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Manipur votes for Peace and Development

It is time for BJP again
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BJP Ga Loinama

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Make BJP Win

Only TV anchors are excited about atomic war

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



Ukraine, which has become a pawn between the NATO nations, USA and Russia is going through horrific devastation and fear among its people, while the Russian President Vladimir Putin's threat to use nuclear weapons is spreading a wave of concern in the world. No one would ever want the third world war or the use of atomic bombs to take place, except, it seems the TV news channels, whose anchors create unnecessary panic by terming even the micro level updates as a *Badi Khabar* (a big news). When the anchors of a prominent news channel, while talking to defense experts, repeatedly asked them to comment on the possible atomic bomb attack, a retired army officer reacted calmly that 'please don't talk like this. If the atom bomb goes off, neither we will survive, nor will this show be telecasted. Threatening an atomic bomb is one thing, but using it is another. No matter how powerful a dictator or an angry head of state, he too will be aware of the damage caused by the atomic bombs. If Russia uses nuclear weapons, how do you think Russia will be able to remain untouched by its loss? The country itself will be devastated.'

Russia's special military operation in its neighbouring Ukraine has started to have an adverse effect on international trade. The export and import business with Russia, Ukraine and other European countries is at a standstill. Indian export containers are starting to get affected. The containers which have to go to different countries of Europe or to Russia are stuck in the middle of the way. Due to the war, maritime cargo ships have been diverted or many of them have been cancelled after the war. The containers leaving Punjab carry rice, paper, hand tools, readymade garments, medicines etc. They are sent to Gujarat port through railways. From there the containers are transported to different countries through cargo ships. The fare of a goods train is more than Rs 25 lakh, in which around 90 containers are loaded at a time. Industry sources say that around 7,000 containers are shipped from Punjab every month.

The Purvanchal region of Uttar Pradesh, famous for Banarasi sarees, has more than a thousand units of carpets, wall hangings, rugs, handicrafts, saris, enamel and wooden toys, whose work is getting affected due to the war in Ukraine. The business of consignment to foreign countries has started declining and orders worth Rs 2000 crore have been stalled. Exports to countries like Britain, Australia, Germany, France, Belgium, Spain etc. are also expected to be affected by the current tense situation in the European region. Handicraft items are sent to these countries, whose orders have come down by 25 per cent. The payment for the goods sent earlier has also been delayed. Textiles and yarn are exported to about 65 countries from Bhiwar in Rajasthan. Poland and Turkey's exports have been affected the most due to the war. Poland's border is adjacent to Russia and Ukraine, where there are situations like lockdown. Traders in Rajasthan are also worried that due to the increase in the price of crude oil, the price of polyester fiber will increase, which will have a negative impact on the textile industry.

Why Indian students go abroad for MBBS: The inadequacy of opportunities at home

Opportunities for medical education in India fall inadequate

According to the Ministry of Health, there were 88,120 undergraduate seats in medical colleges in India as of December 2021. On the other hand, over 15.44 lakh candidates appeared for NEET-UG (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test - Undergraduate) in 2021, an exam which even students who wish to pursue a medical degree abroad are required to clear, in some countries. Around 8.70 lakh candidates cleared the exam last year. This means the number of undergraduate medical seats available (88,120) can only accommodate around 10% of the total qualifying candidates.

Pointing to the magnitude of the gap in demand and availability for MBBS seats in the country, education strategy specialist Ramachandran Krish says, "Even if we assume some of the candidates are writing the exam only out of parental pressure, even if only about 5 lakh candidates truly want to pursue MBBS, that's still a huge shortage," he notes.

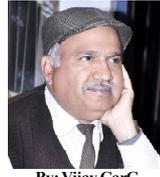
The National Medical Commission's website shows 43,310 MBBS seats available in 284 government medical colleges in India, and 41,065 MBBS seats in 269 private medical colleges. This means only about half of the already meager seats are in affordable government colleges. And there's a massive difference in the cost of studying in "small countries", as PM Modi referred to them, when compared to private colleges in India.

Ramachandran says that the cost of the entire MBBS degree in countries like Ukraine and Russia can be as relatively low as one-third of the cost in a private college in India. Speaking to IANS, Omkar Jilla, a third year medical student from Maharashtra studying at the Ivano-

Frankivsk National Medical University in Ukraine, said, "Where we have to spend Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 lakh per annum in private medical colleges in India, here it costs Rs 3 to Rs 4 lakh only." Moreover, the quality of education at Indian private colleges can also be dubious at times, making students and parents opt for relatively affordable colleges abroad of similar or better quality, says Ramachandran.

On returning to India, students would still have to clear the Foreign Medical Graduates Exam (FMGE) for a license to practice medicine here. FMGE is now proposed to be replaced by the National Exit Test (NExT), an exam which is also likely to become a qualifying final exam for MBBS students who have studied in India, and also possibly replace the NEET-PG exam. In the midst of the Ukraine crisis, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi claimed that 90% of Indian students who study abroad don't pass India's qualifying examinations, a remark that was heavily criticised by the Progressive Medics and Scientists Forum (PMSF).

PMSF slammed the "insensitive and inappropriate questions" being directed towards students facing the horrors of war in Ukraine, asking them why they go to "small foreign nations" to become doctors instead of studying in India. In a statement issued on March 1, Tuesday, the doctors' forum pointed out: "Limited government MBBS seats and lack of affordable medical education in India forces thousands of MBBS aspirants to seek help from agencies that arrange their admission in medical colleges in eastern Europe, south east Asia and



By: Vijay GarG

Oceania." It also said that these countries, unlike India, have "relatively adequate number of medical universities, most of them entirely public funded," and that they use their additional capacity "to train foreign students on a monetary basis."

Can the private sector fix the shortage?

Speaking after the war on Ukraine commenced, PM Modi had said, "Our children today are going to small countries for study, especially in medical education... Can our private sector not enter this field in a big way? Can our state governments not frame good policies for land allotment regarding this?" Incidentally, the PMSF in its statement said that by finding fault with the choice of students who study medicine abroad, the Government of India "is feigning ignorance from the rampant commercialisation of medical education and health care here in India."

Although more private colleges can help meet the demand for medical education in theory, Paul Chellakumar, Chairman of Chennai-based overseas education consultancy Campus Abroad, notes that in the case of engineering and business education in India, quality of education has become increasingly unreliable with growing privatisation and lack of proper regulation of private colleges. "Managements of private colleges are often not very invested in ensuring quality education, as they run these institutions like a business. With management quota seats being so expensive, many countries including Bangladesh are trying to attract students from India. If the demand leads to rise in private medical colleges,

there has to be a proper mechanism for fees and quality regulation. But in India, no one hesitates to pay a capitation fee, which has become very normalised as part of our culture, despite being illegal," Paul notes.

At present, the number of medical colleges is hugely disproportionate across Indian states, with a large number of them concentrated in Karnataka (63 colleges with 9,795 MBBS seats according to NMC), Maharashtra (61 colleges and 9,600 MBBS seats), Tamil Nadu (69 colleges and 10,625 MBBS seats), Telangana and Andhra Pradesh (34 colleges and 5,340 seats; and 31 colleges and 5,210 seats respectively), and Uttar Pradesh (67 colleges and 8,678 seats). In October 2021, NITI Aayog member Dr Vinod K Paul had said that the Indian government aims to achieve the doctor patient ratio of 1:1000 as prescribed by World Health Organisation (WHO) by 2024.

Ramachandran says that if the National Medical Commission (NMC) were to take the scarcity of MBBS seats seriously, in order to provide enough opportunities for every student who aspires to a medical education in India, while also aiming to achieve the required doctor patient ratio in proportion with each state's population, it would at least have to start adding around 30,000 MBBS seats every year if not more for the next few years, and funds would have to be allocated accordingly.

"Alternatives to the existing education system must be considered," Ramachandran says, adding, "The NMC can consider adding a few colleges through a public-private partnership. The government could ask large hospital groups to set up colleges and provide incentives, while keeping the fees affordable."

Russia's financial system takes big hits on Eighth Day of Ukraine War

Banks are crippled, Foreign MNC's Planning shifting of Business

By: Anjan Roy

I never tire of recalling what Joseph Schumpeter, one of the greatest economists and scholars, wrote in his monumental tome: The nearer we are to an epoch the less we understand. Our own we understand the least. It is too early to make an assessment of Russia's Ukraine war and its implications on the country's polity and economy. But already some clues are visible.

At this point of time, what is looking certain in the midst of all other imponderables is that Russia will win the military campaign eventually. But, like in the aftermath of the great war in Mahabharata, will Russia itself survive in its present form. That outcome will decide a lot for the future.

This is begetting the question whether in the twenty-first century it is the old fashioned geo-politics and power play which are the final reckoner or geo-economics will finally overtake it.

The raft of sanctions, which are the weapons of geo-economics of present day, are already biting on Russia and its elites and those who are the ultimate deciders.

The cumulative impact of the sanctions are seeming like having a three-fold implosion. First, these sanctions and restrictions are fundamentally destabilising Russia's macro-economic balance and pushing the economy to the edge of a precipice.

Secondly, personal sanctions on individuals are hitting them person-

ally and their ability to conduct normal business and transactions. They are being outright impoverished, which will have eroded their loyalties and steadfastness to Russian president Putin who has so far been bankrolled by these hugely rich oligarchs.

Thirdly, in view of the sanctions and out of disgust at the brutality of Putin's totally uncalled for war against a far smaller country, big multinational corporations are suddenly withdrawing from Russia. This will have immediate consequences on employment and income creation. Thus, the withdrawal of corporations will have socio-economic impact.

But for now, it is the immediate consequences of the financial sanctions and the fear of a financial crisis which is most pressing.

Some \$600 billion of war chest, built by the Russian central bank over years, lies mostly confiscated in the western financial centres as a first measure of the sanctions. Russian banks are out of their international clearing network. Exports of Russia's mainstay of earning, namely, oil and gas, have been put on hold.

Sanctions are crippling the Russian central bank and its ability to what it is supposed to do. The currency is depreciating every day and it has raised the basic policy rate to unsustainably high levels to stem the slide. That has not stopped the rouble's downward drift. Huge volume of funds remain locked up and



frozen, not available when these are needed most by its beleaguered banks to keep the internal banking system working.

Banks without funds is like patients snapped of their essential life line. As a consequence, they are also not able to serve their primary roles. Long lines are reported in front of bank offices and people are not able to withdraw their own money. This is the surest way to ruin trust in the banks and financial architecture.

Some of the Russian banks' subsidiaries outside the country have already collapsed. Now a similar development should be expected within the country as well. Bank failures could strike the fear of financial freeze and a total collapse of the system.

The sanctions on institutions and economic entities apart, United States has announced a decision to place sanctions on the Russian president Vladimir Putin and his foreign

minister, Dmitry Lavrov. European Union and UK also have decided to follow the same.

Sanctioning a head of state and the foreign minister is a public slap on them and it also means a kind of breaking of diplomatic relations in relations with the head of the government. This will be infamy before the Russian people as well.

Both these leaders would be hit personally since they have reportedly huge amount of wealth much of which are invested globally. Admittedly it would be tremendously difficult to track their ill-gotten wealth and freeze these assets. However, sanctioning them means the search would start for locating their wealth and then confiscating these.

Along with the government heads, the immensely rich Russian oligarchs are already facing the same prospects of losing their amassed wealth around the world. A principal

location of these investments has been Britain since the last ten years.

Many of London's most pricey real estate have been bought over by the Russian oligarchs and their children are staying in these properties. They are facing uncertainty and threats in the wake of Russia's war against Ukraine.

Not surprising that some of Russian elites have started making noises and reportedly putting pressures on the Russian state to come seriously to the negotiating tables with the Ukrainians as the economic sanctions have started biting.

The splits are already showing. The Moscow stock exchange has not been reopened this week for fear of a blood bath on the exchange which can cause an imminent financial crash. The central bank is imposing capital controls on transfer of funds out of the country.

Russia can possibly reasonably

get some help from China. After all, China has world's largest pot of savings — over \$3 trillion. China could bail out with ease. But will it really do that

Given the current mood of USA and its western European allies, will China's dealing with Russia also attract sanctions. Two of them together could sustain for a while. However, in their dogged pursuit of punishment for Russia, the western bloc together can punish China as well.

Despite its size and girth, China is typical vulnerable to threats from USA and European Union. Even today, China is dependent on its exports and critical imports. Exports and imports together account for the bulk of its GDP. Hence the threat of effective sanctions could also intimidate China, despite its heft.

A financial collapse, coupled with shooting inflation, sudden unemployment and large scale impoverishment are what autocrats would fear. Combination of these economic issues could be enough of a bomb to unsettle an autocratic regime. What is needed is steadfastness in pursuit of these sanctions.

There is no doubt that even after a successful military win, Putin might have to go unceremoniously and Russia can come unstuck. That will show that geo-economics in the present world could be far more powerful than weapons of mass destruction.

Ukraine's ultimate salvation lies in Russia itself and its people. It will be saved if the Russian people rise in the face of the consequences of an unjust and avoidable war. Not elsewhere. (IPA Service)

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Suspected voters in the vicinity of 18 years will be check in Heirok AC

IT News
Imphal, March 4:

Following the directives of the Manipur High Court verdicts a PIL filed for verification of ages of young people who are below 18 years at various places of Heirok Assembly constituency the CEO Manipur has ordered to verified the age who are in the vicinity of 18 years by producing two separate documents of proof of date of birth at the polling station on the day of poll. The polling of Heirok Assembly constituency will be held tomorrow with 21 other

assembly constituency. Re-poll in 12 polling station of the 5 Assembly constituency will also be held tomorrow.

As per Court's order, the documents to be produced by such voters may be a passport, a birth certificate, a Class-10 certificate, an Aadhaar Card, an Election Identity Card, or any other authenticated document certifying date of birth or age.

"For verification of all such young people, separate verification counters shall be set up in all polling stations so that no inconvenience is caused to other voters who

face no such issue, being of older age", a statement by the CEO said.

In compliance of the High Court's Order, the Election Commission of India has also instructed to ensure strict compliance of the Order of the High Court.

The District Election Officer, Thoubal and Returning Officer, 33-Heirok Assembly Constituency have been instructed to take adequate necessary actions. All stakeholders including political parties, candidates, BLOs, polling officials have also been informed accordingly.

Protest rally staged against pushing of woman by workers of a candidate



IT News
Imphal, March 4:

A Mass Peace Rally was organised at Singjamei Assembly Constituency in protest against the pushing of a woman by a worker of the sitting MLA on Poll day this morning.

The Rally was organised by the different Singjamei based women organisations protesting incident terming it as poll related violence in the recent State General Assembly Elections 2022 in some Polling Stations in the Constituency.

A protestor said that there was a ruckus in the Polling Station opened at the New Age Club, Singjamei

Thongam Leikai, Imphal that some electors were denied casting their votes by the workers of the sitting MLA, Y. Khemchand Singh. During the ruckus, the sitting MLA himself rushed at the spot. Without knowing much about the root of the ruckus, he used some outspoken words and urged the Presiding Officer of the Polling Station to do the work in favour of his workers and supporters instead of pacifying the real matter.

He added that there were exchange of words with him and the gathering regarding the incident. All four contesting Candidates rushed at the spot and enquired about the incident, the workers and the

supporters of all the Candidates made heated exchange of words among them in front of the Candidates.

The protestor alleged that during the exchange of words, one of the male workers of the sitting MLA pushed away a women elector with his hands without any hesitancy, then the anger of the mob was elevated but the mob was controlled by the security forces on time. Polling was stopped for a while but later continued after putting the situation under control.

The woman participants in the Rally told the reporters that such incident should not be made happened as a male is not allowed to touch a women's body. It is against the law of the land and it was nothing but to forfeit the legal rights of a women. He should be punished but the sitting MLA denied to do so instead he gave moral support to the culprit as he was being his supporter, it is quite unfortunate, the woman told media persons.

They said that the people outside the Constituency think that the people of Singjamei are all intellectuals but such incident marred the thinking.

Three workers of a candidate in Wabagai Assembly constituency arrested

IT News
Imphal, March 4:

Three persons who came to threaten a family at Hangool Litan Manak of Wabagai Assembly constituency to vote for a specific candidate were reportedly rounded up by a large number of people of the locality and handed over to police, hours after CEO Manipur has announced silent zone yesterday.

As per report, around 10 to 15 persons came in two four wheeler vehicles to the house of one Md. Hazyaoddin @ Tomba, (64yrs) S/o (L) Md. Jalaruddin at Hangool Litan Manak at Wabagai Assembly constituency and allegedly threatened him using gun to vote for JD (U) candidate Md. Sikandar, who is contesting the election at Wabagai Assembly constituency. The incident happens at around 11.30 pm yesterday. On getting the information large number of people from the locality rounded up the people with guns and deadly weapons. The group of political workers then fire rounds of gun shots and escaped. However, the angry



persons managed to detain three persons along with the two four wheeler vehicle - a grey colour Bolero without number plate and an A-Star car bearing registration number MN0 6B8337.

A team of police on getting the information rushed to the site. The locals handed over the three people along with the vehicles and the weapons. On verification, the three persons identified themselves as Md. Noorhuda 27yrs. S/o Md. 'Tonthem of Santhel Mayai

Leikai, Md. Abdul Hamid 25yrs. S/o Md. Helaluddin @ Chaobi of Santhel Maya Letka and Md. Wahid Ali 33yrs. S/o Md. Habi of Sora Awang Leikai. While checking the vehicles, the police found 1 (one) Single barrel body No. £77-13319 marked as B.S.A BR0S (11), 1 (one) single barrel body No. E-2475 2004 marked as Shaktiman Guns, 1 (one) 12 bore hive rounds cartridge, 1 (one) Khugri and a sword from the Balero Vehicle and 1 (one) single barrel bearing

body No. 30458-04 marked as Khajuria gun works India and 1 (one) double barrel bearing body No. 31532-i4 marked as Standard Gun Works from the A-Star car. Three persons along with the weapon were arrested at 1.20 am today morning. A case has been registered against them.

Hence a regular case under FIR No. 07/03 2022 HLM PS Us 147 148/34 IPC & 27 Arms Act has been registered on suo motto for investigation.

MNRF observes 11th Raising day

IT News
Imphal, March 4:

Armed rebel group the Manipur Naga Revolutionary Front (MNRF) observed its 11th raising day at its headquarters yesterday.

The raising day function was presided by MNRF Army Chief Vapaimi Zimik, Chief of the Manipur People's Army, M Chaoba and Secretary of Minority Affairs of UNLE, TD Khuman Chiru attended the Raising day function as guests of honours, a statement by MNRF Information and Publicity Assistant Secretary Rex Kashung said.

The 11th raising day function was also attended by the MNRF Assistant Publicity Secretary, general staff officers, officers, NCOs and cadres.

Speaking on the occasion, Vapaimi Zimik paid revolutionary salute to all



leaders, officers and cadres of fraternal revolutionary organisations of WESEA.

He said majority of the revolutionary groups of WESEA have been waging revolutionary movements separately for over 50 years.

MNRF is a very young revolutionary group which is just 11 years old.

Categorically stating that MNRF is not for Nagas exclusively, Vapaimi Zimik called upon all communities of the State viz; Meitei,

Naga, Kuki and Pangal to unite together and fight the war of liberation collectively.

MNRF's primary principle is peaceful co-existence among all communities of Manipur and collective development, he added.

Dispersal of Polling Personnel for 41-Chandel & 42-Tengnoupal started



IT News
Imphal, March 4:

As the polling for 41-Chandel (ST) and 42-Tengnoupal (ST) just two days away, the dispersal of polling personnel had started yesterday. The polling personnel were sent off by the District Election Officer, Chandel,

Mayanglambam Rajkumar from Maha Union Govt. High School, Chandel.

Speaking to the Media persons, District Election Officer, Chandel, Mayanglambam Rajkumar said that due to the vastness of the areas of the two constituencies the dispersal of the polling personnel for the 154 polling stations

are being done in two phases. For the first phase, today, polling personnel for 64 polling stations had been dispersed and remaining 90 teams will be dispersed tomorrow. He said that this election unlike the last election, Chandel and Tengnoupal will have ten polling stations each, which will be exclusively manned by

Women Polling personnel only. He further added that all the polling stations had been categorised into Normal, Vulnerable and Critical, and adequate security arrangement had been done and the district election office is working hard to have a peaceful, free & fair, and transparent polling in the two districts, and also appealed to all the people of the two constituencies for the same.

It can be mentioned here that out of the 154 polling stations 80 polling stations are in 41-Chandel and 74 polling stations in 42-Tengnoupal. In the 41-Chandel (ST) a total of 49255 electors, will be deciding the fate of the two candidates and in 42-Tengnoupal a total of 44525 electors will be voting to select their representative from the six candidates in fray.

Polling personnel for Jiribam Assembly Constituency dispersed



IT Correspondent
Jiribam, March 4:

Polling personnel for duty in 40-Jiribam Assembly Constituency for the second phase of 12th Manipur Assembly Election 2022 to be conducted on March 5 were dispersed from D.C office campus, Chingdongleikai, Jiribam today.

The polling personnel along with security personnel were dispersed for the 40 numbers of polling stations in Jiribam Assembly Constituency.

District Election Officer, Jiribam, W. Malemngamba Chenglei flag off the polling team at around 9:00 am today with all the materials of polling personnel.

Speaking on the occasion, DEO, Jiribam W. Malemngamba Chenglei said the polling personnel will reach their respective polling stations within 1 pm and will prepare for the poll on next day.

It might be recall here that there is four candidates in fray in Jiribam Assembly Constituency.

Stage set for 2nd phase poll in Manipur, 92 candidates are in the fray



IT News
Imphal, March 4:

Stage is set for the 2nd phase Manipur election in 22 assembly constituencies for the 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly election scheduled to hold tomorrow. On the same day-re-poll in 12 polling booths of 5 Assembly constituencies will also be held. All preparation has been

completed. Voting will begin at 7 am tomorrow and concludes at 4 pm. Altogether 92 candidates including 2 women candidates are in the fray in the 2nd phase election. There will be straight fight between the Naga People's Front (NPF) and the BJP in Chandel Assembly constituency, SS Olish, one among the two woman candidate, is the

BJP candidate contesting at this seat. She will have a keen contest with NPF candidate LP Anal. At Nungba Assembly constituency there will be a straight fight between Congress and the BJP. Dinganglung Gangmei is the BJP candidate while veteran politician and former deputy chief Minister Gaikhangam is the Congress candidate in Nungba Assembly

constituency. A total of 8,47,400 voters including 4,28,968 females and 4,18,432 males will franchise their rights. BJP fielded candidates for all the 22 assembly seats while Congress fielded 18 candidates, BJP ally National People's Party has 11, Naga People's Front and Janata Dal(U) have 10 each. The first phase of polling will decide the fate of former Chief Minister O Ibobi Singh, his son O Surjakumar, former Deputy Chief Minister Gaikhangam, forest minister Awangbow Newmai, Water supply minister Losii Dikho, former education minister Th Radheshyam, who were seeking re-election from Thoubal, Khangabok, Nungba, Tamei, Mao and Heroik assembly constituencies. A maximum of 8 candidates are contesting in Wangkhem constituency.

Manipur's Naga Hills may decide who wins State Polls this time

Courtesy: NDTV
Ukhrul, March 4:

The second phase of the Manipur elections on Saturday will see a closely watched contest in 11 constituencies in the hilly areas of the state dominated by the Naga tribe. In the past five years, the BJP has tried a reach out to the region, trying to bridge the gap between the valley areas of the state and the hills which were once the epicentre of bandh and blockades. The party is now trying to make inroads into the political bastion of its ally the Naga People's Front or NPF and the Congress with their pitch of peace and development over the core issues of the Naga peace deal. The magnificent hills once

used to reverberate with gunshots but now a highway is being built to give Ukhrul much better connectivity to Imphal. Riding on this development push, the BJP is contesting in all the 11 constituencies in the Naga dominated areas, taking on ally NPF, who are fighting solo, and arch-rival Congress. At Ukhrul, the BJP has fielded former national footballer Somatai Shaiza. He is trying to win over the Christian-dominated area for the BJP. "This time the BJP would form a government of its own. So our people also want to be with BJP and part of the government. I thought politics was totally different to football but it is similar. Observe, analyse and execute," said Somatai Shaiza to NDTV. But the Naga Peoples Front

will not let go of its bastion easily. It has raised the delay in the Naga peace talks and the slow development in Naga areas. A former bureaucrat Ram Muivah is its candidate from Ukhrul. "In Ukhrul there are no proper roads, water, internet and there is a shortage of electricity supply. And for us, the focus even now is the peace agreement and NPF is the only party pushing this agenda," Ram Muivah told NDTV. The sitting MLA is from Congress but this time their campaign is key. Out of the 11 constituencies in Naga areas, in 2017 the NPF had won four, Congress four, BJP one, and NPP one. Ukhrul is the home district of armed rebel group NSCN (IM) chief Th Muivah, who has not visited the area for decades, and

the peace talk has been stalled on the contentious demands of a separate flag and constitution. "Every Naga feels bad that our leader Muivah cannot come to Manipur to home at Ukhrul. So for us, Naga issue solution is the key issue," said Chonchui, a resident. Which way the winds will blow in the Naga hills of Manipur might decide who will form the next government in this multi-corner poll battle. Many say successive state governments have failed to provide the very basic necessities for years. "It is the moral responsibility of people to provide basic necessities and it should not matter if our MLA is from Congress, BJP or NPF. People should get facilities," said Donny, a young man in Ukhrul.

Congress and its Alliance stages blindfold protest against BJP government



IT News
Imphal, March 4:

The Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee and its alliance political party today staged a blindfold protest rally in front of the Congress Bhawan here in Imphal, alleging suppression of de-

mocracy to capture power through all means by the BJP government in the state. The Alliance - Manipur Progressive Secular Alliance consists of the Congress party CPI, CPI-M, RSP, JD-S and Forward Block. The blind-folded protest rally was led by AICC

Manipur in-charge Bhakta Charan Das, MPCC president N Loken, CPI national executive member M Nara. The protest rally was carried out till the western gate of the Kangla fort, took up demonstration and returned to the Congress Bhawan.

PM Modi chairs crucial meet on evacuation of Indian students, situation in Ukraine as conflict enters day 9

Agency
New Delhi, March 4:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday chaired a meeting to review the Ukraine-related situation and evacuation of Indian students from the war-ravaged country. Union Minister Piyush Goyal, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, NSA Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla took part in the high-level meeting. The PM was briefed about the evacuation status and was informed that the number of students who have returned to the country so far. This meeting comes after

an Indian student was reportedly been shot at and injured in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv. The announcement was made by Minister of State for Civil Aviation V K Singh on Friday. Singh is in Poland currently to facilitate the evacuation of Indians stranded in war-hit Ukraine. A fifth meeting chaired by PM Modi This is the fifth meeting chaired by the PM. The government has launched "Operation Ganga" to evacuate its citizens and sent four Union ministers as PM Modi's "special envoys" to neighbouring countries of Ukraine to coordinate the exercise.

The Centre has brought 17,000 students to India from Ukraine while 7,000 are yet to be evacuated. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister has called for a return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy to defuse the crisis in Ukraine. India has asked Russia to facilitate the safe passage of Indians On March 2, the PM spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin and discussed the situation in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, where many Indian students are stuck amid Russia ramping up its military offensive on Ukraine's key locations.

Sports

ISL: ATKMB confirm semi spot for second straight year with victory over Chennaiyin FC



Agency
Bamboloi, March 4:

ATK Mohun Bagan rode on their talisman Roy Krishna's first-half strike to sail into the semifinals of the Indian Super League for the second straight year, with a 1-0 victory against Chennaiyin FC here on Thursday. Krishna netted his fifth goal of the season and first this calendar year in the 45th

minute and that proved to be the difference in the end as the green and maroons side moved to second in the standings with 37 points from 19 matches. They will take on Jamshepur FC next on March 7 to potentially decide the team that will finish at the top of the table. Jamshepur have two games in hand and are at the top with 37 points. They take on Odisha FC on Friday.

ATKMB bossed the game from the first minute, bombing the Chennaiyin defence with constant attacks, the latter happy to sit back and try to attack on the counter. Krishna gave early warnings after a Kauko through ball sent him clear but the veteran Fiji striker, back in the starting XI after an injury layoff, found the post in his way. There were no clear-cut chances after that early oppor-

tunity but the Mariners looked the likelier to score before Chennaiyin started growing into the game and almost kept ATKMB at bay despite all their adventures in the final third. But just before half time, Kauko provided a similar pass for Krishna who, unlike at the start of the game, slammed home past a diving Samik Mitra in Chennaiyin goal. Chennaiyin started the second half on the front foot and almost got their reward three minutes into the hourmark when a Reagan Singh effort deflected off an ATKMB shirt and came off the post. It was an open half but ATKMB defended well to see off the tie and grab important three points although one point would have been enough to seal their semifinal berth. Chennaiyin, already out of the play-offs race after a forgettable season, finished their engagements with 20 points from the same number of matches.

As war rages, Winter Paralympics open in Beijing without Russia



Agency
Beijing, March 4:

The 2022 Winter Paralympics open Friday in Beijing, with the Russian athletes sent home and the Ukrainian team escaping a war zone to get here. "It's a miracle that we have made it to the Paralympics," the head of the Ukrainian delegation, Valerii Sushkevych, told a news conference on the eve of the Games. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, shortly after the Win-

ter Olympics wrapped up in Beijing, is roiling the world. And the world of sports is no exception. Paralympics organizers initially announced that Russians and Belarusians would be allowed to compete in Beijing, but reversed course one day before the opening and expelled athletes from both countries. They cited tensions in the Athletes Village. Sushkevych said it took four days for team members in Ukraine to reach Beijing. He said he slept on the floor of a bus

because of a back condition during the last two days of the journey through Europe. "We overcame a lot of barriers on the way," he said. "Many members of our team had to escape while there was bombardment and shells exploding." The Paralympics were set to open with a night ceremony at the Bird's Nest National Stadium. Chinese President Xi Jinping and International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons were to attend the opening ceremony. The Games close on March 13.