

## Naga Youth Front urges govt. to delete fictitious villages, population and to protect reserve forest

IT News  
Imphal, Mar 14:

Showing serious concerns to the present socio-political issues of Manipur the Naga Youth Forum Manipur (NYFM) has called for a mass movement and urged the concern government authority to identify and delete the fictitious villages, bogus population, bogus Aadhar Cards and Voter Identity Cards, and to derecognise Chieftainship heading multiple villages and also to enact appropriate laws for new village recognition.

The Naga Youth Forum also expressed strong apprehension to the massive loss of forest as well as unprecedented growth of villages in Kangpokpi and Churachandpur area as well as massive plantation of poppy inside Reserved Forest and Protected Forest area.

The statement of the Naga Youth Forum Manipur signed by its President Amu Pamei said that Manipur has been in the national news recently for the massive loss of forest cover. According to India's Forest

### NYFM demands

1. Identify and delete the fictitious villages and delete the bogus population.
2. Identify and delete the bogus Aadhar Cards and Voter Identity Cards, and
3. Derecognise Chieftainship heading multiple villages.
4. Enact appropriate laws for new village recognition.

Report 2021, Manipur recorded a loss in forest cover of 249 sq. km in 2021 compared to forest cover in 2019. In 2019, forest cover loss was 499 sq. km as compared to the previous assessment in 2017. From 2017 to 2019, Manipur lost a total forest cover of 758 sq. km. This is in contrast with the increase of 2,261 sq. km in the total forest and tree cover for the whole country during 2019-21. Deforestation to facilitate poppy cultivation has been mainly responsible for most of the forest cover loss during this period.

Correspondingly, drug trafficking has also been on the rise as evidenced by the massive seizure of drugs in the state.

Drugs originating from the neighbouring countries and trafficked through the state have also been seized in other parts of the country. Responding to this critical situation, the Government of Manipur under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh has been undertaking a massive campaign against drugs under the banner of "War on Drugs" since November 2018. In the process of the drive against poppy cultivation, it has been found that many areas under the reserve forest and protected forests are under poppy cultivation. Many illegal encroachments were also found within these

forest areas. This led to the investigation into the existence of many illegal settlements within forest areas.

For instance, K. Songjiang Village evicted recently from Churachandpur-Khoupum Protected Forest is a new settlement established in 2021. As per the statement of the Forest department, the establishment of a new village inside a Protected village violates Section 30 (C) of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, Rule No. 73 (4), 73(5) of Manipur Forest Rules 2021, Section 2(ii) of Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and Hon'ble Supreme Court Order dated 12.12.1996 passed in WPC/No.202 of 1995 and is treated as encroachment in the Protected Forest.

Besides the long-term impact of climatic change, another immediate big impact of deforestation is that Manipur is facing floods during the rainy season and drought and shortage of drinking water during winter. The massive herbicides and fertilisers used for poppy cultivation have become a big cause of health hazards.

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## CM N. Biren Singh returns after meeting Union Home Minister



IT News  
Imphal, Mar 14:

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh who had left Imphal for New Delhi yesterday in a hasty manner by even skipping a state function at JN Dance Academy, where the governor of Manipur Sushri Anusuiya Uikye attended as Chief Guest returns Imphal after meeting the Union Home Minister Amit Shah and attending various other functions.

Chief Minister's sudden departure to Delhi created an atmosphere of apprehension assuming it as an outcome of the March 10 state cabinet decision to abrogate the Suspension of operation with rebel group KNO and the ZRA. As of now no official revelation has been made in connection with the talk between Home Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister N. Biren Singh regarding the

state cabinet decision for withdrawal of the SOO with the KNO and ZRA.

But gestures of both the two leaders tweeted by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh showed that the Union Home Minister have no issues to the state cabinet decision. However, as the SOO with the KNO and ZRA is a tripartite one expectation about the decision from the Union Home Ministry in the regard is confusing.

As tweeted by Chief Minister N Biren Singh he had apprised the latest political situation of this sensitive border state called to the Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

N. Biren in his Facebook said, "Delighted to meet Hon'ble Home Minister Shri Amit Shahji in New Delhi today."

The CM also posted on FB stating that "We discussed various issues pertaining to the security of the state as well as the welfare and develop-

ment of Manipur."

The Kuki National Organisation (KNO), one of the umbrella outfits of the Kuki insurgents and an entity of the tripartite talks with the Centre and the Manipur Government has termed the decision of the State Cabinet to withdraw the Kuki National Army (KNA) and the Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA) from the SoO as contradictory to the very essence of the agreements.

During his Delhi visit the CM also took part in the Yoga Mahotsav-2023, an event to commemorate 100 days Countdown to International Day of Yoga 2023 at Talkatora Indoor Stadium, New Delhi.

N. Biren Singh also met Union Ministers Sarbananda Sonowal & G. Kishan Reddy and Union Ministers of State Dr. Manjpara Mahendrabhai Kalubhai and Meenakshi Lekhi, before attending the event of Yoga Mahotsav 2023 in New Delhi.

## EEVFAM and HRA condemn partiality towards police personnel while granting prosecution sanction

IT News  
Imphal, Mar 14:

A joint statement of the Extrajudicial Execution Victim Families Association, Manipur (EEVFAM) and Human Rights Alert (HRA) expressed strong condemnation to the partiality of the state Home Department towards the police personnel while granting prosecution sanction in connection with the extrajudicial killing case.

The joint statement signed by EEVFAM Secretary Edina Yaikhom and HRA Executive Director Babloo Laitongbam said that such acts of the Government of Manipur to denied prosecution sanction to a group of perpetrators of crime while giving prosecution sanction to another group involved in the same incident is down right arbitrary and discrimina-

tory.

In connection with the August 29, 1998 incident at Kwakeithel Akham Leikai here in Imphal, Major Saiza and four others were allegedly killed in broad daylight. The Supreme Court of India has directed the CBI/SIT to investigate the case and following that the CBI submitted charge -sheet against the accused police personnel.

"Out of the accused persons four accused namely, Khondongbam Inaobi Singh, Thangkhangam Lungdim, Md. Akhtar Hussain and Thokchom Krishnatombi Singh were already granted prosecution sanctions by the state government in the same incident. Subsequently, CBI gave an observation the four accused persons are hiding and creating false stories to screen their team members from

the offence committed by them, which is also an offence under section 201 IPC. On further investigation, CBI filed a supplementary charge sheet against four Manipur personnel of the then Rapid Action Police Force /CDO, Imphal West for the offence punishable under section 302, 307, 201 and 34 IPC. They are Nongmaithem Rameshwar Singh (A-6), Baremron Khamjai (A-8), Khundrakpam Ranjeet Singh (A-9) and Leitanthem Sharat Singh (A-10). However, the Government of Manipur denied prosecution sanction against the four accused vide letter no. 2/8(5)/2018-H(CBI) (EJK) 25 dated 05.12.2022 by Mr. Rehanuddin Choudhury, Joint Secretary (Home) Government of Manipur", the joint statement by EEVFAM and HRA said.

The statement said that in a democracy where there is a rule of law, the government is duty-bound to ensure that no perpetrators of the crime are left scot-free and they are to be punished as per the law of the land. Such acts of the Government of Manipur to deny prosecution sanction to a group of perpetrators of crime while giving prosecution sanction to another group involved in the same incident is downright arbitrary and discriminatory. EEVFAM and HRA appealed to the Government that prosecution sanction be granted to all the accused against whom triable evidence has been found by the CBI/SIT so that the court can conduct a fair trial to determine if they are acquitted convicted as per the law.

## Re-Constitution & Orientation Programme of DLCC, DLIES & SDLIEST under NTCP held

IT News  
Chandel, Mar 14:

The Re-Constitution and an Orientation Programme of District Level Coordination Committee (DLCC), District Level Joint Enforcement Squad Team (DLJEST) & Sub-Divisional Joint Enforcement Squad Team (SDJEST) under national Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) was held at the mini secretariat, DC conference Hall,

Chandel today.

Delivering his opening remark in today's programme, the Addl. Deputy Commissioner, Chandel Md. Firoz Khan stressed the need to create more awareness and the strict implementation of the prohibition laws.

Speaking as a resource person, SM Moonkhum, State Consultant, NTCP, spoke on the updates on the national tobacco Control Programme. He

further spoke in details on how the tobacco control programs are being implemented under varies laws in different parts of the country as well as in different districts of the state.

Premjit Thokchom, President, Sangai Youth, Tobacco Free & Educational Organisation (SYTFOE) deliberated on Tobacco Control Act, COTPA 2003 and ToFEI Guidelines.

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## Let us resolve for resurgence of Rashtra based on 'Swa' (Selfhood) - ABPS

IT News  
Panipat, Mar 14:

The Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS), general body meeting of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was concluded with a firm resolution for resurgence of Rashtra based on 'Swa' (Selfhood).

The annual general body meeting was held at SewaSadhaevam Gram Vikas Kendra, Pattikalyana, Panipat, Haryana from 12-14 March, 2023 with delegations across the nation.

The resolutions adopted

### during the ABPS- 2023

The Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS) is of the opinion that the prolonged journey of Bharat's 'Swa' to realize the noble objective of global wellbeing has always been a source of inspiration for all of us. During the period of foreign invasions and struggle, Bharat's societal life got disturbed and social, economic, cultural and religious systems were severely mutilated. In this period, under the stewardship of revered saints and great personalities, the entire society preserved its 'Swa' while be-

ing in continuous struggle. The inspiration for this struggle was based on the 'Swa - trayi' of Swadharma, Swadeshi and Swaraj in which entire society participated. On the auspicious occasion of Amrit Mahotsav of independence, the whole nation gratefully acknowledged the public leaders, freedom fighters and seers who contributed in this resistance.

After independence, we have attained remarkable achievements in many fields. Today, Bharat's economy is emerging as one of the leading economies of the world.



The resurgence based on Bharatiya eternal values is being accepted by the world. Bharat is heading towards a role for ensuring global peace, universal brotherhood and

human wellbeing based on the conceptual framework of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

The ABPS is of the opinion that, in the process of making well organized, glori-

ous and prosperous nation, we need to overcome the challenges of fulfillment of basic needs of all sections of society, opportunities for holistic development and building new models based on Bharatiya concept of modernity through judicious use of technology and eco-friendly development. For rebuilding the nation, we need to make special efforts for achieving the objectives such as strengthening the family institution, creating fraternity based harmonious society and developing entrepreneurship with Swadeshi

spirit. The entire society, especially youth, will have to make concerted efforts in this regard. As renunciation and sacrifice were essential for freedom from the foreign rule during the period of struggle; in present times, we need to establish a social life free from colonial mindset and committed to civic duties for realization of abovementioned objectives. In this perspective, the call of 'PanchPran' (five resolves) given by Honourable Prime Minister on Independence Day is significant.

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## WORLD WIDE WASTE: Can Indian seaweed replace plastic?



By - Sarojini Rout

We human constantly strive for a secure and healthy planet, but we never consider how to make the planet more livable in the long run. We don't spend a much money on research into how improve the world. These efforts by the team Zero Circle did a splendid job. Increased seaweed farming may affect the ecosystem on coming years. As when plastic was invented nobody has an idea that it will curse for mother nature. As nature has a rule no matter how much we try but we create some waste or harm mother nature, We can only try to contribute less waste that's what all in our hands. But the method seems eco friendly. Nowadays, we are really critical about sustainability. However, the seaweed economy in India never really scaled up although it has been cultivated here for years. Zerocircle is one of the small but growing number of companies hoping to promote the use of seaweed in India and, through that, solve some of the bigger questions around sustainability. Many years ago I read an article about making "plastic" from corn starch. The idea never materialised but that this moves forward in a big way, it doesn't got materialised because corn doesn't grow fast and it's a seasonal crop so it can't meet the market demand. On the other hand we can grow seaweed on a much larger scale on the empty ocean.

Edible packaging would be a wonderful innovation. But we talk about seaweed

Well despite this being great innovation. It will be interesting to see the economics at industrial scale. There is obviously a lot of hand touch in the current process as it's still at the laboratory stage. Also, it appears to be energy intensive. It would be nice to see a comparison to petroleum based plastics at industrial scale. Part of that analysis should include 'post use' economics.

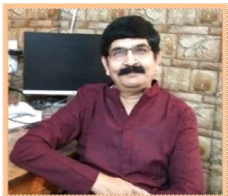
Similarly there are some bacteria which synthesize some granules (PHA granules) as a carbon and energy storage compound which helps these bacteria to survive in the absence of certain carbon source. These granules are now being used to make bioplastic films which can be used for packaging. These can also be used for medical purposes because it is biocompatible. This bioplastic is called polyhydroxyalkanoates. It is biodegradable but the cost of making it is very high.

The fact that this can be made with the same infrastructure that manufacturers use now is an actual game-changer. I haven't had hope for replacing plastics until now!

Since Zerocircle is based in Pune, they could utilise the seaweed which is growing naturally on the surface of the river below Bund Garden bridge, there's a huge huge mass of it. It will help clean the water and serve as a raw material for research. Seaweed actually grows really quick, so we can just use it safely and sustainably. This is what we called a great achievement.

\*\*\*\*The writer is a Research Scholar and completed M.Sc, Environmental science (gold medalist), B.Sc from Manipur university, B. Ed. (from Delhi)

## My Lovely Daughter Mansi is my World



By: Vinod Chandrashekar Dixit

A daughter is a very special creation in the family. Daughters are not only delicate and lovely but also a strong pillar of the family. It is rightly said that a daughter is the happy memories of the past, the joyful moments of the present, and the hope and promise of the future. Daughters are like flowers, they fill the world with beauty. My daughter is super amazing and she is my heart, my soul, and my best thing that ever happened to me. I would only say that daughters are very dear and so dear that their worth can never be measured. Daughter is everything, a poem, an emotion and a beautiful gift from God. Today is the birthday of my Cute and pretty, beautiful, and lovely daughter Mansi and her birthday is the happiest day of my life because it is the day that decorated my life with her - my most treasured blessing. Birthdays are times to indulge in happiness and friends. My daughter Mansi has made every single day a memorable experience for me, with her endless affection and care. I feel blessed to have a daughter Mansi as pretty and sweet as she is. Being her father has been the most meaningful part of my life. I always thank God for giving such a thoughtful, loving and kind person as my daughter Mansi. Her smile has brightened my days and her laugh has brought fun in my boring life. Life now has more meaning because of her. No matter how far you are in Hyderabad but my heart will always beat for you. We all know that daughters are the precious gift from God and our house becomes home when a little princess comes in. The joy of raising a daughter into a fully-grown woman means a lot to parents, thereby, showing that a girl child needs special treatment as the flower of the house. Words are not sufficient to put across my feelings and love for my daughter. Today, my daughter is not just a child, a daughter or a mother but she is a mentor, a hero, a legend, an achiever. There is no doubt that a girl who has been blessed with her father's love has been indubitably, be blessed with the greatest power. The very first 25 years of her life when she lived with us were the most wonderful days for me and for her as well, and when she got married then her life changed. Nothing lights up my world more than my daughter.

Through this article, I would only say that my heart will always beat for my daughter, my thoughts will always revolve around her for she is the most precious gift given by God. My daughter will always be my sweet little girl, my darling daughter. You are a beautiful soul; therefore please let all the challenges come your way, but keep striving to fulfill your dreams and live a happy fulfilled life.

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## The rising threat of forest fires: The status of India's forests

By Shri Bivash Ranjan,  
Additional Director General of Forests, Wildlife, MoEFCC



One of the key elements, fire plays an integral role in society and for the overall sustenance of humanity. Fires also an important part of the forest environment and has been vital in preserving healthy forests, recycling nutrients, supporting tree species in regrowth, removing exotic and invasive species, and maintaining habitats for a long period of time. However, the intensity, frequency, and spread of forest fires have significantly increased in recent years. Every year, large areas of forests are impacted by fires of varying intensities and extent, with forest fires now becoming one of the key threats to forest ecosystems.

The past decade has seen a significant rise in the incidences of large and uncontrolled fires, in India and globally. Fires have claimed lives, damaged forests and biodiversity, led to extensive loss of property, and displaced a large number of people in several G20 countries. Forest fires are also a leading cause of forest loss. Between 2001 and 2021, around one third of global forest loss i.e. over 118 million hectares of forests<sup>1</sup> was due to forest fires.

In April 2020, the number of fire alerts rose by 13% around the world compared to 2019, a record year for fires<sup>2</sup>. Separately, countries like the USA, EU, Australia, Indonesia, and Brazil have recently experienced several mega-fires<sup>3</sup>. As a matter of fact, India alone has seen a 10-fold increase in incidences of forest fires over the last two decades<sup>4</sup>. While the total forest cover has increased by 1.12%, the frequency of forest fire incidents has increased by 52%. More than 36% of the country's forest cover is estimated to be prone to frequent forest fires and more than 62% of the states to high-intensity forest fires.

Similar to other parts of the world, forest fires in India are primarily driven by human activity. Population pressures, current and historic land management practices, the use of fire as a tool, demand for forest resources, negligence, and anthro-

pogenic climate change are some of the factors that have strongly shaped the contours of the prevailing forest regime.

Fires affect both the physical and chemical properties of soils, particularly the productive layers; changes in the physical properties lead to loss of productive soil, increased runoff, and lower underground water recharge while changes in chemical properties affect the soil's organic matter and nutrient dynamics. Recurrent fires reduce seed sources, ultimately affecting the regeneration and succession of forest ecosystems. In North-Eastern India, the shortening of fire-associated hum cycles has also had a detrimental effect on soil fertility. Climate change and changes in land use are predicted to increase the frequency and intensity of fires, with a global increase of extreme fires of

up to 14% by 2030, 30% by the end of 2050, and 50% by the end of the century. Valuable forest resources, including carbon in the biomass, are lost due to forest fires every year, impacting the flow of goods and services from forests.

Forest fires can have devastating effects on biodiversity by destroying trees, ecosystems, and food supplies and by increasing the susceptibility of surviving animals to predation. Additionally, they can also directly affect the economic state of communities that depend on forests and non-timber forest products as a source of income. The economic losses associated with forest fires may be much greater for smallholders than for large holders considering their greater reliance on forests for a wide range of services and uses. The potential cost of forest fires in India is estimated to be

over INR 1,101 crore per year.

It can be argued that forest fires can have both a negative as well as a positive impact on ecosystems. Historically, fire has played an important role in shaping the flora and fauna; fires play a key role in keeping the forests healthy, recycling nutrients, aiding in the regeneration of tree species, removing invasive weeds and pathogens, and maintaining habitats. Occasional fires can help in controlling fuel stocks that may feed larger, more destructive wildfires. However, incidences of fires have spun out of control with increasing population growth and the resultant demands on forest resources, to the point where fires no longer sustain forest health. In fact, fires are burning larger areas and fire seasons are becoming longer due to the warming climate.

As countries increasingly work to improve socio-economic resilience to forest fires and other climate-related threats, there is also a need to regenerate forest-fire affected land. The restoration of ecosystems is an important way to mitigate the risk of fires before they occur and to better recover in the aftermath. Post-fire forest restoration is, therefore, indispensable for maintaining the ecological integrity of forests and for the sustainability of affected forest landscapes.

Keeping in mind Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for India's Presidency, one that is ambitious, inclusive, decisive, and action-oriented, the Environment Climate Sustainability Working Group (ECSWG) will focus on and address the discussed issues of forest fires with an aim to drive meaningful action and accelerate ecosystem restoration in forest fire-impacted areas across the G20 countries. Considering the global nature of the rapid and alarming increase in forest fires, the Indian Presidency will encourage the active sharing of knowledge and international best practices and collaboration between the G20 countries, rooted overall in the principle of One Earth, One Family, and One Future.

## G20: Driving Women-Led Development

By : Amitabh Kant

India's G20 Presidency comes at a critical juncture and an opportune time. Countries across the world are looking to build back better from the host of crises experienced over the past three years. From the COVID-19 pandemic to the ongoing climate crisis, it is now well-acknowledged that the impacts of a crisis are very often gendered, exacting their highest price on women and girls, impacting their safety, livelihoods and health.

India's Presidency of G20 brings an enormous focus on the role of women and gender equality. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has highlighted the imperative need for tackling critical issues of women's access to finance, entrepreneurship, and labor force participation.

On the domestic front, the Government of India has taken a conscious decision to place women's empowerment at the heart of its 'Amanirbhar Bharat' development agenda, with a commitment to supporting their holistic development at all stages of life. The 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' scheme has led to a 16-point improvement in the sex ratio at birth since 2014. The MUDRA Scheme that provides microfinance has over 70% women beneficiaries. Mission Poshan 2.0, an integrated nutrition support programme has served over 1.2 crore pregnant and lactating mothers. Several other steps, from the establishment of working women's hostels, to the

launch of various skills-development programmes, and initiatives to secure their safety and freedom from violence-all testify to India's concerted focus on securing the Suraksha (Safety), Suvridha (Convenience) and Swabhimann (Independence) of their women.

Increasingly and inline with our society's civilisational ethos-the Government is also recognising the centrality of 'Nari Shakti' to affect meaningful society-wide transformation. Simply put, there is a greater focus on the role of women as drivers of growth and agents of changes, and not simply as beneficiaries of development.

With India steering the efforts of the G20 in 2023-the time has come for us to build on the momentum generated so far, and further this agenda of women-led development. Given that gender is a cross-cutting theme-affecting almost all the other development prospects we hope to see a renewed emphasis on gender equality across the entirety of the G20 Agenda, and its engagement groups.

In particular, we look forward to advancing concrete actions on the following themes:

**First, supporting women's digital and financial inclusion.** Globally, almost half (42%) of women and girls remain outside the formal financial system. Despite progress in financial inclusion rates, the gender gap has not narrowed and a 7% gap persists. Digital technology innovations, particularly for information & communication, have

the potential to accelerate women's economic empowerment. Yet, there remains a Digital Gender Gap, both in access to digital technology and to digital education. India has prioritised women's digital financial inclusion through the *JAM* or *Jan Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile* platform and this has allowed significant social protection programs to reach women directly as well as strengthened and women's economic empowerment. Through the G20, we must look at similar concrete ways to strengthen women's digital and financial inclusion.

**Second, strengthening women's capacities to make them equal stakeholders in development.** This is important both to facilitate the entry of, and to ensure continuity in women's participation in the economy and in society. For instance, despite education being wholly acknowledged as the cornerstone of empowerment-globally only 49% have achieved gender parity in primary education, 42% in lower secondary education, and 24% in upper secondary education. Globally, around 1.1 billion women and girls remain outside the formal financial system, many of whom also have limited access to digital technologies. Similarly, in countries across the world women perform significantly higher unpaid care work. Therefore, it is crucial that the G20 works together and drives consensus and actions around dismantling these long-term structural barriers that women face and their lives and at

work.

**Third, enabling women's leadership at all levels of decision making.** Today, India is being served by over 1.90 crore women in administrative offices, over 17,000 women elected to Panchayati Raj Institutions, and over 10,000 women in the defense forces. Such an approach to women-led development will be critical for ensuring that their unique perspectives, experiences and leadership styles are brought to the table, which in turn can lead to more inclusive and effective decision-making.

Finally, it is important to ensure the sustainability of the outcomes realised across various initiatives. For this, prioritizing gender-disaggregated data systems will be critical, as investing in the collection and sharing of gender-disaggregated data will be important for developing targeted interventions, and monitoring progress towards gender equality.

Although the interlinked crises the world has faced has set us back from achieving our common development goals- India's G20 presidency offers the opportunity for us to set the agenda for next phase development. In this window of opportunity, it is critical that we place women at the heart of our efforts so as to achieve a better tomorrow.

\*\*\*Author is G20 Sherpa & Former CEO, NITI Aayog, Govt of India. Views expressed are personal.

# India saw 11% dip in arms imports between 2013-17 and 2018-22 due to Atmanirbhar Bharat: Report

Agency  
New Delhi, Mar 14:

Amid threats from Pakistan and China, India saw an 11% dip in arms imports between 2013-17 and 2018-22 due to India's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' scheme.

According to a report released by the Sweden-based think-tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on Monday: "India's tensions with Pakistan and China largely drive its demand for arms imports. With an 11% share of total global arms imports, India was the world's biggest importer of major arms in 2018-22, a position it has held for the period 1993-2022. It retained this position even though its arms imports dropped by 11% between 2013-17 and 2018-22."

"The decrease can be attributed to several factors including India's slow and complex arms procurement process, efforts to diversify its arms suppliers, and attempts to replace imports with major arms that are designed and produced domestically," the SIPRI report stated.

The latest report had showed a 21% dip in defence imports. "Between 2012-16 and 2017-21, Indian arms imports decreased by 21%. Despite this, India was the world's largest importer of major arms in 2017-21 and accounted for 11% of total global arms im-



ports in the period," the report released last year had said.

**RUSSIA STILL THE LARGEST SUPPLIER**

The report said that Russia was the largest supplier of arms to India in both 2013-17 and 2018-22, but its share of total Indian arms imports fell drastically. The report found that from 2013-17 and 2018-22, Russia's supplies reduced from 64% to 45%. "Russia's position as India's main arms supplier is under pressure due to strong competition from other supplier states, increased Indian arms production and, since 2022, the above-mentioned constraints on Russia's arms exports related to its invasion of Ukraine," it stated.

On the other side, India has seen a massive increase of supplies from France. "India's arms imports from France, which included 62 combat aircraft and 4 submarines, increased by 489% between 2013-17 and 2018-22. France therefore displaced the USA to become the second largest supplier to India in 2018-22," the report released on Monday stated.

During Aero India, when Russia is in war, it came with largest ever contingent along with F-35 which had turned heads.

**CHINA-PAK DEFENCE DEALS**

The report spoke about the import of Pakistan as well. According to the report, arms im-

ports by Pakistan increased by 14% between 2013-17 and 2018-22 and accounted for 3.7% of the global total. China supplied over three quarters (77%) of Pakistan's arms imports in 2018-22. Till 2021, as per the report released last year, China was sharing around 72% of the total imports by Pakistan from China.

SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.

Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

# HSLC Examination from March 16; 38,127 students to appear

IT News  
Imphal, Mar 14:

A total of 38,127 students would be appearing in the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examination starting from March 16 in 158 centres across the state.

Addressing media persons in this regard at Board of Secondary Education Manipur (BSEM) conference hall, Babupara, here on Monday, BSEM chairman Akham Joykumar informed that of the total number of students, 18,286 are male students (regular), 18,628 female students (regular), 596 male students (external) and 617 female students (external).

Of the total, there are 8140 students from government schools, 1520 from govern-

ment aided schools and 1520 students from private schools in addition to 12 students who are differently abled, he said.

The chairman further informed that a total of 70 inspection teams of teachers, earlier known as flying squad, have been formed in connection with the ensuing exam in addition to setting up 44/45 teams of stakeholders concerned and student volunteers.

Explaining that the common answer script for Science and Social Science, which was practiced earlier, will be replaced by separate answer scripts, Joykumar said that for Science, papers of Physics, Chemistry and Biology will have separate answer sheets.

Similarly, separate answer sheets would be provided for

Civics & Economics, Geography and History of the Social Science subject.

The answer scripts of those not complying with the BSEM guidelines will not be evaluated, he added.

The chairman appealed to all concerned not to call any bandh or blockade during the course of the examination and to cooperate with the inspection teams during their visit to the examination centres so as to ensure smooth conduct of the exam.

BSEM will declare the results of the examination by the second week of May, he added.

The press meet was also attended by BSEM secretary Sapam Mangijao and controller of examinations Laishram Mangi.

# RPF refutes police claim

IT News  
Imphal, Mar 14:

The proscribed Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) has clarified that the Front and its armed wing People's Liberation Army (PLA) are unrelated with the three individuals said to have been arrested by secu-

rity forces on March 12.

According to a statement issued by its assistant publicity secretary Bangkok, RPF and PLA are unrelated with Ayeekpam Abi (40) alias Rabi and his elder brother Ayeekpam Kumarjit (46) son of Aibomcha of Kakwa Nameirakpam Leikai Bini Leirak, who were arrested

by a combined team of Thoubal police commando and 16 AR on March 12.

The statement further denied its relation with Konjengbam Abinas (24) alias Ibungo son of K Inaocha of Larenjam Awang Leikai, who too was arrested by security forces on March 12.

# Out of 8,773 accused in child marriage and POCSO cases, only 494 convicted since 2017, says Assam CM

Agency  
Guwahati, Mar 14:

Out of 8,773 persons who have been named in chargesheets in cases of child marriage and sexual assault against minors in Assam, only 494 have been convicted since 2017, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday, PTI reported.

Sarma said that those named in the chargesheets, have been booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act against men who have married girls below 14 years of age, and under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

"A total of 494 persons were convicted and a total of 6,174 persons released on

bailed," he said. This represents a conviction rate of just 5.63%." The chief minister made the statement in response to a question from Congress MLA Abdur Rashid Mandal in the Assam Assembly.

In January, Sarma had announced that the Assam Police will file cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act against men who have married girls below 14 years of age, and under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act against those who married girls aged 14-18.

Till March 3, at least 3,163 people, including 94 women, have been arrested by the police as part of its crackdown on child marriage.

Hundreds of women in Assam have been protesting against the arrests and the police action against their family members. The mass arrests have led to a space crunch in existing jails.

Police data seen by Scroll shows that districts with high Muslim populations have seen more arrests than others. The districts of Biswanath, Bapeta, Baksa, Dhubri, Hojai, Bongaigaon and Nagaon districts have all recorded over 100 arrests each.

In January, the Assam chief minister had referred to the "alarming" results of the National Family Health Survey-5 conducted in 2019-20 and released last year to justify the government's drive against child marriage. According to the survey, Assam had an under-age pregnancy rate of 11.7% - significantly higher than the national average of 6.8%.

However, many activists have said the police crack-

down was short-sighted as it did not address the structural reasons such as poverty and illiteracy behind underage marriages.

On Monday, Sarma told the Assembly that the government has not taken any step to bear responsibility for the children born out of underage marriages. He added that the government could take such measures if any child requires care and security, PTI reported.

Several Opposition MLAs have alleged that the drive against child marriage in the state has created a disturbance in society.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Manoranjan Talukdar alleged that no awareness against child marriage has been created in the state.

"Assam should follow Kerala model as there is hardly any case of child marriage in the Southern state," he said.

Congress MLA Bharat Chandra Narah dismissed the government's justification for Maternal Mortality Rate being a reason behind the drive, reported PTI. He said that it could be one of the reasons, but not the only cause for child marriage in the state.

Mandal also alleged that the Assam government was terrorising people using the two acts.

To this, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pijush Hazarika accused the previous Congress governments of inaction towards instances of child marriage.

"How is it terrorising people?" Hazarika asked. "You [Congress] did not make the rule. Because of vote bank politics, you did not take any initiative."

# MP Govt orders probe over allegations of HIV tests on women dancers at fair

Agency  
Lucknow, Mar 14:

A row has erupted over the alleged testing of women dancers for HIV at an annual fair in Madhya Pradesh's Ashok Nagar district by government doctors, prompting authorities to order a probe after the National Commission of Women (NCW) took cognisance and served notice.

Gwalior Divisional Commissioner Deepak Singh, under whose jurisdiction Ashok

Nagar falls, has constituted a committee to investigate the alleged incident.

"NCW has taken cognizance. Chairperson @sharmarekha has written to Collector & DM Ashoknagar to tender a written explanation of the allegation against the district administration for taking such unwarranted decision & hurting the sentiments of the women dancers," NCW tweeted.

The commission also cited a Facebook post in its tweet on Monday.

Meanwhile, the Gwalior divisional commissioner in an official communication quoted media reports saying the incident of HIV tests on dancers has tarnished the image of the administration as the NCW has sought a reply.

A three-member panel headed by Regional Director (Health Services) Dr Rakesh Chaturvedi has been constituted, he stated.

The divisional commissioner also informed that the Chief Medical and Health Of-

ficer (CMHO) of Ashok Nagar, Dr Neeraj Chhatri, has been transferred to the directorate of the Health Department in Bhopal.

An annual fair is organised on the day of Rangpanchmi, which was celebrated on March 12 this year, at Kareela in Ashok Nagar, where the temple of Goddess Seeta is located. A large number of women dancers perform traditional Rai (a Bundelkhandi dance) during this fair.

# The Rising Heat Wave in India is a Serious Concern



By Vijay GarG

Heat waves have become a major concern for India this year. The scorching summer heat has started prematurely, as per the recent IMD reports. India will face hotter weather over the coming months, stoking concern about a repeat of the intense heat wave last year that risks damaging crops and further straining the country's power network.

The weather office expects an enhanced probability of

heat waves in most parts of the country during the three months ending May 31, according to IMD. If the record temperatures of the recent past are any indication, the heat wave is likely to become more intense. Rising temperatures lead to several health problems, from dehydration and heat exhaustion to more severe conditions like heatstroke. They also affect the economy and the environment.

An early onset of hot weather has already pushed electricity demand to near-record levels and led to the farm ministry setting up a panel to monitor the impact on the wheat crop, which is expected to reach a record this year. Last year, India suffered its hottest March in more than a century, scorching the grain harvest and forcing the government to curb exports. Monthly average maximum temperatures across

the country were the highest for February since 1901, according to the weather office. Temperatures in March - crucial for the wheat crop which is at a vulnerable stage - are likely to be above normal in most parts except in the peninsular region. Prolonged heat could cut India's wheat production for a second straight year, hurting efforts to control local food costs. India is the second-biggest producer, just after China. Lower output may lead to a continuation of export curbs, keeping the global market tight.

India has experienced some of the hottest summers on record in recent years. In May 2016, Phalodi in Rajasthan registered 51 degrees Celsius, the highest temperature ever recorded in the country. In 2021, India saw its hottest day on May 22, with the temperature touching 48

degrees Celsius in Barmer, also in Rajasthan. In 2022, Jaipur experienced a severe heatwave. Rajasthan's capital recorded 45 degrees Celsius in April - a record for the city for the month. Delhi, Agra, Pilani and Rohtak are among the well-known hot cities in India, where temperatures, of late, have gone up to 43 degrees Celsius in early summer.

India is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. More extreme weather events such as heat waves, heavy flooding and severe drought kill thousands every year and increase economic hardships by eroding farm productivity. At the same time, it burdens the country's energy supplies by pushing demand for fossil fuels and drying up sources of hydropower. The impact of heat waves on human health is also significant. Heat-related illnesses, such as

heat exhaustion and heatstroke, are becoming more common, particularly among vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, and outdoor workers. In addition, heat waves can exacerbate existing health problems, such as respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. The healthcare costs associated with heat-related illnesses can be significant, particularly for vulnerable groups who may not have access to affordable healthcare. In addition, heat waves can lead to a decrease in worker productivity, which can impact economic growth.

The rising heat wave in India is a serious concern that needs to be addressed urgently. With the right strategies in place, it is possible to mitigate the impact of rising temperatures and ensure a sustainable future for the country.

# “State Level Training on Mapping & Listing Activity” launched

IT News  
Imphal, Mar 14:

The inaugural session for the “State Level Training on Mapping & Listing Activity” for first phase of sixth round of National Family Health Survey, popularly known as NFHS-6 has been launched in Manipur with the specific goals of providing essential data on health and family welfare needed by the Central and State Governments and other stakeholders, for policy formulation and also acquiring information on important emerging health and family welfare issues, according to Roli Singh, I.A.S., Additional Secretary & Mission Director (NHM), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare,

Government of India.

The state level training program was inaugurated by Dr. N. Somorjit, Mission Director, State Health Mission, Manipur on 14th March 2023 at DSSS, Mantripukhri, Imphal West. He told that its’ important to collect quality data as the future of Manipur’s health scenarios lies in the responsibility of the investigators and they should be free from any bias before going to field, in his inaugural speech. The presidential address was delivered by Dr. Manmath Kumar Mohanty, Executive Director, CMRSD. The program was also attended by many local community leaders and Civil society organization

representatives, officers from IIPS and CMRSD.

The ministry has designated Mumbai-based International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), as nodal agency responsible for providing coordination and technical guidance for the survey. IIPS has assigned, Centre for Market Research and Social Development Pvt. Ltd.(CMRSD), New Delhi as the field agency to conduct field work for collecting data in the state of Manipur and Nagaland.

As first stage of fieldwork the mapping and listing of households in selected sample village(s)/urban block(s) will be undertaken. This will serve as a frame for selection of households for

collecting information in prescribed survey schedules, i.e. Household Schedule, Biomarker Schedule, Women’s Schedule and Men’s Schedule in the second stage. The fieldwork for mapping and listing in Manipur is to commence shortly.

The NFHS is a large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India. First survey, conducted in 1992-93, provides state and national information for India on fertility, infant and child mortality, practice of family planning, maternal and child health, reproductive health, nutrition, utilization and quality of health and family planning services.

Contd. from Page 1

## Naga Youth Front urges govt....

Many new villages, both recognised and unrecognised, have been detected in the follow-up investigation. There have been instances where more than 10 villages in different districts under a single village chief are recognised. The villages were also found to be named after their forefathers and not by location. It is also very alarming that many villages with fictitious populations, Aadhar cards and voter ids have also been found.

The process of timely streamlining has so far been blocked by the elected representatives for their selfish ends. Sadar Hills (present Kangpokpi) had 179 villages in 1969 which has grown into

massive 534 villages in 2021, an impossible growth of 198%. This can be compared to the growth of villages in Senapati District with 126 villages in 1969 and 140 in 2021, a growth of 11% growth. Similarly, Churachandpur had 216 villages in 1969 and 544 villages in 2021, a growth of 150%. Tengenoupal and Chandel had 232 in 1969 and it has increased to 446 in 2021, a growth of 100%. Tamenglong and Noney recorded a growth of 29%. Ukhrul and Kamjong district has recorded a negative growth of 6% in the number of villages.

Correspondingly an attempt to control land and re-

sources has been translated into a political movement demanding a separate political status. This has resulted in socio-political issues in Manipur. This is evidenced by the recent agitation launched by some sections of people in support of the illegal encroachment in the reserve and protected forests.

A mass social movement is the need of the hour to address the present artificial socio-political issue created by vested interests. It is the moral responsibility and bounden duty of all those who desire a peaceful and prosperous society, irrespective of their caste, class or ethnic affiliation.

## Re-Constitution & Orientation...



Speaking on the occasion Premjit Thokchom spoke about the various steps taken up and the challenges in implementing the tobacco control acts and stressed the need for more stringent implementation of the act particularly in our state as 55.1 percent of the state

population are using different tobacco products and rank 3rd highest in the country. He further spoke in length on the “Tobacco Free Educational Institution” (ToFEI), its guide lines and the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders.

All the stakeholders

present in today’s programme also had a fruitful discussion on various issues on implementing the Nation Tobacco control Act.

Today’s program was attended by Dr. Mekham DNO, NTCP, DLOs and other stakeholders of the district.

## Let us resolve for resurgence...

The ABPS wishes to underscore the fact that while many countries have respect and goodwill for Bharat, some forces in the world are not accepting this Bharatiya resurgence based on its ‘Swa’. These forces opposing Hindutva thought within and outside the country are devising new conspiracies for creating mutual distrust in society, systemic alienation and

anarchy by instigating selfish interests and divisiveness. While being vigilant towards all these, we also need to defeat their designs.

This ‘Amritkaal’ is offering us an opportunity to make collective efforts so that Bharat attains global leadership. The ABPS calls upon the entire society including enlightened people to participate, with full

strength, in this endeavour of evolving contemporary systems in all the fields of social life including educational, economic, social, democratic and judicial institutions in the light of Bharatiya thought process, so that Bharat acquires its rightful place on the global stage as a strong, prosperous nation committed to universal wellbeing.

## International Women’s Day

IT News  
Imphal, Mar 14:

Department of English of the Regional College, Lillong

Chajing organized International Women’s Day at its college premises under the theme “DigitALL: Innovation & Technology for Gender

Equality” yesterday at 1.30 pm.

Y. Joykumar, Vice Chairman, GB Regional College, M. Memtombi Devi, Principal,

Regional College and Y. Sunil Singh, Secretary GB Regional College attended as chief guest, President and Guest of Honour respectively.

## Awareness programme for weavers and designers begins

IT News  
Imphal, Mar 14:

An Awareness Building and training to designers, weavers, artisans on

Digibunai CAD Software” programme organized under the Digital India Corporation project for customization, enhancement and development of Digital solution for empow-

ering of citizens of North East India begins today at Kshetri Awang Leikai in Imphal East today. The training programme attended by 60 beneficiaries will conclude

on March 23, 2023. Programme facilitator of the event is Integrated Research and Resource Development Organisation Manipur.

## 5 days long Meghalaya International Film Festival will kick off today

IT News  
Shillong, Mar 14:

A five days long Meghalaya International Film Festival (MeghiFF) will kick off today to-day evening at Shillong. Romi Meiteis Film “our home” will screened during the festival. Meanwhile, National award win-

ning filmmaker Borun Thokchom has been invited to be a resource person in the festival.

MeghiFF is a celebration of the best of the best international cinema with films chosen and curated to bring the wide variety of cultural production to Meghalaya. The first

Meghalaya International Film Festival 2023 is an initiative of the Meghalaya Filmmakers’ Association (MeFiMA), and Meghalaya Tourism, Government of Meghalaya. The festival will screen over 65 films and documentaries spread over five days with a gala open-

ing on the evening of 14th March at the Soso Tham Auditorium, while the closing ceremony will take place on the evening of 18th March at the same venue. MeghiFF is expected to attract more than 5,000 viewers from across the country, including guest countries

## Sports

# Mary Kom wants Asian Games to be her swansong, says ‘I’ll be forced to retire next year’

IT Correspondent  
New Delhi, Mar 14:

Racing against time to get fit, six-time world champion boxer MC Mary Kom is targeting the Asian Games as her swansong in the ring before she is “forced” to retire next year.

The veteran pugilist, who had torn her anterior cruciate ligament after twisting her left knee during the Commonwealth Games selection trials last year, underwent a reconstructive surgery to repair the ACL tear in August.

“What happened during the Commonwealth Games trials was very unfortunate. I suffered a major injury and I had to undergo a surgery,” Mary said at the unveiling of the Indian team jersey ahead of the women’s World Championship.

“I’m trying to come back soon. Because I have only this year, next year I’ll be forced to retire. So this year I want to compete in any com-

petition before the retirement.”

According to the rules, the maximum participation age for a boxer is 40 years and the Manipuri will turn 41 in November.

“I don’t want to retire at

all. I want to compete for the next five years, but above 40, we can’t compete, that is the rule.”

“My main (target) is the Asian Games, hopefully I will recover by then. I will have time for preparation also. It is

my dream to compete once this year before retirement.”

The Asian Games, which were postponed last year, are set to be held from September 23 to October 8 this year. However, in order to be selected for the marquee event,

the London Olympics bronze medalist will have to go through the new selection process, which requires a boxer to go through an evaluation test in the national camp.

“My recovery is going very well. Very soon I’ll be able

to run and train. I’m trying my level best. If I’m able to compete then I will try to beat the boxers to get selection. “But if

I don’t get fit by the Asian Games then I want to compete in any other international competition once.”

## Major Bob Khathing Football Tournament concludes at Leimakhong

PRO (Defence)  
Imphal, March 14:

Major Bob Khathing Memorial Football Tournament concluded yesterday, after 13 days of exhilarating and intense competition between 20 teams from Manipur state. The thrilling final match held at Mission Veng ground, Leimakhong between Football Lovers team from Chinmang Village, Senapati and Brother FC from Sapomeina village, Senapati was witnessed by



more than 1200 locals. Football Lovers won by 03 goals and were crowned the Champions. Minister of Youth Affairs

and Sports Minister of Manipur, Govindas Konthoujam was the chief guest on the occasion and felicitated the teams. The

Sports Minister commended the efforts of the Red Shield Division in providing such an opportunity to the local youth and helping in overall progress and development of the society.

The Tournament was a resounding success, bringing together football enthusiasts from across the region. It has not only provided a platform for the young players to showcase their skills but also helped the communities to come together and celebrate the spirit of sportsmanship.

## Ph.D. DEGREE AWARDED



**Mr. Ningthoujam Nungshitomba Singh**, son of late Ningthoujam Thambaljai Singh and Ningthoujam Mema Devi, of Chingmei Mayai Leikai Mandop Maning has been awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Management by the Mizoram University vide notification no. F.No. Ex/Ph.D./9-190(SEMIS)/17/115 dated the 27th February, 2023. He pursued his research work on “Sustainable Development of SHGs in Meghalaya: A Comparative Study of West and South West Khasi Hills Districts” under the supervisions of Prof. Elangbam Nixon Singh and Dr. Lalhmimgiana Renthlei, Asst. Prof., Department of Management, Mizoram University.

During his research period, he published many research papers in peer-reviewed journals including Scopus Indexed, wrote book chapters in edited books and presented articles at various national and international seminars as well as workshops.

We warmly congratulate him for his achievement and wish him a successful life in his future endeavor.

Best wishes from  
Family, Relatives and Friends