



Regional political parties moved to the Supreme Court against misuse of ED, IT

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RAHUL GANDHI DISQUALIFIED AS LOK SABHA MP AFTER CONVICTION



On Thursday (March 23), Gandhi was held guilty and sentenced to two years in jail by a Surat court in a 2019 defamation case, over his remarks about the “Modi” surname. The conviction prompted the process of his disqualification as a lawmaker. A notice issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat said he stood disqualified from the House from March 23, the day of his conviction. Rahul Gandhi has to now move a higher court and get his conviction stayed.

Chief Judicial Magistrate HH Verma convicted Gandhi in a 2019 defamation case, for saying ‘why do all thieves have the name Modi’, and sentenced him to two years in prison. The remarks were made during a rally in Kolar, Karnataka, in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. “Why do all thieves, be it Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi or Narendra Modi, have Modi in their names,” Gandhi had said in Hindi. Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) prescribes for defamation a simple imprisonment for a “term which may extend to

two years, or with fine, or with both.” The court also approved Gandhi’s bail on a surety of Rs 15,000 and suspended the sentence for 30 days to allow him to appeal.

Disqualification of a lawmaker is prescribed in three situations. First is through the Articles 102(1) and 191(1) for disqualification of a member of Parliament and a member of the Legislative Assembly respectively. The grounds here include holding an office of profit, being of unsound mind or insolvent or not having valid citizenship. The second prescription of disqualification is in the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, which provides for the disqualification of the members on grounds of defection. What does the RPA say?

There are several provisions that deal with disqualification under the RPA. Section 9 deals with disqualification for dismissal for corruption or disloyalty, and for entering into government contracts while being a lawmaker. Section 10 deals with disqualification for failure to lodge an account of election expenses. A key provision, Section 11, deals

with disqualification for corrupt practices. Section 8 of the RPA deals with disqualification for conviction of offences. The provision is aimed at “preventing criminalisation of politics” and keeping ‘tainted’ lawmakers from contesting elections.

First, disqualification is triggered for conviction under certain offences listed in Section 8(1) of The Representation of The People Act. This includes specific offences such as promoting enmity between two groups, bribery, and undue influence or personation at an election. Senior Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan lost his Uttar Pradesh Assembly membership in October 2022 after he was convicted in a hate speech case. Defamation does not fall in this list. Section 8(2) also lists offences that deal with hoarding or profiteering, adulteration of food or drugs and for conviction and sentence of at least six months for an offence under any provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act.

Section 8(3) states: “A person convicted of any offence and sentenced to imprison-

ment for not less than two years shall be disqualified from the date of such conviction and shall continue to be disqualified for a further period of six years since his release.” The disqualification can be reversed if a higher court grants a stay on the conviction or decides the appeal in favour of the convicted lawmaker. In a 2018 decision in ‘Lok Prahari v Union of India’, the Supreme Court clarified that the disqualification “will not operate from the date of the stay of conviction by the appellate court.”

Significantly, the stay cannot merely be a suspension of sentence under Section 389 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), but a stay of conviction. Under Section 389 of the CrPC, an Appellate Court can suspend the sentence of a convict while the appeal is pending. This is akin to releasing the appellant on bail. This means that Gandhi’s first appeal would be before the Surat Sessions Court and then before the Gujarat High Court.

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Buying house in Mumbai is challenge for commoners

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

The Union Budget 2023 empowered self-help groups and introduced a savings scheme, among other measures to empower women with financial freedom. As Maharashtra's new government led by Eknath Shinde announced its first budget, the focus was on benefits for women. Following the success of cash transfer schemes in India, Maharashtra's deputy CM Devendra Fadnis announced Rs 90,000 for girls in the state. Following the birth of a girl child, the family will get Rs 5,000, and Rs 4,000 when she is in fourth standard in school, Rs 6,000 in sixth and then Rs 75,000 when she turns 18. The cash transfer

will be provided for girls from families which have yellow and orange ration cards. Women will also get a 50 per cent discount for travelling on buses and trains.

Stamp duty discounted by 1 per cent for women will also make home purchases less expensive for them. It will also increase the number of properties registered in the name of women. The government had been looking at demands for reducing stamp duty since it came to power last year, in order to boost affordable housing.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 02

Editoritis

Buying house in Mumbai is challenge for commoners

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Despite the huge strain on the state's exchequer, Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Devendra in the budget refrained from announcing a hike in stamp duty or taxes.

The high-end properties worth crores in elite areas are moving like hot cakes because buyers and sellers both are elite wealthy class but the commoners who own one bed room hall kitchen, not finding buyers because the buyers and sellers both are from economy class

Prices will not come down further. The industry itself has already said that prices have come down by 15% in the past year. Obviously, for some developers the cut could have been more, given the level of desperation there may exist. the construction costs haven't come down.

Apart from these financial incentives, separate hostels will be set up for providing legal help, counselling and other required assistance for survivors of sexual exploitation. The state government has also announced a pay hike from Rs 8,300 to Rs 10,000 for Anganwadi workers, and Anganwadi helpers will now get Rs 5,500. Meanwhile, the stamp duty in Maharashtra is expected to be hiked by 1 per cent from April 1, 2023. It is also expected that the new rates of ready reckoner will also come into effect.

Despite the huge strain on the state's exchequer, Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Devendra in the budget refrained from announcing a hike in stamp duty or taxes. But now the proposal to increase the stamp duty is taken into consideration, reported Loksatta quoting high-ranking sources.

The high-end properties worth crores in elite areas are moving like hot cakes because buyers and sellers both are elite wealthy class but the commoners who own one bed room hall kitchen, not finding buyers because the buyers and sellers both are from economy class. Prices will not come down further. The industry itself has already said that prices have come down by 15% in the past year. Obviously, for some developers the cut could have been more, given the level of desperation there may exist. the construction costs haven't come down.

Yes, the steel and cement prices may have come down but labour costs have gone up, statutory dues have gone up and there is no significant reduction in land pricing happening. The worst-affected pockets across India such Greater Noida, Ghaziabad, Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Chennai, where sales pace has dropped to a level that it will take 36 months and more for all existing stock to be cleared, developers need to struggle. But even in these real estate markets and others, credible developers with a delivery track record will continue to command a pricing premium. Many developers who have been lax and taken the buyer for granted have realized that fixing their business is the only way to win the buyer back. The focus has shifted from launching new projects to delivering existing ones.

Indian buyers usually pay for apartments before construction has been completed. Many buyers do not take-out mortgage loans. As a result, the ratio of housing loans to GDP is very low. In 2012, housing loans in India were only around 4.14% of GDP. The leading mortgage lender is the Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) followed by the State Bank of India (SBI). Total housing loans in India were around INR 4,033.78 billion (US\$ 63.36 billion) in 2012, up by 12.3% from INR 3,590.67 billion (US\$ 56.40 billion) a year earlier. Economy is not growing at a greater rate. Foreign rating agencies and Investment firms predict our growth rate to be a bit+1 or -1% less than the government announced rate. Indian companies are in huge debt so they cannot raise money unless they clear the balance sheet. PSU banks are in huge debt; they are not in a position to fund new ventures. Real estate inventory is at an all-time high. People are on a wait and watch mode, Stamp duties across states ranges from 6 to 10% (very high). Only desperate buyers for a first home or buying new property. The second and third home buyers as investment options are going slow. Landowners who desperately need money are selling land at a discount based on their need. Developers who can withstand pressure are not selling.

The major reason for the lowering property rates in India is demonetization then GST and now lockdown. According to surveys, residential property prices are now falling in majority of Indian cities and the nominal house prices have risen in some cities of its premium areas. If we talk about real estate trends in Delhi/NCR, there is a lot of panic and shock among the builders because transactions will be closer to the circle rates and the rates have come down by 25% to 30%.

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Voices



Letters to the Editor

Remembering Pash

Avtar Singh Sandhu, also known as Pash, was born on September 9, 1950, in the village of Talwandi Salem in Jalandhar, Punjab. Pash's poetry has always had political overtones. Pash was opposed to religious fanaticism and harshly criticised the state's authoritarian nature. On March 25, 1988, he was assassinated in New Delhi by Khalistani militants. Decades after his death Pash's ideas still reverberate to the contemporary socio-political milieu. With the country's communal tensions on the rise, it's a good time to remember Pash's revolutionary spirit.

Vijaykumar H K

Jokers of all trades & master of none!

Rohit Sharma & his boys threw in the towel without a fight in the ODI series but Aussies deserves kudos on an commendable victory against all odds in the enemy backyard. Indian players one thought were more eager to play in the upcoming IPL than while representing their country. They had already switched themselves in the T-20 mode but the 50 over game is a lot about patience & class. IPL may be an lot more interesting but it certainly is responsible for the downfall of our team where players love to perform where the money is, often sacrificing national pride in the bargain.

The next ODI World Cup will be held in India & BCCI should have scheduled their IPL tourney in a better way giving more importance to ODI. Also, the WTC finals will be held after the IPL & while most Australian players will skip T-20 tournament, most of our players will play IPL which is a big disadvantage for Team India. We must have different teams for different formats to excell at international tournaments than have a team that is 'Jokers of all trades & master of none'.

S.N.Kabra

KEY ROLE OF BLUE FOODS :

Its fascinating to learn how significant blue foods are for the economies, way of life, nutritional security, and cultures of people in many different countries. Blue foods offer a rich array of possibilities for creating food systems that are healthy, diversified, empowering and environmentally sustainable. They frequently have high nutritional value, produce less emissions and have fewer negative environmental effects on land and water than many terrestrial meats, and they support the health, well-being, and livelihoods of many rural communities. Several billion people worldwide rely on blue foods as a vital source of nutrition and hundreds of millions of livelihoods. The potential for these blue foods to benefit people and the ecosystem, according to marine ecologists, is still unappreciated despite the fact that people around the world depend on and enjoy seafood.

More than just protein can be found in blue foods. Zinc, iron, vitamin A, vitamin B12, and Omega-3 fatty acids are among the nutrients found in abundance in many blue food species. In areas and among populations where the prevalence of malnutrition is high, increasing the consumption of blue foods can help avoid non-communicable diseases and nutrient deficiencies. According to a recent study, blue food, which comes from aquatic habitats, can help India's economy in terms of employment and export earnings while also reducing nutritional inadequacies. Increased consumption of blue foods may therefore aid India's economy in overcoming its environmental and health issues.

Dr Krishna kumar Vepakomma

Wellness secrets during summer season

Mumbai summers really irritate you as the humid condition is not good for health. People would like to stay indoors as the outside heat is unbearable. However, people staying back home also face the hot conditions as there are power cuts in some of the areas on a regular basis. It is better to fit an inverter in your flat to overcome power shortage during summer season. Curd is great as it is cooling, and contains proteins in the predigested form. It does have B-complex vitamins and contains bio-available calcium, Phosphorus and magnesium and is beneficial during the hot season to withstand heat. Summers are generally associated with heat, humidity and loss of appetite.

People tend to drink more water and they eat light food which is easily digestible. The best way to beat the heat is to keep you cool all the time. Watermelon will provide you with the water required for your body during this time of the year. Seasonal foods such as sweet lime, guavas, melons and cucumbers help offset excess body salt. Along with food we can take sprouts, salads, curd rice, whole grain sandwiches with watery fruits which provide all the Vitamin C and the B-complex vitamins that are required to build resistance power against colds and fever that are very common during summer season.

Avoid mangoes during summer as the body becomes very hot and boils appear in the body. Drink a glass of milk if you happen to taste mangoes and boils appear in the body during the summer season. Skin rashes, irritations and headaches can be avoided by opting for summer friendly food. While driving and when you go for an outing it is better to keep the car's A/C on for sometime before starting your journey. The tiring heat requires more consumption of water. If you follow all these



basic rules during the summer season then you can make sure that life is like other days and has no impact on summer here as such.

Summer season has set in and several cities are sweltering in the heat wave during the month of March. Rich people can enjoy the comfort of the Air Conditioner in their homes and in their car while traveling whereas the middle-class and lower middle class go for frequent baths to beat the heat and take watermelon and fruit juices to beat the heat. Fortunately, Mumbaiis having sufficient water supply. So far we have not felt the shortage of Power and Water. It is better to take precautions while traveling out in the hot sun. By keeping the windows open we can get fresh air instead of keeping it closed all the time. Cold water bath before going to sleep will give you a sigh of relief from the hot and humid atmosphere. Air coolers in this part of the country will not provide much solace from the sweltering heat.

Summer is very much enervating and people die of Sun Stroke during the hot summer season. This time round the year the mercury is touching 40 degree centigrade and people in Mumbai face heat waves. People would like to stay indoors as the outside heat is unbearable.

The best way to beat the heat is to take cold water baths. If you pour cold water into your head, the heat in the body comes down drastically. Instead of using an air-conditioner to reduce room heat it is better to have a cold water bath.

Watermelon is a good remedy to reduce cold. Orange and Mosambi juices are also a good alternative. Tender coconut is preferred mostly. Instead of taking ice and ice creams, water based items are good for the health. While driving and going for an outing it is better to have a bottle of water with you. The tiring heat requires more consumption of water. One requires at least 8 glasses of water during ordinary days. During summer you can increase to 12 to 15 glasses of water. Lime juice with salt and little sugar is preferred for dehydration. Instead of going for bottled drinks you can have barley water as well. Health is wealth and one has to keep fit even during hot and humid summer seasons as well.

C.K. Subramaniam

Columnist

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(The views expressed are authors' own.)

The stamp duty in Maharashtra to be hiked by 1 percent from April 1, 2023



Despite the huge strain on the state's exchequer, Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Devendra in the budget refrained from announcing a hike in stamp duty or taxes. But now the proposal to increase the stamp duty is taken into consideration, reported Lok-satta quoting high-ranking sources. Stamp duty in Mumbai, Pune indicates a possibility that the

cost of houses will be increased. If the proposal is approved then the stamp duty in Mumbai will be hiked to seven percent from its earlier six percent. The stamp duty in Pune, Thane and Navi Mumbai will go up to eight percent. In case one percent Local Body Tax and metro surcharge are applicable the stamp duty will be at eight percent whereas if LBT is not applicable then the

stamp duty will be at seven percent.

The report also added that the rate of recalculation has also been reviewed. The ready reckoner will increase in any areas of the big cities in the state. The state exchequer has been on a huge financial burden and the government has no option but to increase the stamp duty rate. Although the Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue in increasing the fiscal deficit will move up to Rs 95,000 crore. The major sources of income for the state are stamp duty and taxes on cigarettes and liquor. This is why the state is considering hiking stamp duty. Meanwhile, the banks have this month increased their interest rates making loans more expensive for the common people, but if the read reckoner rate is increased then houses will become even more expensive.

Three scrap dealers from Navi Mumbai attacked, robbed in Dhule; group of 20 booked for dacoity

The Navi Mumbai police have registered a case of dacoity against a group of around 20 persons, who allegedly attacked three scrap dealers and robbed them of their belongings worth more than Rs 5 lakh

in Dhule district of north Maharashtra, an official said on Friday. The incident occurred on March 20 night, he said. "Complainant Farhan Khot from Panvel had got information that copper in windmills was

up for sale as scrap at Jamda in Dhule and he was keen on purchasing it. Accordingly, he and two other dealers went to Dhule for it," an official of Panvel town police station said.

Driver held for Rs 72 lakh theft in singer Sonu Nigam's father's home



The driver of renowned singer Sonu Nigam's father was arrested for allegedly stealing Rs 72 lakh, a Mumbai police official said on Friday.

The theft came to light at the Oshiwara residence of Agamkumar Nigam, the singer's father, on Wednesday, after which police teams began a probe, he said.

The accused was held on

Thursday evening, and his interrogation led to the recovery of Rs 70.70 lakh of the looted amount from Kolhapur, the official added.

During the examination of CCTV footage of the society, the driver was seen entering the housing complex with a bag, and he was named in the complaint filed by the singer's sister Nikita, as per police.

After almost three years Uddhav Thackeray and Devendra walked together at the legislature

After almost three years since the Maharashtra Assembly polls and in the wake of their strained relations after the Shiv Sena split, former chief minister Uddhav Thackeray and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had a jovial meeting in the public on Thursday, triggering speculations across the corridors of power. Thackeray, who arrived at the legislature building in the morning, was informed that Fadnavis's convoy was behind him. The former chief minister along with MLAs and MLCs from his Shiv Sena (UBT) waited for the BJP leader at the gate. Thackeray and Fadnavis exchanged greetings with smiling faces and had a jovial conversation. Later speaking to reporters, Thackeray said it was merely an exchange of greetings and nothing much. "In the past, the (political) atmosphere was more open. Nowadays it is said that discussions held behind a closed door turn out to be more fruitful. Therefore, if we ever hold a meeting behind closed doors, we will surely let you know," he said. Asked whether the meeting was the beginning of an end to the disagreement between the two, Thackeray

said that not every meeting took place with intentions. "We both came to the legislative building at the same time and therefore exchanged greetings," he said. The relations between Thackeray and Fadnavis soured after the former's party snapped ties with the BJP and joined hands with the Congress and the NCP to form the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), after the 2019 Assembly polls. Last year, 40 Sena MLAs led by Eknath Shinde rebelled against Thackeray and formed a new government with the help of the BJP.

Shinde has won the battle in the Election Commission with the party name and its symbol going his way. The BJP has been targeting the Thackeray family since the formation of the MVA. At a recent MVA meeting, Thackeray told workers of the three parties to ensure that there would be no electoral alliance with the BJP in the future. A former chief minister from the Congress said that nobody should read too much into the meeting. "Maharashtra's political culture is such that leaders of parties with diametrically opposite ideologies share personal relations. Nobody should read too much into it," he said.

Rahul Gandhi disqualified as Lok Sabha MP after conviction

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Under the RPA, Section 8(4) stated that the disqualification takes effect only "after three months have elapsed" from the date of conviction. Within that period, lawmakers could file an appeal against the sentence before the High Court. However, in the landmark 2013 ruling in 'Lily Thomas v Union of India', the Supreme Court struck down Section 8(4) of the RPA as unconstitutional.

Veteran Congress leader Ratnakar Mahajan told Afternoon Voice, "When the court has given Rahul Gandhi a time of 30 days to appeal further then why decision of disqualification was taken in hurry apart from that 'Modi surname' speech was given in Karnataka so there would be jurisdictional issue as it was filed in Gujarat. Another thing is he had not taken any specific name and only gave out a general statement on surname Modi. So all these should have not disqualified him".

Sachin Sawant, Congress leader said, "This is vindictive politics against the democracy and Rahul Gandhi has only spoken truth inside the parliament over Adani issue. It is completely a vindictive

strategy taken by the Modi government to disqualify the leader and this action clearly depicts who ever speaks against BJP or Modi government it won't be tolerated. Democracy has been dismantled".

Advocate Ali Kashif Khan Deshmukh said, "The disqualification comes in procedure of Peoples Representation Act 1951 but He has not talked anything offensive about the prime minister's post and only Modi surname was used in the speech which could be anyone and going offensive of Prime Ministers Post and only talking about person Modi are different cases. This is completely unjustified section implied to disqualify someone as Prime Minister's post was not defamed. Now he has all rights to move to the higher courts as the disqualification did not follow legal process and If he court gives judgement in his then he can start working from the same professional position".

Advocate Manisha Rote said, "According to article 19 people have right to express their opinion and disqualification was not taken correctly against congress leader and earlier this case was stayed in the 2022. So why this case was take to different court".

Regional political parties moved to the Supreme Court against misuse of ED, IT and CBI

The petitioners, 14 regional parties have sought guidelines to fulfil and realise the guarantee of personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution for all citizens including those targeted for exercising their right to political dissent and for performing their duties as the political opposition. They have prayed for the triple test to be used by police officers, ED officials and courts alike for the arrest of persons in any cognisable offences except those involving serious bodily violence. Where these conditions are not satisfied, alternatives like interrogation at fixed hours or at the most house arrest be used to meet the demands of investigation.

The petitioner-political parties are: INC, DMK, RJD, BRS, TMC, AAP, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Shiv Sena (UBT), JMM, JD(U), CPI(M), CPI, Samajwadi Party, J&K National Conference. According to the petitioners, there has been an alarming rise in the use of coercive criminal processes against



opposition political leaders and other citizens exercising their fundamental right to dissent and disagree with the union government. Investigating agencies such as the CBI and ED are being increasingly deployed in a selective and targeted manner with a view to completely crush political dissent and upend the fundamental premises of a representative democracy, it was submitted.

The petitioner had prayed the principle of 'bail as rule, jail as exception' be followed by all courts especially in cases of non-violent offences. They have also prayed that bail be denied only where the triple-test is not met. In cases where special laws

such as PMLA with stringent bail conditions are concerned, the petitioners have sought directions harmonious such bail with Article 21 of the Constitution. Where it appears that trial is unlikely to complete within 6 months, the accused be released on bail even under special laws unless the conditions under the triple-test are not fulfilled. The petition has been drawn and filed through advocate Shadan Farasat and settled by Senior Advocate Dr Abhishek Manu Singhvi.

Fourteen political parties moved the Supreme Court on Friday alleging that the Central government led by Bharatiya Janata Party is misusing central

agencies like Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED). The petitioners which include the Indian National Congress (INC), Trinamool Congress (TMC), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have sought pre-arrest guidelines.

The matter was mentioned before Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud by Senior Counsel Abhishek Manu Singhvi for urgent listing. "14 political parties have come together, seeking pre-arrest guidelines and their enforcement. Today CBI ED entirely being used against us," Singhvi said. He further claimed

that 95 percent of probes by central agencies are against leaders from opposition parties. The CJI agreed to list the case on April 5.

The petitioner also shed light on statistics to buttress their claims.

The action rate on raids in terms of complaints filed following raids reduced from 93 per cent in 2005-2014, to 29 per cent in 2014-2022;

- Only 23 convictions have been secured as of now under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) despite a rise in the number of cases registered by the ED from 209 in 2013-14 to 981 in 2020-21, and 1180 in 2021-22;

- Between 2004 and 14, of the 72 political leaders investigated by the CBI, 43 (under 60 per cent) were from the opposition of the time. Now, this figure is over 95 percent.

In ED investigations, proportion of opposition leaders from total number of politicians investigated rose from 54 percent before 2014 to 95 percent after 2014.

FM Sitharaman to setup committee into issues related to pension for govt employees

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday proposed setting up of a committee to look into the issues related to pension for government employees and evolve an approach to address the need of employees while maintaining fiscal prudence. While moving the Finance Bill 2023 in the Lok Sabha for consideration and passage, the minister also said the RBI will look into the issues related to credit cards payments for foreign tours not being captured under Liberalised Remittances Scheme (LRS).

Representations have been received that the national pension system for government employees needs to be improved, Sitharaman said. "I propose to set up a committee under the finance secretary to look into this issue of pension and evolve an approach

which addresses the need of employees while maintaining fiscal prudence to protect the common citizens. The approach will be designed for adoption by both central and state governments," the minister said.

The minister further said it has come to notice that payment for foreign tours through credit cards are not being captured under LRS and such payments escape tax collection at source. "RBI is being requested to look into this with a view to bring credit card payments for foreign tours within the ambit of LRS and tax collection at source there on," she announced. Several opposition members were in the well of the House raising slogans demanding setting up a joint parliamentary committee probe into the allegations against Adani group of companies. PTI

Govt: 50% of respiratory infection cases admitted to hospital over two months are H3N2 influenza

An ICMR survey has shown that 50 per cent of the respiratory infection cases admitted to hospitals in over two months are of H3N2 influenza, the government told the Lok Sabha on Friday. A total of 1,161 cases of H3N2, which is a subtype of seasonal influenza virus, have been reported between January 1 and March 20, Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar said in a written reply. She said most of these cases showed symptoms of cough and fever.

The minister said H3N2 is a viral respiratory infection and antibiotics have no role in its treatment. However, she added, sometimes in a respiratory infection a bacterial infection may also occur and therefore physicians may prescribe an antibiotic to take care of the secondary



bacterial infection. According to the data shared by her, Delhi (370) reported the highest number of H3N2 cases followed by Maharashtra (184), Rajasthan (180) and Karnataka (134).

Pawar said the Health Ministry is monitoring the situation and taking steps to support states and UTs in management of influenza cases, including H3N2,

which include issuing an advisory for closely following the trend of influenza-like illness (ILI) or severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) increase. The ministry has asked states and UTs to monitor the proportion of SARI cases among all infection cases and refer sufficient number of samples for testing for influenza, SARS-CoV-2 etc. PTI

World

Prosperity has returned to Kashmir: Activist tells UNHRC



An activist from the Geneva-based Universal Rights Group apprised the United Nations Human Rights Council (NHRC) of how stability and prosperity are returning to the Kashmir Valley.

In her intervention during the 52nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, the activist from J-K said, "More families are expected to come forward, sharing their experiences as stability and prosperity return to Kashmir."

Further sharing details of the

situation returning to normal in the Union Territory, the activist said, "As violence in Kashmir is on the decline and life returns to normal, there is a visible change in the attitude of the common Kashmiris."

Also sharing the "tough times" her family had experienced before things changed for the better in the UT, she said, "For the first time, numerous Kashmiri families have shared their inability to speak about atrocities committed by terrorist organisations.

In 2003, my sister was brutally

killed by militants and I was shot multiple times. Life has never been normal since that day," said the activist.

She added, "Today, we are willing to speak up and soon. We spend decades in anonymity. Out of fear of retribution by militants and existing patriarchal structures all these years, the information vacuum was exploited by giving false impressions on the developments in Kashmir."

On her expectations from the Council, the activist said, "Taking the focus away from the perpetrators of terror is not enough for women to feel secure. Acknowledgement and moral support for these families and protection of human rights shall go a long way in establishing the desired comfort zone."

She concluded her intervention with an appeal to the UNHRC, "It is a humble request to Human Rights Councils that the voices of Kashmiri victims of terror be heard by the international committee and effort be made to sensitise the world about these acts."

China 'firmly opposes' forced sale of TikTok



China said it would strongly oppose any forced sale of TikTok, responding for the first time to Biden administration demands that the video app divest itself from its Chinese parent ByteDance or face a US ban, reported CNN.

China's commerce ministry said on Thursday that a forced sale of TikTok would "seriously damage" global investor confidence in the United States.

"If the news (about a forced sale) is true, China will firmly oppose it," Shu Jueting, a spokeswoman for the ministry, told in a news conference in Beijing, adding that any potential deal would need approval from the Chinese government, reported CNN.

"The sale or divestiture of TikTok involves technology export, and administrative licensing

procedures must be performed in accordance with Chinese laws and regulations," she said.

Previously, Beijing didn't weigh in directly on a potential forced sale.

However, starting in 2020, it had signalled it wanted to protect Chinese technology by adding recommendation algorithms, which could include TikTok's, to a list of technologies restricted for export, reported CNN.

During a four-hour long hearing, Chew time and again stressed that the TikTok app, which is owned by the Chinese technology company Bytedance, has long maintained that it does not share data with the Chinese government and it doesn't pose a risk to its 150 million users in the US nor share their data with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

"No new escalation..." Armenia and Azerbaijan to sign peace treaty

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Thursday announced that there will be a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan based on joint official statements adopted at the highest level.

The PM said, "There won't be a new escalation."

"There will be a #peace treaty between #Armenia and #Azerbaijan, and it will be based on the joint official statements adopted at the highest level. There won't be a new escalation! The international community must strongly support this narrative," the Armenian PM tweeted on Thursday.

US State Department's Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel in response to the development said the US is encouraged by the progress made toward lasting and sustainable peace in the

South Caucasus.

He said US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is engaged in facilitating peace discussions between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"@SecBlinken is very engaged in facilitating peace discussions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and we are encouraged by the progress made toward lasting and sustainable peace in the South Caucasus. We very much appreciate @NikolPashinyan's message on that progress," Patel tweeted on Friday.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have engaged in two wars in the more than 30 years both ex-Soviet states have been independent. Thousands of lives have been claimed in fighting for the control of Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated enclave of Karabakh.

North Korea tests underwater nuclear-capable attack drone

North Korea has tested a new underwater nuclear-capable attack drone, Al Jazeera reported citing the country's state news agency KCNA said on Friday.

Significantly, the drone operated continuously for 59 hours underwater before being destroyed as part of a drill to intimidate the US and South Korean armed forces.

The North Korean military deployed and tested-fired the new weapons system this week during a military drill directed by Kim Jong Un, with the aim of determining if it could produce a deadly blast and wave on a "super-scale."

According to KCNA, "This nuclear underwater assault drone may be launched at any coast and port or operated while being towed by a surface ship."



As per several media reports, the nuclear-capable underwater attack drone tested by Pyongyang can also launch a "radioactive Tsunami".

The drone was placed in the ocean near South Hamgyong province on Tuesday as part of the experiment, and it drifted there for 59 hours and 12 minutes, at a depth of about 80 to

150 metres (260 to 490 feet), before exploding on Thursday in the waters of the province's east coast.

However, the South Korean news agency, Yonhap said that the drone's final target point was a mock enemy port set up in the waters of Hongwon Bay, Al Jazeera reported citing the media report.

Column

How to remove the habit of using social media in children?



Vijay Garg

Retired Principal Educational
Columnist Malout Punjab

Mobile dominating children's lives Getting addicted to mobile and internet to the point of obsession is no less than an addiction. Nowadays mobile, computer, tablet etc. gadgets are influencing the new generation very much. While the increasing use of the Internet has increased the income of the Internet providers, there has also been an immense increase in the number of people using the Internet. As a result, today every ordinary and special person has a mobile phone and that with a bang Using the Internet Today, even children are not less than adults in terms of using mobile phones. If we talk about mobile phones, according to an estimate, about 30 percent of children in our country get a mobile phone by the age of 10 years and 70 percent children by the age of 12 years. Almost all children have their own mobile phone by the age of 15. But due to lack of awareness of the parents, the mobile phone is having a deadly effect on the physical and mental level of their children. Mothers do not shy away from giving mobile phones to their small nursing children, but they want that if their child is busy on the phone, he will not cry and they will deal with their work in peace. Some parents are often busy with mobile phones in front of their children, due to this, there is an increase in the attraction of mobile phones in the minds of children. Homework also on phones in order to protect their reputation and economic status during the corona period, private schools have used their own resources to make children addicted to mobile phones through online homework. have paid their contribution, at the same time, even after the corona call in government schools, homework is being sent to children through WhatsApp groups on mobile phones.



As a result, parents are helpless to give their children separate mobile phones. Children today are using gaming, YouTube and social media on mobile phones. The surprising thing is that children studying in the fourth-fifth standard are also running their own YouTube channels. They are coming under the spell of this bog-like technology, influenced by the magical dazzle of mobile and internet. the child Facebook, Insta, Twitter and so on. T. T. etc. apps are also being used regularly. Technology companies are developing new gadgets and apps keeping children and youth in mind, the excessive use of which is wasting the time of our new generation and the youth, as well as economic, social, it is destroying them mentally and physically. Radiation is dangerous for the brain Experts recommend that mobile phones should not be given to children under the age of 16. Their brain mobile radiation is very sensitive to exposure to the effects of, because the brain and body tissues are still developing, these rays can damage the cells. Absorption of radiation can cause serious health problems in children. According to the research of Exeter University of Britain, if you

use mobile for a long time, the risk of cancer and weakness increases with radiation. Excessive use of mobile also leads to blood pressure and heart diseases in the case of children, these results can prove to be even more fatal. mobile Phones have a very bad effect on children and it can bring unwanted changes in their lifestyle. Many children become so obsessed with the phone that they distance themselves from their parents and friends and remain lost in the mobile phone all the time. Having mobile in the hands of children increases the chances of misuse of mobile phone. Children can send and receive obscene messages, pictures or videos. Children can access adult websites. While browsing through some websites They may accidentally click on links that may lead them to adult or criminal content. So many incidents of crime are coming up day by day. Physical and mental effects Experts are warning about the negative effects of mobile phones on the physical and mental health of young children. The University of Toledo has claimed in one of its researches that the blue light coming out of these gadgets is pushing us towards premature

blindness. Due to this, the problem of itching, dryness and tanning occurs on the skin goes away Due to mobile, the child may face diseases such as fatigue, headache, lack of sleep, loss of memory, ringing in the ears, joint pain, obesity and stress. Most parents allow children to play mobile games to keep them occupied. The addiction of these online games gradually starts to affect the brain and way of thinking of children. Their full attention goes to mobile games instead of studies. Deteriorating manic balance Deterioration of children's mental balance due to games, lack of social interaction, mind Loss of concentration, sleep problems, avoidance of studies, negative issues dominating the mind, indifference in other aspects of life, increased anger, violent mentality and many other physical problems change the outlook of children towards life. are destroying the future of According to another study, an average cell phone is seven times dirtier than your flush seat. These nasty germs cause food poisoning and stomach worms. Due to this, the possibility of stomach pain, vomiting and diarrhea increases.

Entertainment

Sheryl Lee Ralph reveals she was sexually assaulted by 'famous TV judge'



Actress Sheryl Lee Ralph has made a shocking revelation! On the podcast, 'The Way Up With Angela Lee', Ralph alleged she was sexually assaulted by a "famous TV judge" at a business event years ago, Variety reported.

She also claimed that network executives witnessed the attack, but asked her to stay silent to avoid "bad press."

"I'm at a very public place. I was suited. I had my suit on. I was handling my business for the television show I was on at that time. He and I were on the same network," Ralph said, recalling the alleged incident.

"This man walked in, grabbed me by the back of my neck, turned me around and rammed his nasty ass tongue down my throat," Ralph said, adding, "And everybody at the network saw it."

She did not name the man who allegedly assaulted her, and she did not reveal which network or show she was working with, at the time.

Ralph made sure to note it was not Judge Greg Mathis. "I love him. He's a great man," she said of the "Judge Mathis" star, adding, "Not him at all. He's a great man. This was another one."

She decided to disclose the incident in order to encourage other women and actors to stand up for themselves. "Speak up, tell your truth, do not carry the burden of the pain ... especially if you feel like it's something you can't work through," Ralph said.



Big B gets back to work after suffering injury on 'Project K' sets

Actor Amitabh Bachchan recently got injured while shooting for his upcoming Pan India film 'Project K' in Hyderabad. On Thursday night, the actor announced that he has finally resumed his work.

Big B took to his Blog and shared his health update and wrote, "So despite the inconvenience of damaged body .. there must be desire and effort to repair .. which is being done with care and comfort of the Ef and well-wishers, and for which there is repeated gratitude and love .."

He also penned that he has not fully recovered and is still being treated for his rib injury. "Work schedules have been done and the charts start filling up again .. to the joy of the 'moi' .. for there is no better pastime than work .. Yes the rib and toe are in a state of revolt .. but revolts must be tendered with and a solution to be found .. and find we must we no, I," he continued.

Local documentarians stepping out to showcase India's diversity: Kartiki Gonsalves

Kartiki Gonsalves, director of the Oscar-winning documentary "The Elephant Whisperers", on Thursday said the Indian documentary scene is rich and thriving with filmmakers who are stepping out in the world to showcase the "diversity" of the country.

Gonsalves created history when "The Elephant Whisperers", produced by Guneet Monga and Achin Jain of Sikhya Entertainment, was named the winner of the Best Documentary Short Academy Award earlier this month.

At the first press meet since the Oscar win, Gonsalves said she hopes the triumph translates into more support for documentary filmmakers. "I hope it is the way for all people looking to start out with small stories and also for small documentaries that don't have large budgets. This is my debut film."

"I was a sales girl at FabIndia, I worked at a gym, and I was in advertising for a couple of years. And here I am today. There is a whole generation stepping out of the world showcasing the diversity of India, as local documentarians," the debutante director told reporters.

Bomman and Bellie, who were featured in the documentary also attended the event, expressed gratitude for the outpour of love towards the film and their story.



'Parineeta' director Pradeep Sarkar passes away

Noted Bengali director Pradeep Sarkar passed away on Friday. He had directed films like, 'Parineeta', 'Laaga Chunari Mein Daag', and 'Mardaani'. He was 67. The cause of his death is still awaited.

Pradeep made his debut in the Hindi film industry with the screen adaptation of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's 'Parineeta'.

Vidya Balan, Saif Ali Khan, and Sanjay Dutt played pivotal characters in the film. His last directorial on the big screen was 'Helicopter Eela' starring Kajol and Riddhi Sen in the lead roles.

Pradeep has also directed 'Laga Chunari Mein Daag' starring Rani Mukherjee, Konkona Sen Sharma, Abhishek Bachchan, Kunal Kapoor, 'Lafangey Parindey' featuring Deepika Padukone and Neil Nitin Mukesh.