, washing, bathing, cleaning and agricultural purposes. Water is essential for life and it is very important to save water.

It is simply impossible to imagine human life without water, if there are no ample sources of water left then it would be a matter of great concern. Without water the will be no harvesting, no drinking water, no washing, cleaning and cooking as well. Hence it is very important to use our present water sources judiciously and try to save as much water as possible. It is very important to realize water conservation benefits and also to implement those in our day to day life. Water conservation encompasses the policies, strategies and activities to manage fresh water as a sustainable resource, and efforts to protect the water environment while maintaining a balance between current and future human demand. Population, household size and growth and affluence all affect how much water is used. Factors such as climate change will

increase pressures on natural water resources, especially in manufacturing and agricultural irrigation. It is very important to realize the need for water conservation in the community as well as personal level.

Over the past few years a rapid growth in populations, modernization, growing industrialization, and expanding agriculture has pushed up the demand for water in the urban as well as rural areas. Human demands are increasing day by day but the natural resources are in a limited quantity. Efforts have been made to collect water by building dams and reservoirs, practising rainwater harvesting, digging wells; some countries have also tried to recycle and desalinate salty water to make it fit for drinking or washing. Water conservation has become a major need of the hour. The idea of groundwater recharging by harvesting rainwater is gaining importance in many parts of the world and has been practised successfully in many parts of the world.

## Needs and Importance of Water Conservation

Water is an essential part of human life and plays a major role in human sustenance. We use water for drinking purpose, cooking, washing, for producing electricity, for farming, for industrial purpose and many other purposes that support the human lifestyle. Earth is about 70% water, but there is only a small amount of groundwater source that is fit for drinking and cooking purpose. Ninety-seven per cent of all the water on the earth is salt water which is not suitable for drinking. Only three per cent of all the water is fresh water, and only one per cent is

available for drinking water. The other two per cent is locked in ice caps and glaciers. About 70% of the water source that is from the sea and oceans the major part contains saline water that is the salt level of this water is so high that it cannot be used for drinking purpose and purification process for this water is really high. Our water supply is finite, which means that we do not have an endless supply.

We only have the water that we have now. The adult human uses on average about 100 gallons of water a day which may seem to be a small figure but with the rising population and depleting water sources there is a fear that one day there will not be enough water sources available to meet even drinking demands. Seawater that is highly salty as a result is not fit

for human consumption and not even for industrial purpose or for producing electricity. Since this water contains a high amount of salts, therefore, using this water in industries and for producing electricity leads to salt deposition on the machinery and this at times can get really dangerous and lead to some major industrial disasters. Hence sea water is of no major use for humans.

As we discussed earlier that water resources are finite and there is only 3% of freshwater sources, with all the people on Earth relying on such a small percentage of all the water on Earth, it only makes sense that we must preserve and conserve our water for our own survival otherwise a day will come when all the water sources will be extinguished. Besides con-

serving water it is also important that we must not pollute our water sources because it is the only water we will ever have. There are a lot of people who do not realize the importance of water, and they are continually wasting and polluting it. Only about ten per cent of wastewater is disposed of properly.

It is a high time that we must start saving water today so that it will be available to us in the future. We need to think of future generations, if we go on wasting our water resources recklessly then it is obvious that in future we will not have a sufficient supply of water unless we become more concerned with how we use our water today. There are many things that we can do to help preserve water. These are not things that are hard. All it takes is a little bit of extra effort, and soon it will be second nature. Save the water, that's all we can do.

## Methods of Conserving Water

The most important step in the direction of finding solutions to is-

uses of water and environmental conservation is to change people's attitudes towards the fact and also changing habits which include each one of us to put in some sincere efforts. Conserve water because it is the right time to do so. We can follow some of the simple things that have been listed below and contribute to water conservation.

Every drop of water counts, so make sure you are not wasting clean drinking water and you are not leaving any running tap.

Remember to use only the amount you actually need and not wasting water unnecessarily.

It has been found beneficial to form a group of water-conscious people at school, college or society level and encourage your friends and neighbours to be part of this group. Promote water conservation in community newsletters and on bulletin boards. Encourage your friends, neighbours and co-workers to also contribute.

Plant more and more trees to increase transpiration.

Encourage rainwater harvesting at the community level as well as municipal level.

Make sure that your home is leak-free and there are no leaking taps or tanks storing water. Many homes have leaking pipes that go unnoticed. Call a plumber as soon as you notice any leakage.

Do not leave the tap running while you are brushing your teeth or soaping your face.

When washing the car, use water from a bucket and not a hosepipe which helps to reduce about 50% of the water used for washing your car.

While watering your lawns do not waste water and use only the amount that is required.

Do not throw away water that has been used for washing vegetables and use it to water plants or to clean the floors.



By: Vijay GarG



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# India records 25,920 new Covid-19 cases, 492 deaths in last 24 hours

Agency  
New Delhi, Feb 18:

India recorded 25,920 new Covid-19 cases, 492 deaths in the last 24 hours, pushing the total death toll to 5,10,905, according to the data released by the Ministry of Health on Friday (February 18, 2022). The active cases stand at 2,92,092.

A decrease of 40,826 cases has been recorded in the active Covid-19 caseload in a

span of 24 hours. The country also recorded 66,254 recoveries today, taking the total number of recoveries to 4,19,77,238.

The active cases comprise 0.68 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate stands at 98.12 per cent.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 2.07 per cent, while the weekly positivity rate was recorded at 2.76 per cent, according to the minis-

try.

Additionally, the cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide Covid-19 vaccination drive have exceeded 174.64 crore. As many as 12,54,893 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours to detect the presence of the virus.

Meanwhile, the global coronavirus caseload has topped 419.4 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 5.86 million and vaccina-

tions to over 10.30 billion, according to Johns Hopkins University.

The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 78,274,553 and 931,504, according to the CSSE.

The second worst hit country in terms of cases is India (42,754,315 infections and 510,413 deaths), followed by Brazil (27,940,119 infections and 642,156 deaths).

# 38 sentenced to death in 2008 Ahmedabad serial blasts, 11 others sent to life in prison

Agency  
New Delhi, Feb 18:

Thirty-eight people were sentenced to die by a special court in Gujarat that convicted them in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts case. Eleven other convicts were sent to life in prison. The July 26, 2008, Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts killed 56 people and left over 200 injured. Last week, a special court in Gujarat convicted 49 people and acquitted 28 others in connection with the blasts.

All the accused appeared virtually in court today while

the sentences were pronounced. The death sentences will need to be confirmed by the Gujarat High Court.

Judge A R Patel also awarded compensation of Rs 1 lakh each to kin of those killed in the blasts, and Rs 50,000 for each victim with serious injuries and Rs 25,000 each for those with minor ones.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 2.85 lakh each on the 48 convicts.

Patel had on February 8 declared 49 of the total 78 accused as guilty under various offences of the Indian Penal Code, including for murder,

sedition and waging war against the state, as well as under offences of the UAPA and Explosive Substances Act.

They were convicted under sections 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 121 (a) (conspiracy to wage war or attempt to wage war against the nation) and 124 (a) (sedition) among others of the IPC, and 16(1)(a)(b) of the UAPA related to punishment for a terrorist act.

The court had concluded a trial against 77 accused in September last year. Of the 78 accused put on trial, one had turned an approver.

The police had claimed that people associated with the terror outfit Indian Mujahideen (IM), a faction of radicals of the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), were involved in the blasts.

It was alleged that the IM terrorists had planned these blasts to avenge the 2002 post-Godhra riots.

Days after the serial blasts in Ahmedabad, the police had recovered bombs from different parts of Surat, following which 20 FIRs were registered in Ahmedabad and 15 in Surat. The trial was conducted after the court merged all 35 FIRs.

# Assam Rifles apprehends KYKL insurgent



IT News  
Imphal, Feb 18:

Moreh Battalion under the aegis of IGAR (S) in a joint operation with Manipur Police apprehended one active

insurgent of proscribed group KYKL in Moreh, Tengenpou district on February 16.

Based on specific input from reliable sources, troops of Assam Rifles along with

Manipur Police launched an operation which led to the apprehension.

The apprehended insurgent was handed over to Moreh Police Station for further investigation.

# Assam Rifles Foils Cross Border Smuggling

IT News  
Imphal, Feb 18:

Moreh Battalion under the aegis of IGAR (S) foiled cross border smuggling of illegal goods in Moreh on 16 February.

During border domination patrol, troops of Assam Rifles observed large number of packages lying unattended near check point in Moreh. On thorough search of the packages, Chinese origin spare auto parts were recovered.

The recovered items are assessed to be worth Rs 4 Lakh.

The recovered items were handed over to Custom Preventive Force, Moreh for further legal action.

# Bird flu scare in Maharashtra's Thane, 25,000 chickens to be culled at farm

Agency  
Thane, Feb 18:

About 25,000 birds falling in a kilometre radius of an affected poultry farm in Thane will be culled in the next few days in the wake of a bird flu scare.

The move came days after about 100 chickens died suddenly at the farm in Vehloli village of Shahapur tehsil in Thane district, officials said.

According to an ANI input, Thane district magistrate and collector Rajesh J Narvekar said the district animal husbandry department has been ordered to take measures to control the infection, adding samples of the dead birds have been sent to Pune-based



laboratory for testing.

The chief executive officer (CEO) of the Thane Zilla Parishad, Dr Bhausaheb

Dangde, results of the tests confirmed that the birds died due to H5N1 avian influenza. The Union ministry of fish-

eries and animal husbandry has been informed about the detection of bird flu cases here, Dangde added.

# Meghalaya government to raise ILP issue with union home minister Amit Shah

Agency  
Aizawl, Feb 18:

The Meghalaya government will raise the issue of implementation of inner line permit (ILP) in the state with union home minister Amit Shah.

This was informed by Meghalaya deputy chief min-

ister Prestone Tynsong.

Tynsong said that ILP implementation issue would be raised by the Meghalaya government during its next meeting with Amit Shah.

"We will raise all pending issues (including ILP) in the meeting with union home minister Amit Shah," Prestone Tynsong said.

However, the Meghalaya deputy chief minister clarified that no date has yet been fixed for the meeting with Amit Shah.

He said that union home minister Amit Shah would fix a date for meeting, where "all pending issues" pertaining to the state of Meghalaya would be discussed.

# COVID: China is developing its own mRNA vaccine and it's showing promise

Agency  
Dublin (Ireland), Feb 18:

China, the country that first detected the novel coronavirus, remains one of the few not to have imported one of the exceptionally effective mRNA COVID vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna. Instead, it has so far relied on vaccines developed by two Chinese companies, Sinovac and Sinopharm. However, this may be set to change. China is now developing its own mRNA vaccine.

Both the Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccines use a traditional design, containing whole forms of the coronavirus that have been inactivated a tried-and-tested way of making vaccines that work.

However, while these vaccines were initially quite good at stopping people getting symptomatic COVID, this protection waned significantly over time. These vaccines also offer poor protection against infection with omicron. This has put pressure on China to

develop more effective vaccines, as it is pursuing a strict containment policy with the virus.

The mRNA vaccines work in a different way. They deliver a snippet of the coronavirus's genetic code into the body, housed inside a lipid droplet. Once this gets inside cells, the code gets read and the cells produce copies of a key part of the coronavirus, its spike protein. The immune system then sees these spike proteins and mounts a response to them, generating immunity against the full virus should it be encountered in the future.

The mRNA vaccines initially generated high levels of protection against getting COVID. And while the protection offered by two doses wanes over time and offers little protection against infection with omicron, the mRNA vaccines appear to offer the best protection against an omicron infection when used as boosters.

They also continue to offer very impressive protection against severe disease. Early

results suggest a third dose of Sinovac, in comparison, is unable to stop infection with the new variant (though these results are still in preprint, meaning they're awaiting review by other scientists).

The mRNA vaccine technology therefore looks like it will offer the best protection against COVID in the future hence China's development of such a vaccine. But it hasn't just jumped on the bandwagon. Development of ARCoV, China's candidate mRNA vaccine, commenced in March 2020. The technology used is very similar to that in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, using modified messenger RNA from the virus, housed in a lipid droplet, to stimulate immunity.

But rather than getting the immune system to respond to the full spike protein of the virus like the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines do, ARCoV gets the body to make copies of the receptor binding domain (RBD), a key subpart of the virus's spike protein that it uses to attach to and enter cells.

# Govt dismisses media reports on 'undercounting' of Covid deaths

Agency  
New Delhi, Feb 18:

The Union health ministry on Thursday dismissed media reports based on a published research paper alleging that India's COVID-19 mortality count is much higher than the official figure, which is "fallacious and completely inaccurate".

The ministry said the country has a robust system of reporting deaths, including those caused by COVID-19, and the data is compiled regularly at different levels of governance, starting from the gram panchayat level to the district level and the state level.

"The reporting of deaths is regularly done in a transparent manner. All deaths are compiled by the Centre after

being independently reported by states and UTs.

"To project that COVID deaths have been under-reported is without basis and devoid of justification," the ministry said in a statement.

There have been some media reports based on a published research paper alleging that the Covid mortality count in India is much higher than the official figure and the actual numbers have been undercounted, it said.

The study estimates that the Covid death toll in the country till early November 2021 was between 32 lakh and 37 lakh, as compared to the official figure of 4.6 lakh.

"As has been stated earlier for similar media reports, it is again clarified that these reports are fallacious and completely inaccurate. They

are not based on facts and are speculative in nature," the statement issued by the ministry said.

Based on globally acceptable categorisation, the government has a comprehensive definition to classify Covid deaths, which has been shared with the states and the states are following it, the ministry added.

Furthermore, the government has been urging the states to update their mortality numbers in case certain deaths were not reported in time at the field level and hence, remains completely dedicated in getting the correct picture of the pandemic-related fatalities, it said.

The government has urged the states and Union territories through several formal communications, video-

conferences and deployment of central teams for correct recording of deaths in accordance with the prescribed guidelines.

The Union health ministry has also regularly emphasised the need for a robust reporting mechanism for monitoring district-wise cases and deaths on a daily basis. Therefore, to project that Covid deaths have been under-reported is without a basis and devoid of any justification, the statement said.

The study quoted in the media reports has taken four distinct sub-populations — the population of Kerala, Indian Railways employees, MLAs and MPs, and school teachers in Karnataka — and uses a triangulation process to estimate the nationwide death count.

# Over 174.59 Crore Covid Vaccine Doses Administered in India: Government

Agency  
New Delhi, Feb 18:

The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country crossed 174.59 crore on Thursday, according to the Union health ministry. More than 33 lakh (33,62,813) vaccine doses were administered till 7 pm on Thursday, the ministry said, adding that the daily vaccination tally is expected to go up with the compilation of the final reports by late night. More

than 1.84 crore (1,84,27,087) precaution doses of the vaccines have been administered to healthcare workers (HCWs), frontline workers (FLWs) and those aged 60 years and above with comorbidities.

The countrywide vaccination drive against the viral disease was rolled out on January 16 last year with the HCWs getting inoculated in the first phase. The vaccination of FLWs started from February 2 last year.

The next phase of Covid

vaccination commenced from March 1 last year for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 years and above with specified co-morbid conditions.

The country launched vaccination for all people aged more than 45 years from April 1 last year.

The government then decided to expand the vaccination drive by allowing everyone above 18 years of age to be vaccinated from May 1 last year.

The next phase of COVID-19 vaccination commenced from January 3 this year for adolescents in the age group of 15-18 years.

India began administering the precaution doses of the Covid vaccines to the HCWs, the FLWs including the personnel deployed on poll duty and those aged 60 years and above with comorbidities from January 10 this year amid a spike in the number of coronavirus cases fuelled by its Omicron variant.

## Centre's Covid Emergency Funding Quadrupled as States, UTs Proposed Budgets to Bolster Healthcare

Agency  
New Delhi, Feb 18:

The Narendra Modi government's emergency funding for tackling the Covid-19 pandemic has quadrupled in the ongoing financial year as states and union territories proposed to spend higher budgets on strengthening healthcare facilities, data shows.

On April 5, 2020, to bolster health systems and provide an immediate response to the pandemic, the central government had announced the India Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package, also known as the Emergency Covid-19 Response Plan (ECRP).

The objective of the fund was to build resilient health systems to address not only the Covid crisis but also manage future outbreaks. The money was allocated to

states, UTs via the National Health Mission (NHM) as the nodal body for the scheme's implementation.

According to the government data collated by the Accountability Initiative at Centre for Policy Research (CPR), a New Delhi-based think tank, of the 25 states and UTs for whom data was available, demand and government's allocation both increased more than 300% to tackle the pandemic via emergency funding.

In the financial year 2020-21 - when the fund was introduced - the states and union territories had proposed to seek a budget of Rs 4,451 crore, of which 94 per cent - Rs 4,193 crore - was approved by the Centre.

In the next financial year, 2021-22, when Indian states had fairly experienced the pandemic during the peak of the first wave in September and understood the major re-

quirements, they hiked the amount proposed by over four times to Rs 21,460 crore.

The Centre also approved the increased amount and Rs 17,860 crore was sanctioned.

While the states and UTs had proposed almost 400% more than the previous fiscal, the government approvals also hiked the sanctioned amount to more than 300%.

### Dearth of data

Experts welcome the focus on strengthening the healthcare infrastructure despite it being affected by the pandemic, but the data to show the on-ground impact of the increased funding is missing.

"The recent emphasis on health system strengthening is welcome especially given the pandemic," Avani Kapur, fellow, CPR and lead at Accountability Initiative, told News18.com. "Unfortunately, Rural Health Statistics

data for 2021 is not available to know the impact of this increased funding."

The latest data available is from March 2020.

"Surprisingly too, revised estimates in this fiscal year, i.e., FY 2021-22, for Health System Strengthening within NHM fell by 3 per cent," she further pointed out.

### States to focus on healthcare

Broadly, the amount from the emergency budget can be divided into expenditure on Covid-19 diagnostics and drugs, health facilities, human resources and incentives. It can also be distributed towards information technology (IT) systems, information education communication/behaviour change communication (IEC/BCC), capacity building and training, and miscellaneous, which includes unutilised funds for districts and items not covered by the other categories.

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## Boycott Rahul Gandhi's visit to Manipur...

Works Minister Th Biswajit attended election campaign at Tamenglong District Public ground today. He reminded of the promise made by the Bharatiya Janata Party to establish an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Manipur if voted to power and 100% coverage of Ayushman Bharat and to increase the insurance amount of CMHT (Chief Minister's Health Tenbang) scheme to Rs 5 lakh to all the eligible beneficiaries. Tamenglong is well known for its Orange production but not

only Orange, the government will target other fruit items for a better economy, said Th Biswajit. The Minister also spoke about the introduction of One Sub-Division One Product scheme to promote indigenous products and boost local economy. Interest-free loans will be provided to MSMEs for technology upgradation, capital requirements and to enable better market access, he added. Manipur is one of the five states upcoming with assembly elections, along with Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Uttarakhand and

Punjab. Manipur assembly polls 2022 are to be held in two phases - on February 28 and March 5, where the results are to be declared on March 10. Earlier, the dates of the poll were announced as February 27 and March 4, however, the Election Commission of India (ECI) revised the Manipur Assembly election schedule with respect to requests from Christian communities, political parties, inputs, representations, past precedent, logistics and ground situations.

## Biren, Biswajit, Sharda spend....

Interesting part is that the three were hardly seen together at a specific function or campaign. When one goes to the west the other to the east and when one to the north the other to the south. Which means that as for the state of Manipur both N. Biren Singh and Biswajit finally emerges as the face of the BJP.

Today Biswajit visited Tamenlong Assembly constituency campaigning for BJP candidate Huri Golmei and Nungba Assembly Constituency Dinganglung Gangmei, while N. Biren Singh went at Suguna Assembly constituency to attend flag hoisting programme for the BJP Candidate Mayanglangbam Binod.

Later, Biswajit attended a series of camera meetings at Thangmeibang Assembly constituency along with BJP national leaders. Earlier, Biren and Biswajit had covered many of the assembly constituencies separately for the BJP candidates in the respective assembly constituencies including Kumbi, Moirang, Wabagai, Hiyanglam etc.

## Haobam Paban Kumar's Nine Hills One Valley ....

It includes a trophy plus a cash prize of INR 15,00,000. Silver Gateway Award: Films screening in the India Gold section are eligible for this award. It includes a trophy plus a cash prize of INR 8,00,000. Best Female Filmmaker: Films screening in the India Gold and Spotlight sections are eligible for this award. It includes a trophy plus a cash prize of INR 5,00,000.

In the Spotlight (feature, non-competitive) section of the festival; a Meiteilon feature - Eikhoygi Yum directed

by Romi Meitei was also selected along with other 14 films namely, *A Home For My Heart* (Hridoy Bosot) in Bengali, Hindi, English by Sankhajit Biswas, a.k.a. (Urf) in Hindi by Geetika Narang Abbasi, *Borderlands* in Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Manipuri, Nepali by Samarth Mahajan, *Desire* (Abharkha) in Gujarati by Himadri Parmar, *Goldfish* in English, Hindi by Pushan Kripalani, *Mirror* (Ayena) in Hindi, Urdu by Siddhant Sarin and Debakant S. Solanki, *Once Upon a Village*

(Ek Tha Gaon) in Garhwali, Hindi by Srishri Lakhera, *River of Blood* (Paka) in Malayalam by Nithin Lukose, *Shoebux* in Hindi, Bengali, English by Faraz Ali, *The Chicken Curry* (Koli Taal) in Kannada by Abhilash Shetty, *The Small-Town Sea* (Kasimite Kadal) in Malayalam by Shyamaprasad, *Three Legged Horse* (Teen Paayancha Ghoda) in Marathi by Noopur Bora, *Tortoise Under the Earth* (Dharti Latar Re Horo) in Santhali by Shishir Jha and *Two Sisters and a Husband* in Hindi by Shlok Sharma.

## Sports

## ISL: Jamshedpur FC ride Stewart double to edge past Mumbai City FC in humdinger

Agency  
Bambolim, Feb 18:

Jamshedpur FC wasted a two-goal advantage but came back just in time to grab a late winner and move to third in the points table with a nerve-racking 3-2 victory over Mumbai City FC in a rescheduled Hero Indian Super League tie at the Athletic Stadium in Bambolim on Thursday.

Greg Stewart (9th) opened the floodgates early on to give Jamshedpur the lead with Ritvik Das (30th) doubling the margin. In the second half, Rahul Bheke (57th) pulled one back for Mumbai before Igor Angulo missed a penalty but that didn't matter as Diego Mauricio converted from the spot in the 86th minute to leave the game on a knife's edge. Stewart then converted a penalty in added time to seal the issue.

Jamshedpur now have 28 points from 15 games, one adrift of leaders Hyderabad FC but with a game in hand. ATK Mohun Bagan, placed second, are also on 29 points with 15 matches, the same as Jamshedpur. Mumbai remain fifth with 25 points from 16 matches.

Jamshedpur started on the



front foot and got their reward after just nine minutes. A brilliant piece of teamwork saw Jitendra Singh pass the ball to Boris Singh just outside the box with the latter relaying it to Ritvik Das who back-flicked it to an unmarked Greg Stewart. The Scottish attacking midfielder slammed home from close to make it three goals in two games as Owen Coyle's team showed early intent.

Mumbai were dealt another blow when midfield linchpin Ahmed Jahouh had to be taken off after he was hit on the shoe. Vinit Rai replaced him.

At the half-hour mark, Jamshedpur double their lead. Ritvik was on target this time, having to tap in the easiest of finishes with no one tracking him down after Daniel Chima Chukwu acrobatically sent in a low cross from the edge of

the byline.

Jamshedpur went into the break with a 2-0 lead with Mumbai snapping at their heels. In the second period, Bheke halved the margin by making the most of the ball coming at his feet after Igor Angulo's attempt was saved by Rehenesh.

Mumbai kept putting pressure on Jamshedpur and it paid off when Peter Hartley fouled Mourta Fall inside the area and the referee pointed to the spot. Angulo's effort though was saved by Rehenesh who got up to make another save showing brilliant reflexes.

Angulo was replaced by Diego Mauricio in the 89th minute and the Brazilian striker made an immediate impact, being fouled by Hartley inside the box. Mauricio stepped up and slotted the ball in the centre to make it 2-2 and with four minutes remaining in the game, it was set for an end-to-end encounter.

It was heartbreak in the end for Mumbai after the ball hit Vignesh Dakshinamurthy's arm for the third penalty of the game. Stewart sent the keeper the wrong way to hand Jamshedpur the much-needed win and all three points.

## FIH Women's World Cup: India grouped with England, New Zealand and China

Agency  
Muscat, Feb 18:

The Indian team has been grouped along with England, New Zealand and China in pool B in the upcoming FIH Women's Hockey World Cup, the country's governing body for the sport said on Thursday.

The tournament will be held in Spain and Netherlands from July 1.

The Indian team recently secured its qualification for the World Cup after finishing third in the Asia Cup in Muscat.

Speaking about competition in their pool, India goalkeeper Savita said, "It is a tough pool with England (world No.3) and New Zealand (world No.8) who are ranked above us and China can always spring a surprise."

"As a team, we have always believed we need to focus on ourselves and not what the opponent can do. But now that we know who we play in the pool stage, we can plan our preparations accordingly and we look forward to the challenge."

The Indian women's team achieved a best-ever fourth place finish at the Tokyo Olympics last year.

The team also made it to



the top eight for the first time in the previous edition of the World Cup when they drew 1-1 with England, lost 0-1 to Ireland, who went on to play the final against world champions Netherlands, and drew 1-1 against USA in the group stage.

"It was a very good tournament for us and it inculcated a great sense of self-belief. Draw against England in their home ground was quite significant for us in 2018 and we came very close to beating Ireland in the quarterfinal but ended up losing in the shootout after a 0-0 draw," Savita recalled.

The senior player's team is better prepared this time.

"With the experience we have had over the past three-

four years, particularly in big events like the Olympic Games in Tokyo, I feel we are better prepared mentally to do well this time at the World Cup," she added.

Savita further emphasised that the upcoming FIH Hockey Pro League matches will help them prepare well in the lead-up to the prestigious quadrennial event.

"We will play England at home in the Pro League matches in April and we have already played China. I believe playing other top teams of the world like Belgium, Argentina etc will definitely benefit us in our preparations for the World Cup," she said.

Netherlands are grouped in pool A with Germany, Ireland and Chile.