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Vol. XXXV

March 2021

No. 3

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# *News digest*

▪  
*a monthly digest of news  
for the law maker*  
▪

**PREPARED BY  
THE SECRETARIAT OF THE KERALA LEGISLATURE**

# NEWS DIGEST

VOL. XXXV

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## **ABBREVIATIONS USED**

ദി.	-	ദീപിക
മാ.	-	മാതൃഭൂമി
എ.	-	എക്സ്പ്രസ്സ്
കേ.കൗ.	-	കേരളകൗമുദി
ദേ.	-	ദേശാഭിമാനി
മ.മ.	-	മലയാള മനോരമ
മാധ്യ.	-	മാധ്യമം
മം.	-	മംഗളം
ജന്മ.	-	ജന്മഭൂമി
ച.	-	ചന്ദ്രിക
B.T.	-	Business Times
H.	-	The Hindu
P.	-	The Pioneer
N.I.E	-	The New Indian Express
I.E.	-	The Indian Express
T.O.I.	-	The Times of India
F.E.	-	Financial Express
E.T.	-	The Economic Times
S.	-	The Statesman
T.	-	The Telegraph

**സംസ്ഥാനവാർത്തകൾ**

**60 കഴിഞ്ഞവർക്കും ഗുരുതര രോഗികൾക്കും വാക്സിൻ; രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ഇന്നു മുതൽ**

60 വയസ്സിനു മുകളിലുള്ളവർക്കും 45-59 പ്രായപരിധിയിലുള്ള ഗുരുതര രോഗബാധിതർക്കും കോവിഡ് വാക്സിനേഷനുള്ള രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ഇന്നു രാവിലെ 10 നു തുടങ്ങും. കോവിൻ (<https://www.cowin.gov.in>) പോർട്ടൽ വഴിയും ആരോഗ്യസേതു ആപ് വഴിയും രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യാം. പോർട്ടലോ ആപ്പോ വഴിയല്ലാതെ, നേരിട്ട് വാക്സിൻ വിതരണ കേന്ദ്രത്തിലെത്തി പേര് രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യാനും പിന്നീട് സൗകര്യമൊരുക്കും. ആധാർ കാർഡോ ഫോട്ടോ പതിപ്പിച്ച മറ്റേതെങ്കിലും അംഗീകൃത തിരിച്ചറിയൽ കാർഡോ കയ്യിൽ കരുതണം. 45-59 വയസ്സുകാർ അംഗീകൃത ഡോക്ടർമാർ ഒപ്പിട്ട കോ മോർബിഡിറ്റി സർട്ടിഫിക്കറ്റ് വാക്സിനേഷൻ കേന്ദ്രത്തിൽ നൽകണം. സംശയപരിഹാരത്തിന് ദിശ ഹെൽപ്പ്ലൈൻ: 1056. 45-59 പ്രായക്കാർ രോഗം സ്ഥിരീകരിക്കണം. 45-59 വയസ്സുകാർ തങ്ങൾക്കു രോഗമുണ്ടെന്നു സ്ഥിരീകരിക്കണം. ഹൃദ്രോഗം, അർബുദം, വൃക്ക- കരൾ രോഗങ്ങൾ, പ്രമേഹം, പക്ഷാഘാതം, അരിവാൾ രോഗം, തലാസിമിയ തുടങ്ങിയവയുള്ളവരെയൊന്നും പരിഗണിക്കുന്നത്. സർക്കാർ ആശുപത്രികളിൽ വാക്സിനേഷൻ സൗജന്യമാണ്. സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ 395 സ്വകാര്യ ആശുപത്രികളിലും 250 രൂപ നിരക്കിൽ വാക്സീനേഷനാൻ സൗകര്യമുണ്ട്.

(മ.മ., 01/03)

**ആർ.ടി.പി.സി.ആർ പരിശോധനയ്ക്കുള്ള മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശം പുതുക്കി**

സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ സർക്കാർ, സ്വകാര്യ, മൊബൈൽ, സ്റ്റാറ്റിക് ലബോറട്ടറികളിൽ നടത്തുന്ന ആർ.ടി.പി.സി.ആർ. പരിശോധനയ്ക്കുള്ള മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശം ആരോഗ്യ വകുപ്പ് പുതുക്കി. നിലവിൽ സർക്കാർ, അംഗീകൃത സ്വകാര്യ ലാബുകളിൽ ആർ.ടി.പി.സി.ആർ. പരിശോധന നടക്കുന്നുണ്ടെങ്കിലും പരിശോധനകൾ കൂടുതൽ ഉറുജസ്വലമാക്കുന്നതിന് വേണ്ടിയാണ് മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ പുതുക്കിയത്. സർക്കാർ ലാബുകളുടെ പരിശോധനാശേഷിക്കപ്പുറം ആർ.ടി.പി.സി.ആർ. പരിശോധനകൾക്കായി വന്നാൽ അംഗീകൃത സ്വകാര്യ ലാബുകളിൽ പരിശോധനയ്ക്കായി അയക്കാവുന്നതാണ്. എയർപോർട്ടിലെ അന്തർദേശീയ യാത്രക്കാരുടെ ആർ.ടി.പി.സി.ആർ. പരിശോധന സർക്കാർ സൗജന്യമാക്കിയിരുന്നു. ഈ സേവനം നൽകുന്ന അംഗീകൃത ലാബുകൾക്ക് എല്ലാ ചെലവുകളും ഉൾപ്പെടെ 448 രൂപ നിരക്കിൽ റീ ഇമ്പ്രൂവ് ചെയ്യുന്നതാണ്. ഈ ലാബുകളെല്ലാം 24 മണിക്കൂറിനകം തന്നെ പരിശോധന നടത്തി വിവരം അപ് ലോഡ് ചെയ്യേണ്ടതാണ്. കോവിഡ് തീവ്രതയുള്ള പ്രദേശങ്ങളിൽ വേഗത്തിൽ പരിശോധന

നടത്തി രോഗമുള്ളവരെ കണ്ടെത്തുന്നതിനായാണ് കെ.എം.എസ്.സി.എൽ. മുഖേന ആർ.ടി.പി.സി.ആർ. മൊബൈൽ ലബോറട്ടറികൾ സ്ഥാപിച്ചത്. ജില്ലകളിൽ സ്പോട്ടുകൾ നിർമ്മിച്ചാണ് മൊബൈൽ ലബോറട്ടറികൾ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നത്. എയർപോർട്ട്, കണ്ടൈൻമെന്റ് സോണുകൾ, ക്ലസ്റ്ററുകൾ, ജോലി സ്ഥലങ്ങൾ, പ്രൈമറി കോണ്ടാക്ട് ഉള്ള പ്രദേശങ്ങൾ എന്നിവിടങ്ങളിലാണ് മൊബൈൽ ലബോറട്ടറികളുടെ സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നത്.

(ഭേ., 01/03)

**നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ്:** ഏതുതരം പരാതികളും അറിയിക്കാൻ 'സി വിജിൽ' ആപ്പ് പെരുമാറ്റ ചട്ട ലംഘനം ഉൾപ്പെടെ നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പു രംഗത്തെ പരാതികളും ക്രമക്കേടുകളും അറിയിക്കാനായി സി വിജിൽ ആപ്പ്. സുതാര്യമായ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് പ്രക്രിയ ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള സംവിധാനമാണിത്. ഇതുവഴി അയയ്ക്കുന്ന പരാതികൾക്ക് 100 മിനിറ്റിനകം നടപടിയുണ്ടാകും. ചട്ട ലംഘനം കണ്ടാൽ അതു മൊബൈൽ ഫോൺ ക്യാമറയിൽ പകർത്തി സി വിജിൽ വഴി ജില്ലാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പു സെന്ററിലേക്ക് അയയ്ക്കാം. അവിടെ നിന്നു സന്ദേശം അതതു നിയമസഭ മണ്ഡലങ്ങളിലെ സ്റ്റാഫുകൾക്ക് കൈമാറും. അവർ ഉടൻ സ്ഥലത്തെത്തി നടപടി സ്വീകരിക്കും. സ്വീകരിച്ച നടപടി 100 മിനിറ്റിനകം പരാതിക്കാരനെ അറിയിക്കും. പ്ലേ സ്റ്റോറിൽ നിന്ന് ആപ് ഡൗൺലോഡ് ചെയ്യാം.

(ഭേ., 02/03)

**സ്വയംഭരണ കോളേജുകൾക്ക് മാർഗരേഖ: ഓർഡിനൻസായി**

യുജിസി റെഗുലേഷൻ 2018 ലെ അപര്യാപ്തകൾ പരിഹരിച്ചും സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ ആറ് സർവകലാശാല നിയമങ്ങളിലെ ചട്ടങ്ങളിൽ മാറ്റം വരുത്തിയുമുള്ള സ്വയംഭരണ കോളേജ് നിയമം നിലവിൽവന്നു. മന്ത്രിസഭാ ശുപാർശ ഗവർണ്ണർ അംഗീകരിച്ച് ഓർഡിനൻസിറക്കി ഗസറ്റ് വിജ്ഞാപനമായി. യുജിസി സ്വയംഭരണ പദവി അനുവദിച്ചുവെങ്കിലും കോളേജുകളുടെ സ്വതന്ത്രമായ അക്കാദമിക പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് സർവകലാശാലകളിൽ നിലനിന്ന പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്കാണ് ഇതോടെ പരിഹാരമായത്. സ്വയംഭരണ കോളേജുകൾക്ക് യുജിസി നിർദ്ദേശിക്കുന്ന അക്കാദമിക സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം നൽകുന്നതിനൊപ്പം സർവകലാശാലകൾ അവയുടെ അക്കാദമിക നിലവാരം നിരീക്ഷിക്കുകയും വിലയിരുത്തുകയും ഉറപ്പുവരുത്തുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നതാണ് നിയമം. യുജിസി ചട്ടപ്രകാരം വിവിധ കമ്മിറ്റികൾക്ക് പുറമെ ഓർഡിനൻസിലൂടെ നാല് കമ്മിറ്റികൾ കൂടി നിർബന്ധമാക്കി. അക്കാദമിക ഗുണനിലവാരം ഉറപ്പാക്കലിനുള്ള

ആഭ്യന്തര സമിതിയും, സ്വയംഭരണ പദവികളുള്ള യോഗ്യത പരിശോധിക്കാൻ ഒരു വിദഗ്ധ സമിതിയും, വിദ്യാർഥി പ്രവേശനവും ഫീസുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട പൊതു പരാതിപരിഹാര കമ്മിറ്റിയും, വിദ്യാർഥി പരാതിപരിഹാര കമ്മിറ്റിയും രൂപീകരിക്കാൻ നിയമം വ്യവസ്ഥചെയ്യുന്നു.

(ഭേ., 03/03)

**60 കഴിഞ്ഞവർക്ക് വാക്സിൻ 'ക്യൂ' വിൽ**

മുൻഗണനാ വിഭാഗങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള കോവിഡ് വാക്സിനേഷൻ വേഗത്തിൽ തീർക്കേണ്ടതിനാൽ 60 വയസ്സ് കഴിഞ്ഞവരുടെയും ഗുരുതര രോഗങ്ങളുള്ള 45 വയസ്സ് കഴിഞ്ഞവരുടെയും വാക്സിനേഷൻ നടപടികൾ വൈകിയേക്കാം. തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഡ്യൂട്ടിയിലുള്ള 3.8 ലക്ഷം പേരുടെ വാക്സിനേഷൻ 6 ന് അകം തീർക്കണമെന്ന നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. കൂടാതെ റജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ നടത്താനാകാത്ത 25,000 ആരോഗ്യപ്രവർത്തകർക്ക് ആദ്യ ഡോസും ആദ്യ ഡോസ് എടുത്ത ആരോഗ്യപ്രവർത്തകർക്കും കോവിഡ് മുന്നണിപ്പോരാളികൾക്കും രണ്ടാം ഡോസും നൽകണം. ഈ വിഭാഗങ്ങളുടെ ഒപ്പമാണ് 60 വയസ്സ് കഴിഞ്ഞവരുടെയും ഗുരുതര രോഗങ്ങളുള്ളവരുടെയും റജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ സ്വീകരിക്കുന്നത്. അതിനാലാണ് പോർട്ടലിൽ പ്രവേശിക്കാനാകാത്തതും വാക്സിനേഷനു സമയം കിട്ടാൻ വൈകുന്നതും.

(മ.മ., 03/03)

**ഐഎഎസുകാർക്കും കുടുംബത്തിനും മുഴുവൻ ചികിത്സയും സർക്കാർ വക**

സംസ്ഥാനത്തു ജോലി ചെയ്യുന്ന ഐഎഎസ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരുടെയും കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങളുടെയും സ്വദേശത്തും വിദേശത്തുമുള്ള ചികിത്സാ ചെലവു പൂർണ്ണമായും സർക്കാർ ഏറ്റെടുത്തു. ഇതിനായി പ്രത്യേക ചികിത്സാ ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങൾ അനുവദിച്ചു തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പു പെരുമാറ്റച്ചട്ടം നിലവിൽ വന്ന തീയതി വച്ചു സർക്കാർ ഉത്തരവിറക്കി. ഇതിനു കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷം ഏപ്രിൽ ഒന്നു മുതൽ പ്രാബല്യവും നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. എംഎൽഎമാർക്കും ജൂഡീഷ്യൽ ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർക്കും നൽകുന്ന രീതിയിൽ തങ്ങൾക്കും മെഡിക്കൽ റീഇംപേഴ്സ്മെന്റ് ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങൾ നൽകണമെന്ന ഐഎഎസ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരുടെ അഭ്യർത്ഥനയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിലാണ് പദ്ധതി അംഗീകരിച്ചതെന്നു ചീഫ് സെക്രട്ടറിയുടെ ഉത്തരവിൽ പറയുന്നു. സ്വകാര്യ ആശുപത്രികളിലെ മുഴുവൻ ചികിത്സാ ചെലവും സർക്കാർ വഹിക്കണം. ആരോഗ്യ ഡയറക്ടറുടെ ശുപാർശയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ വിദേശത്തു ചികിത്സയ്ക്കു പോയാൽ അതിന്റെ ചെലവും വഹിക്കും.

(മ.മ., 04/03)

**പട്ടയഭൂമിയിലെ ചട്ടവിരുദ്ധ നിർമ്മാണം വിലക്കി സർക്കാർ ഉത്തരവ്**

സംസ്ഥാനമൊട്ടാകെ പട്ടയ ഭൂമിയിൽ ഭൂപതിവു ചട്ടങ്ങൾ ലംഘിച്ചുള്ള നിർമ്മാണങ്ങൾ സർക്കാർ വിലക്കി. ഭൂമി എന്താവശ്യത്തിനു പതിച്ചു നൽകിയതാണെന്നു കൈവശ സർട്ടിഫിക്കറ്റിൽ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയതു പരിശോധിച്ച മാത്രമേ നിർമ്മാണ പെർമിറ്റ് അനുവദിക്കാൻ പാടുള്ളൂ എന്നു തദ്ദേശ വകുപ്പ് ഉത്തരവിറക്കി. ഭൂമി എന്തെങ്കിലും പ്രത്യേകാവശ്യത്തിനു പതിച്ചു നൽകിയതാണോ എന്നു വില്ലേജ് ഓഫീസർ പരിശോധിച്ച് കൈവശ സർട്ടിഫിക്കറ്റിൽ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തണമെന്നു റവന്യൂ വകുപ്പും ഉത്തരവിറക്കി. ഉത്തരവുകളുടെ പകർപ്പ് സർക്കാർ ഹൈക്കോടതിയിൽ ഹാജരാക്കി. പട്ടയഭൂമി കൃഷിക്കും വീടിനും അനുബന്ധ ആവശ്യങ്ങൾക്കും മാത്രമേ ഉപയോഗിക്കാൻ പാടുള്ളൂ എന്നാണു വ്യവസ്ഥ. റവന്യൂ അധികാരികൾ അനുവദിക്കുന്ന കൈവശ സർട്ടിഫിക്കറ്റിൽ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന വിവരം പരിശോധിച്ച ശേഷമേ ഇനി നിർമ്മാണ പെർമിറ്റ് നൽകൂ. പട്ടയഭൂമിയിൽ ചെറുകിട വ്യവസായങ്ങൾക്കും മറ്റുമായി നിർമ്മാണങ്ങൾ നടത്താനുള്ള പെർമിറ്റ് അപേക്ഷകളെ ഇതു ബാധിക്കും.

(മ.മ., 04/03)

**നമ്പർ 1: ഭരണത്തിൽ കൊച്ചി; വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തിൽ തിരുവനന്തപുരം**

നഗരസഭകളുടെ പ്രവർത്തനമികവു വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്ന ദേശീയസൂചികയിൽ ഭരണനിർവഹണ വിഭാഗത്തിൽ കൊച്ചി ഒന്നാം റാങ്ക് നേടി. 2020 ജനുവരി-മാർച്ച് മാസങ്ങളിൽ നടന്ന സർവ്വേയിലാണ് ഈ നേട്ടം. തിരുവനന്തപുരത്തിനു 40-ാം റാങ്കാണ്. അതേസമയം, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസകാര്യത്തിൽ തിരുവനന്തപുരമാണു രാജ്യത്ത് ഒന്നാമത്. കൊച്ചി 36-ാം സ്ഥാനത്താണ്. രാജ്യത്തെ 111 നഗരങ്ങളിൽ കേന്ദ്ര ഭവന, നഗരകാര്യ മന്ത്രാലയം നടത്തിയ സർവ്വേ ഫലം ഇന്നലെ കേന്ദ്രമന്ത്രി ഹർദീപ് സിങ് പുരി പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചു. ജീവിതസൗകര്യങ്ങൾ, നഗരമികവ് എന്നിവയെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കിയുള്ള പ്രധാന റാങ്കിങ്ങുകളിൽ മുന്നിലെത്താൻ കേരളത്തിലെ നഗരങ്ങൾക്കായില്ല. ജീവിതസൗകര്യങ്ങളുടെ കാര്യത്തിൽ മികച്ച വൻനഗരം ബെംഗളൂരുവാണ്. 10 ലക്ഷത്തിൽ പരം ആളുകൾ താമസിക്കുന്ന നഗരങ്ങളുടെ പട്ടികയിൽ പുനെ, അഹമ്മദാബാദ്, ചെന്നൈ, സൂറത്ത് എന്നീ നഗരങ്ങളാണു തൊട്ടുപിന്നിൽ. 10 ലക്ഷത്തിൽ താഴെ ആളുകൾ താമസിക്കുന്ന നഗരങ്ങളുടെ പട്ടികയിൽ ഷിംലയാണ് ഒന്നാം റാങ്ക്.

(മ.മ., 05/03)

**വാക്സിനേഷൻ: തിരക്കു കുറയ്ക്കാൻ സ്പോട് രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ടോക്കൺ**

സംസ്ഥാനത്തു കോവിഡ് വാക്സിൻ വിതരണത്തിലെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്കു പരിഹാരവുമായി പുതിയ ക്രമീകരണം ഏർപ്പെടുത്താൻ സർക്കാർ തീരുമാനം. ആരും തിരക്കു കൂട്ടേണ്ട കാര്യമില്ലെന്നും സംസ്ഥാനത്തു നിലവിൽ വാക്സിൻ സ്പോക്കുണ്ടെന്നും മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി പിണറായി വിജയൻ പറഞ്ഞു. തിരക്കു കുറയ്ക്കുന്നതിനു സ്പോട് രജിസ്ട്രേഷനിൽ ടോക്കൺ സംവിധാനം നടപ്പിലാക്കും. സ്പോട് രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ ഉച്ചയ്ക്കു മുൻപ് 50 ശതമാനമായും ഉച്ച കഴിഞ്ഞ് 50 ശതമാനമായും വിഭജിക്കും. ഓൺലൈൻ ആയി സന്ദർശനസമയം എടുത്തു വരുന്നവർക്കും നേരിട്ടു വരുന്നവർക്കും നിശ്ചിതഎണ്ണം അനുവദിക്കും. പരമാവധി പോർട്ടലിൽ ബുക്ക് ചെയ്തു വാക്സിനേഷൻ കേന്ദ്രത്തിൽ എത്തണം. കഴിഞ്ഞ ദിവസങ്ങളിൽ വാക്സിൻ എടുക്കാൻ പല കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലും തിരക്ക് ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ട്. കോവിൻ പോർട്ടലിൽ രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നില്ലെന്നും മിക്ക ജില്ലകളിലും ബുക്കിങ്ങിനായി ഓൺലൈൻ സ്പോട്ടുകൾ ലഭ്യമല്ലെന്നും പരാതി ഉണ്ട്.

(മ.മ., 05/03)

**2020- 21 ലെ ഫീസും പുതുക്കാനുള്ള വിധി ശരിവച്ചു**

മാനദണ്ഡങ്ങൾ അനുസരിച്ചു 2020- 21 അധ്യയന വർഷത്തെ സ്വാശ്രയ ഫീസും പുതുക്കി നിർണ്ണയിക്കാനുള്ള കേരള ഹൈക്കോടതി ഉത്തരവ് സുപ്രീം കോടതി ശരിവച്ചു. 6% വർധനയോടെ നവംബറിൽ ഫീസ് നിർണ്ണയ സമിതി പുതുക്കി നിശ്ചയിച്ച ഫീസ് പുനർനിർണ്ണയിക്കാൻ കേരള ഹൈക്കോടതി നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചിരുന്നു. ഇതിനെതിരെ സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാർ നൽകിയ ഹർജിയിലാണ് ജസ്റ്റിസ് എൽ. നാഗേശ്വർ റാവു അധ്യക്ഷനായ ബെഞ്ചിന്റെ ഉത്തരവ്. ജനുവരി 25 നു തന്നെ സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാർ കോടതിയെ സമീപിച്ചിരുന്നെങ്കിലും ഹർജി പരിഗണിച്ചത് ഇന്നലെയാണ്. ഇതിനിടെ, ഫീസിൽ 1 ലക്ഷം രൂപ കുറവു വരുത്തിയിരുന്നു. ഇതിനെതിരെയും കോളജുകൾ ഹൈക്കോടതിയിൽ നൽകിയ ഹർജി നിലനിൽക്കെയാണ് സുപ്രീം കോടതി സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാരിന്റെ പ്രത്യേകാനുമതി ഹർജി പരിഗണിച്ചത്. എന്നാൽ, നിലവിൽ നിശ്ചയിച്ച ഫീസ് അസ്ഥിരപ്പെടുത്തിയ കോടതി, എല്ലാ വശങ്ങളും പരിശോധിച്ച ഫീസ് നിർണ്ണയിക്കാൻ നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചു. കഴിഞ്ഞ 4 വർഷത്തെ ഫീസ് പുനർനിർണ്ണയിക്കാനുള്ള ഫെബ്രുവരി 25 ലെ വിധിക്കു സമാനമായി ഇതു പരിഗണിക്കാനാണ് നിർദ്ദേശം.

(മ.മ., 06/03)

**കേരളം വൈദ്യുതി വിൽക്കുന്നു**

ലോഡ് ഷെഡിങ്ങും പവർകട്ടും പഴങ്കഥയാക്കിയ കെഎസ്ഇബി വൈദ്യുതി വിറ്റ് സാമ്പത്തിക നേട്ടത്തിലേക്ക്. സംസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ ആവശ്യം കഴിഞ്ഞുള്ള വൈദ്യുതി



പവർ എക്സ്പോഷ് വഴിയാണ് ലാഭകരമായി വിൽക്കുന്നത്. പകൽ കേരളത്തിന്റെ വൈദ്യുതി ലഭ്യത 3500 മെഗാവാട്ടാണ്. ആവശ്യകത 3000-3100 മെഗാവാട്ടും. ശേഷിക്കുന്ന വൈദ്യുതിയാണ് വിൽക്കുന്നത്. യൂണിറ്റിന് നാലര രൂപയ്ക്കു മുകളിലാണ് വിൽപ്പന. ദമ്പതര രൂപയ്ക്കുവരെ വിൽപ്പന നടത്താൻ കേരളത്തിനാകുന്നു. വൈകിട്ട് 4400 മെഗാവാട്ടാണ് ലഭ്യത. ആവശ്യകത 4100 ഉം. സാധ്യമായ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ ഈ വൈദ്യുതിയും വിൽക്കുന്നു. ലാഭം ഉറപ്പാക്കിയാണ് വിൽപ്പന. ഇടമൺ-കൊച്ചി പവർ ഹൈവേ യാഥാർഥ്യമാക്കിയതും പുഗലൂർ-മാടക്കത്തറ എച്ച്വിഡിസി ലൈൻ സജ്ജമാക്കിയതും അധിക വൈദ്യുതിയുണ്ടാക്കാൻ സഹായിച്ചു. പുതിയ അന്തർസംസ്ഥാന ലൈൻ സ്ഥാപിച്ച് ഇറക്കുമതിശേഷി ഉയർത്തിയതിനൊപ്പം ആഭ്യന്തര ഉൽപ്പാദനശേഷി ഉയർത്താനുമായി. അഞ്ചു വർഷത്തിനുള്ളിൽ 320 മെഗാവാട്ടാണ് വർധന. സോളാറിൽനിന്നു മാത്രം 260 മെഗാവാട്ട്. ജലവൈദ്യുത പദ്ധതികളിൽനിന്ന് 24.1, കാറ്റിൽനിന്ന് 27 മെഗാവാട്ട് ശേഷിയും കൈവരിച്ചു. നിലവിൽ വേനൽ കടുക്കുന്നതിനനുസൃതമായി ഉപയോഗം വർധിക്കുന്നത് കണക്കിലെടുത്ത് വൈദ്യുതി മുടങ്ങാതിരിക്കാനുള്ള നടപടിയും സ്വീകരിച്ചു.

(ഭേ., 06/03)

**വരും ഉരുക്കിന്റെ ഉറപ്പുള്ള മണലിഷ്ടിക; സംസ്ഥാന പൊതുമേഖല സ്ഥാപനത്തിന്റെ പുതു ചുവടുവയ്പ്**

ഉരുക്ക് നിർമാണശാലയായ ചേർത്തല ഓട്ടോകാസ്റ്റിൽനിന്ന് ഇനി മണലിഷ്ടികയും. അവശിഷ്ട മണലിൽനിന്നാണ് ഇഷ്ടിക നിർമ്മിക്കുന്നത്. ഇന്ത്യൻ റെയിൽവേയ്ക്കായി ബോഗിയും മാരുതി കാറിന് ബ്രേക്കും നിർമ്മിച്ചതിനു പിന്നാലെയാണ് സംസ്ഥാന പൊതുമേഖല സ്ഥാപനത്തിന്റെ പുതു ചുവടുവയ്പ്. തിരുവനന്തപുരം പാപ്പനംകോട്ടെ നാഷണൽ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഫോർ ഇന്റർഡിസിപ്ലിനറി സയൻസ് ആൻഡ് ടെക്നോളജി(എൻഐഐഎസ്ടി)മായി ചേർന്നാണ് പദ്ധതി നടപ്പാക്കുക. മന്ത്രി ഇ പി ജയരാജൻ കഴിഞ്ഞ ദിവസം ഇതുസംബന്ധിച്ച ധാരണപത്രം ഒപ്പിട്ടു. ഓട്ടോകാസ്റ്റിലെ മണലുപയോഗിച്ച് പരീക്ഷണാടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ എൻഐഐഎസ്ടി ഇഷ്ടിക നിർമ്മിച്ചു. ഇന്റർലോക്ക് ഉൾപ്പെടെ മൂന്നു നിറത്തിലുള്ള ഇഷ്ടികയാണ് നിർമ്മിച്ചത്. പാപ്പനംകോട്ടുനിന്നുള്ള വിദഗ്ധ സംഘം ബുധനാഴ്ച ഓട്ടോകാസ്റ്റ് സന്ദർശിക്കും. യന്ത്രസാമഗ്രി സ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നതുൾപ്പെടെ പരിശോധിക്കും.

(ഭേ., 07/03)

**പാടില്ല ഫ്ലൈക്സ്, പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക്; ഹരിതചട്ടം കർശനമാക്കി കമ്മീഷൻ**

തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പു പ്രചാരണത്തിനായി രാഷ്ട്രീയ പാർട്ടികളും സ്ഥാനാർഥികളും പിവിസി ഫ്ലൈക്സ് ബോർഡുകൾ, ബാനറുകൾ, പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് കൊടി തോരണങ്ങൾ തുടങ്ങി പരിസ്ഥിതി സൗഹൃദമല്ലാത്ത വസ്തുക്കൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നത് തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് കമ്മീഷൻ വിലക്കി. കൊറിയൻ ക്ലോത്തും പാടില്ല. നൈലോൺ, പോളിയസ്റ്റർ തുണി തുടങ്ങി പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക്കിന്റെ അംശമോ പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് കോട്ടിങ്ങോ ഉള്ള പുനഃചംക്രമണ സാധ്യമല്ലാത്ത ബാനർ, ബോർഡുകൾ തുടങ്ങിയവയും നിരോധിച്ചു. പകരം കോട്ടൺ തുണി, പേപ്പർ, പോളി എത്തിലിൻ തുടങ്ങിയ പുനരുപയോഗ, പുനഃചംക്രമണ സാധ്യമായ വസ്തുക്കൾ ഉപയോഗിച്ചുള്ള ബാനറുകളോ ബോർഡുകളോ മാത്രമേ ഉപയോഗിക്കാവൂ. ബോർഡുകളിലും ബാനറുകളിലും റീസൈക്ലബിൾ, പിവിസി ഫ്രീ എന്ന ലോഗോയും ഉപയോഗം അവസാനിക്കുന്ന തീയതിയും പ്രിന്റ് ചെയ്യുന്ന സ്ഥാപനത്തിന്റെ പേരും പ്രിന്റിങ് നമ്പറും ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തണം. പ്രചാരണം കഴിയുമ്പോൾ അതതു രാഷ്ട്രീയ പാർട്ടികൾ ബോർഡുകളും ബാനറുകളും ശേഖരിച്ച് തദ്ദേശ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിലെ ഹരിതകർമ്മ സേന മുഖേന ക്ലീൻ കേരള കമ്പനിക്കു കൈമാറണം. രാഷ്ട്രീയ പാർട്ടികളുടെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഓഫീസുകൾ അലങ്കരിക്കുന്നതിനും പ്രകൃതി സൗഹൃദ വസ്തുക്കൾ തന്നെ ഉപയോഗിക്കണം.

(മ.മ., 07/03)

**ഉറപ്പോടെ പാലാരിവട്ടം: പുനർനിർമ്മിച്ച പാലം നാടിന് സമർപ്പിച്ചു**

പുനർനിർമ്മിച്ച പാലാരിവട്ടം പാലം ഗതാഗതത്തിന് തുറന്നുകൊടുത്തു. തകരാറിലായ പാലത്തിൽ ചെന്നൈ ഐഐടി റിപ്പോർട്ടിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ 2019 മേയ് 1 മുതൽ ഗതാഗതം നിർത്തിവെച്ചിരിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു. തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പു പെരുമാറ്റ ചട്ടം നിലനിൽക്കുന്നതിനാൽ വൈകിട്ട് 4 ന് ദേശീയപാത വിഭാഗം ചീഫ് എൻജിനീയറാണ് പാലം തുറന്നു നൽകിയത്. നേരത്തേ മന്ത്രി ജി.സുധാകരനും ഉന്നത ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരും പാലം സന്ദർശിച്ചിരുന്നു. തകരാറിലായ ഗർഡറുകളും പിയർ ക്യാമ്പുകളും പൊളിച്ചു പുതിയവ നിർമ്മിച്ചു. തൂണുകൾ ബലപ്പെടുത്തി. റെക്കോർഡ് സമയം കൊണ്ടാണു പാലം പുനർനിർമ്മാണം പൂർത്തിയായത്. 100 വർഷത്തെ ഈട് ഉറപ്പാക്കിയാണു പാലം ഗതാഗതത്തിനു തുറന്നു നൽകുന്നതെന്നു മന്ത്രി ജി.സുധാകരൻ പറഞ്ഞു. 5 മാസവും 10 ദിവസവുംമെടുത്താണ് ഡിഎംആർസിയും ഊരാളുങ്കൽ ലേബർ സൊസൈറ്റിയും ചേർന്ന് പാലം പുനർനിർമ്മിച്ചത്.

(ഭേ., 08/03)

**അസംസ്കൃത വസ്തുക്കളുടെ വിലവർധന; പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് വ്യവസായം പ്രതിസന്ധിയിൽ**

അസംസ്കൃതവസ്തുക്കളുടെ അനിയന്ത്രിതമായ വിലക്കയറ്റവും ലഭ്യതക്കുറവുമൂലം പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് വ്യവസായങ്ങൾ പ്രതിസന്ധിയിലാണെന്ന് വ്യവസായികൾ. ചെറുകിട, ഇടത്തരം മേഖലയിലെ ഒട്ടേറെ പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് വ്യവസായ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ അടച്ചുപൂട്ടൽ ഭീഷണി നേരിടുന്നതായും ഇവർ പറയുന്നു. സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് വ്യവസായമേഖലയിൽ 1340 യൂണിറ്റുകളുണ്ട്. അസംസ്കൃതവസ്തുക്കളുടെ ലഭ്യതക്കുറവുമൂലം പ്രവർത്തനശേഷിയുടെ 50 ശതമാനത്തിൽ താഴെമാത്രമേ ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുത്താൻ കഴിയുന്നുള്ളൂ. അസംസ്കൃതവസ്തുവായ വിവിധതരം പോളിമറുകൾക്ക് 50 മുതൽ 155 ശതമാനംവരെയാണ് കഴിഞ്ഞ ആറുമാസത്തിനുള്ളിൽ വില കൂടിയത്. വിപണിയിൽനിന്ന് കിലോയ്ക്ക് 15 മുതൽ 20 രൂപവരെ അധികം നൽകി അസംസ്കൃതവസ്തു വാങ്ങേണ്ട ഗതികേടിലാണ് പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് വ്യവസായികൾ. പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് പൈപ്പുകൾ, ഡ്രിപ്പ് ഇറിഗേഷൻ സിസ്റ്റം, വാട്ടർ ടാങ്കുകൾ, നെയ്യ് ചാക്കുകൾ എന്നിവയുടെ വിലയെയും ഇത് ബാധിക്കും. കളിപ്പാട്ടനിർമ്മാതാക്കളും പ്രതിസന്ധിയിലാണ്. പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് ഉൽപ്പന്നങ്ങൾ അസംസ്കൃതവസ്തുവായി ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന മറ്റ് മേഖലകൾക്കും ഉൽപ്പാദനച്ചെലവിൽ വർധനയുണ്ടാകുമെന്ന് കേരള പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് മാനഫാക്ചറേഴ്സ് അസോസിയേഷൻ സംസ്ഥാന പ്രസിഡന്റ് ബാലകൃഷ്ണ ഭട്ട് കാക്കഞ്ചേരി, ജനറൽ സെക്രട്ടറി എം എസ് ജോർജ്ജ് എന്നിവർ പറഞ്ഞു.

(ഭേ., 08/03)

**കോവിഡ്: 48,960 ഡോസ് വാക്സിൻ കൂടി സംസ്ഥാനത്തേത്തി**

സംസ്ഥാനത്തു 48,960 ഡോസ് കോവിഡ് വാക്സിൻ കൂടി ഇന്നലെ എത്തി. ഭാരത് ബയോടെക്കിന്റെ കോവാക്സിനാണ് എത്തിയത്. സംഭരണ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളായ തിരുവനന്തപുരത്തു 16,640 ഡോസും എറണാകുളത്തു 19,200 ഡോസും കോഴിക്കോട് 13,120 ഡോസും എത്തിച്ചു. സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് ഇതുവരെ 10,19,525 പേർ വാക്സിൻ സ്വീകരിച്ചു. 3,65,942 ആരോഗ്യ പ്രവർത്തകർ ഒരു ഡോസ് വാക്സിനും 1,86,421 ആരോഗ്യ പ്രവർത്തകർ 2 ഡോസ് വാക്സിനും സ്വീകരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. 98,287 മുന്നണിപ്പോരാളികൾക്കും 2,15,297 തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർക്കും വാക്സിൻ നൽകി. അറുപതിനേഴ് മുകളിൽ പ്രായമുള്ള 1,53,578 പേർക്കും 45 നേ മുകളിലുള്ള ഗുരുതര രോഗികൾക്കും വാക്സിൻ നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

(മ.മ., 09/03)

**തപാൽ വോട്ട് : അപേക്ഷ വിജ്ഞാപനശേഷം**

തപാൽവോട്ട് ചെയ്യിപ്പിക്കാൻ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർ വീട്ടിലെത്തുമ്പോൾ സ്ഥാനാർഥിയുടെ പ്രതിനിധിയെയോ രാഷ്ട്രീയപ്രവർത്തകരെയോ വോട്ടറുടെ വീട്ടിനുള്ളിൽ കയറാൻ അനുവദിക്കില്ല. പോളിങ് നടപടിക്രമങ്ങൾ വീഡിയോയിൽ ചിത്രീകരിക്കും. രണ്ടു പോളിങ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർ, ഒരു പോലീസ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥൻ, വീഡിയോഗ്രാഫർ എന്നിവരാണ് 'വീടുകളിലെ ബൂത്തിൽ' വോട്ടറെ തേടിയെത്തുക. തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് വിജ്ഞാപനമിറങ്ങിയാലുടൻ 17 വരെ തപാൽ വോട്ടിനായി അപേക്ഷിക്കാം. 80 വയസ്സ് കഴിഞ്ഞവർ കോവിഡ് ബാധിതർ, ക്യാരന്റീനിലുള്ളവർ, ഭിന്നശേഷിക്കാർ തുടങ്ങിയവർക്ക് തപാൽവോട്ടിന് അപേക്ഷിക്കാനുള്ള 12-ഡി ഫോറം ബി.എൽ.ഒ.മാർ വീടുകളിലെത്തിക്കും. വീടുകളിലെത്തി വോട്ടുചെയ്യിപ്പിക്കുന്ന തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർതന്നെ ബാലറ്റ് അടങ്ങിയ കവർ തിരിച്ചുവാങ്ങും.

(മാ., 10/03)

**ഇനി ആധാരില്ലാതെ വാഹനവുമില്ല ലൈസൻസുമില്ല: വിജ്ഞാപനമായി**

പുതിയ വാഹനങ്ങളുടെ രജിസ്ട്രേഷനും, ഡ്രൈവിംഗ് ലൈസൻസിനും ആധാർ നിർബന്ധിത തിരിച്ചറിയൽ രേഖയായക്കിടക്കാണ് കേന്ദ്രസർക്കാർ വിജ്ഞാപനമിറക്കി. ഏപ്രിൽ മുതൽ സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് പ്രാബല്യത്തിൽ വരുമെന്ന് ഗതാഗതവകുപ്പ് അധികൃതർ അറിയിച്ചു. ഇതോടെ പുതിയ വാഹനങ്ങളുടെ രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ പരിശോധന ഒഴിവാകുമെന്നതാണ് പ്രധാന നേട്ടം. ഷോറൂമിൽ നിന്നു വാഹനം പുറത്തിറങ്ങുമ്പോൾത്തന്നെ സ്ഥിരം രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ നമ്പർ ലഭിക്കും. മറ്റു സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും വ്യത്യസ്തമായി എല്ലാ പുതിയ വാഹനങ്ങൾക്കും ഓൺലൈനിൽ താത്കാലിക രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ നൽകുന്ന രീതി ഇവിടെയുണ്ട്. ഇതിൽ മാറ്റം വരുത്തും. ഫാൻസി നമ്പർ ബുക്ക് ചെയ്യുന്നവർക്കും, ബോഡി നിർമ്മിക്കേണ്ടവർക്കും മാത്രമാകും താത്കാലിക രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ നൽകുക. അപേക്ഷകൻ നേരിട്ട് ഓഫീസിലെത്തുന്നത് ഒഴിവാക്കാൻ 18 സേവനങ്ങൾക്കും ആധാർ നിർബന്ധമാക്കി. ഇതിൽ ഡ്രൈവിംഗ് ലൈസൻസ് സംബന്ധമായ സേവനങ്ങൾ ഒഴികെയുള്ളതെല്ലാം സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് നേരത്തെ തന്നെ ഓൺലൈനാക്കിയിരുന്നു.

(കേ.കൗ., 10/03)

**പരിരക്ഷയുടെ പെണ്ണിടം 25-ാം വർഷത്തിലേക്ക്**

വനിതാ അവകാശങ്ങൾക്ക് പരിരക്ഷയും അഭയവുമായി മാറിയ സംസ്ഥാന വനിതാ കമ്മീഷൻ രജതജൂബിലിയിലേക്ക്. സംസ്ഥാന വനിതാ കമ്മീഷൻ രൂപവത്കരിച്ചിട്ട്

14-ന് 25 വർഷം തികയുന്നു. സ്ത്രീശാക്തീകരണത്തിനു പുതിയ ദിശയും ആത്മവിശ്വാസവുമേകിയ നിരവധി മാറ്റങ്ങൾക്കു വഴിപാകിക്കൊണ്ടാണ് വനിതാ കമ്മീഷൻ രണ്ടരപ്പതിറ്റാണ്ട് പിന്നിടുന്നത്. സ്ത്രീകൾക്കെതിരായ അക്രമങ്ങൾ അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നതിനും പരിഹരിക്കുന്നതിനുമായി കേരള വുമൺ കമ്മീഷൻ ആക്ട് അനുസരിച്ച് നിയമ സ്ഥാപനം എന്ന നിലയിലാണ് കേരള വനിതാ കമ്മീഷൻ സ്ഥാപിതമായത്. ദേശീയ വനിതാ കമ്മീഷന്റെ മാതൃകയിൽ 1990-ൽ തന്നെ കമ്മീഷൻ ബില്ലിന്റെ കരട് തയ്യാറാക്കിയിരുന്നു. അന്നത്തെ സാമൂഹികക്ഷേമ വകുപ്പ് മന്ത്രി കെ. ആർ. ഗൗരിയമ്മയുടെ മാർഗ നിർദ്ദേശത്തിലും ജസറ്റിസ് വി. ആർ. കൃഷ്ണയ്യർ. ജസ്റ്റിസ് സുബ്രഹ്മണ്യൻ പോറ്റി എന്നിവരുടെ നിയമോപദേശത്തിലുമായിരുന്നു കരട്. പക്ഷേ ബില്ലിന് അനുമതി കിട്ടാൻ അഞ്ചു വർഷം കാത്തിരിക്കേണ്ടി വന്നു. 1996-ൽ എ. കെ. ആന്റണി മുഖ്യമന്ത്രിയായിരുന്ന കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ, ആദ്യ കമ്മീഷൻ രൂപവത്കരിച്ചു.

(മാ., 11/03)

**തടവുകാർ ജയിലിലേക്ക് മടങ്ങണം**

കോവിഡിനെത്തുടർന്ന് തടവുകാർക്ക് അനുവദിച്ച ഇളവുകൾ ഹൈക്കോടതി ഒഴിവാക്കി. ബാങ്ക് റിക്കവറി നടപടികൾക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്ന വിലക്കും നീക്കി. കഴിഞ്ഞവർഷം മാർച്ച് 25-നാണ് ഇക്കാര്യത്തിൽ കോടതി ഇളവുകൾ അനുവദിച്ചത്. കോവിഡ് നിയന്ത്രണങ്ങൾ നീങ്ങി കോടതികളുടെയടക്കം പ്രവർത്തനം സാധാരണ നിലയിലായതു കണക്കിലെടുത്താണ് ഇളവുകൾ ഒഴിവാക്കുന്നതെന്ന് ചീഫ് ജസ്റ്റിസ് എസ്. മണികുമാർ അധ്യക്ഷനായ ഫുൾ ബെഞ്ചിന്റെ ഉത്തരവിൽ പറയുന്നു. ചീഫ് ജസ്റ്റിസിനു പുറമെ ജസ്റ്റിസ് സി. ടി. രവികുമാർ, ജസ്റ്റിസ് ഷാജി പി. ചാലി എന്നിവരടങ്ങുന്ന ബെഞ്ചാണ് വിഷയം പരിഗണിച്ചത്. പരോളിൽ ഇറങ്ങിയവർ. വിചാരണത്തടവുകാർ എന്നിവർക്കാണ് ഇളവുകൾ നൽകിയിരുന്നത്. ജാമ്യാപേക്ഷകളിൽ തീരുമാനമെടുക്കുമ്പോൾ പരിഗണന നൽകിയിരുന്നു. ഇതെല്ലാമാണ് ഇപ്പോൾ ഒഴിവാക്കിയത്. പരോളിലുള്ള തടവുകാർ നാലാഴ്ചയ്ക്കുള്ളിൽ ജയിലിൽ റിപ്പോർട്ടുചെയ്യണമെന്നാണു നിർദ്ദേശം.

(മാ., 12/03)

**ശബ്ദതാരാവലി ഡിജിറ്റലായി**

ഭാഷയെ സ്നേഹിക്കുന്നവർക്കിതാ സന്തോഷവാർത്ത. മലയാള ഭാഷയുടെ ആധികാരിക നിഘണ്ടുവായ ശബ്ദതാരാവലി ഇനി വിരൽത്തുമ്പിൽ ലഭിക്കും. ശ്രീകണ്ഠേശ്വരം പദ്മനാഭപിള്ള രചിച്ച രണ്ടാടയിരത്തിലധികം പേജുകളുള്ള ശബ്ദതാരാവലിയുടെ

വെബ്സൈറ്റ് പ്രവർത്തനസജ്ജമായി. മലയാള ഭാഷാ നിഘണ്ടുകളിൽ ഏറ്റവും ആധികാരികമെന്ന അംഗീകാരം ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള ഈഗ്രന്ഥം വാക്കുകളുടെ അർത്ഥാന്വേഷണത്തിലെ അവസാനവാക്കാണ്. ശബ്ദതാരാവലിയുടെ ആദ്യഭാഗം പൂർത്തിയാക്കാൻ പദ്മനാഭപിള്ള 20 വർഷമാണ് പരിശ്രമിച്ചത്. അഞ്ചുവർഷം നീണ്ട കഠിനപ്രയത്നങ്ങൾക്കൊടുവിലാണ് നിഘണ്ടുവിന്റെ ഡിജിറ്റൽ പതിപ്പിറങ്ങുന്നത്. സി. വി. രാധാകൃഷ്ണന്റെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ തിരുവനന്തപുരം ആസ്ഥാനമായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന 'സായാഹ്ന ഫൗണ്ടേഷൻ' നാണ് സംരംഭത്തിനുപിന്നിൽ പ്രവർത്തിച്ചത്. മലയാളത്തിൽ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ച പുസ്തകങ്ങളുടെ സംരക്ഷണം ലക്ഷ്യമിട്ട് രൂപവത്കരിച്ച കൂട്ടായ്മയാണ് സായാഹ്ന. കൃതികളുടെ ഡിജിറ്റൽ രൂപങ്ങളൊരുക്കുന്ന ആഗോളകൂട്ടായ്മയാണിത്. ഡിജിറ്റൽ പതിപ്പിനൊപ്പം മൂലഗ്രന്ഥത്തിന്റെ സ്കാൻ ചെയ്ത പി. ഡി. എഫ്. പേജുകളും ലഭ്യമാണ്. 'ലെക്ലോണമി'സെർവറിലും ശബ്ദതാരാവലി ലഭ്യമാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. 2015-ൽ ശബ്ദതാരാവലിയുടെ മൂലഗ്രന്ഥം ബംഗളൂരുവിലെ സെമിനാരിയിൽ കണ്ടെത്തിയതോടെയാണ് ഡിജിറ്റൽ പതിപ്പിന്റെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ തുടങ്ങിയത്. മുഴുവൻ പേജുകളും സ്കാൻ ചെയ്ത് ലഭ്യമാക്കിയത് ഷിജു അലക്സ്, വിശ്വപ്രഭ, ബൈജു രാമകൃഷ്ണൻ, ബെഞ്ചമിൻ വർഗീസ്, വി. എസ്. സുനിൽ എന്നിവരാണ്. പിന്നീട് ഇത് യൂണികോഡ് വ്യവസ്ഥയിലാക്കാനുള്ള പണി തുടങ്ങി. മലയാൻകീഴിലെ റിവർവാലി ടെക്നോളജി ജീവനക്കാർക്കു പുറമേ കെ. എ. അഭിജിത്, മനോജ് കരിങ്ങാമംത്തിൽ. ശ്രീലത പിള്ള തുടങ്ങിയവരാണ് ഈ സംരംഭത്തിന് തുണയായത്.

(മാ., 13/03)

**സ്കൂളുകൾക്കു സമീപം പെട്രോൾ പമ്പ് പാടില്ല**

സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ സ്കൂളുകളുടെ സമീപം 50 മീറ്റർ പരിധിയിൽ പെട്രോൾ പമ്പുകൾ അനുവദിക്കുന്നത് വിലക്കി സംസ്ഥാന ബാലാവകാശ സംരക്ഷണ കമ്മീഷൻ ഉത്തരവായി. വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുടെ സുരക്ഷയ്ക്ക് പ്രാധാന്യം നൽകുന്നതിനെ മുൻ നിർത്തിയാണ് നടപടി. അനുമതി നൽകുന്നതിനുമുമ്പ് തദ്ദേശഭരണസ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ പാലിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടെന്ന് ഉറപ്പുവരുത്തണമെന്ന് കമ്മീഷൻ അംഗം കെ. നസീർ പറഞ്ഞു. ഇതിനുവിരുദ്ധമായി അടിയന്തര സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ പെട്രോൾ പമ്പ് അനുവദിക്കേണ്ടി വന്നാലും 30 മീറ്റർ അകലം നിർബന്ധമായി പാലിക്കണം. ദേശീയ ഹരിത ടിബ്യൂണലിന്റെ നിർദ്ദേശത്തെ തുടർന്നാണ് സംസ്ഥാന മലിനീകരണ നിയന്ത്രണ ബോർഡ് സർക്കുലർ പുറപ്പെടുവിച്ചത്. ഇക്കാര്യങ്ങൾ തദ്ദേശഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ ഉറപ്പ് വരുത്തണം. നിർദ്ദിഷ്ട ദൂരപരിധിക്കുള്ളിൽ 30 മീറ്ററിനുമേൽ പമ്പുകൾക്ക് അനുവാദം നൽകുമ്പോൾ പെട്രോളിയം ആൻഡ് എക്സ്പ്ലോസീവ്സ് സേഫ്റ്റി ഓർഗനൈസേഷൻ

മുന്നോട്ടു വെച്ച സുരക്ഷാമാനദണ്ഡങ്ങൾ കൃത്യമായി പാലിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടെന്ന് ഉറപ്പുവരുത്തണം. ഇക്കാര്യങ്ങൾ തദ്ദേശഭരണ സെക്രട്ടറി, പഞ്ചായത്ത് ഡയറക്ടർ, മുനിസിപ്പൽ ഡയറക്ടർ എന്നിവർ ഉറപ്പുവരുത്തണമെന്നും ഉത്തരവിൽ പറയുന്നു.

(ഭേ., 13/03)

**വാഹനങ്ങളിൽ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് പരസ്യം പതിക്കുന്നതിന് നിയന്ത്രണം**

നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് പ്രചാരണഭാഗമായി പൊതു-സ്വകാര്യ വാഹനങ്ങളിൽ അനുമതിയില്ലാതെ പരസ്യം പതിക്കുന്നതിന് തടയിട്ട് മോട്ടോർ വാഹനവകുപ്പ്. തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് പരസ്യം പതിച്ച പൊതുവാഹനങ്ങൾ നിരത്തിലിറക്കണമെങ്കിൽ മോട്ടോർ വാഹനവകുപ്പിന് നിശ്ചിതതുക ഫീസായി നൽകണം. അല്ലാത്ത വാഹന ഉടമകളിൽ നിന്ന് പരസ്യത്തിന്റെ ഫീസിനൊപ്പം നിശ്ചിതതുക പിഴയായി ഈടാക്കും. സ്വകാര്യവാഹനങ്ങളിൽ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് പ്രചാരണവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട പരസ്യങ്ങൾ പതിക്കരുതെന്നും മോട്ടോർവാഹനവകുപ്പ് നിർദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നു. ലംഘിച്ചാൽ ഇവരിൽ നിന്ന് പിഴയീടാക്കും. പരസ്യം പതിക്കാൻ വാഹനങ്ങളിൽ രൂപമാറ്റം വരുത്തുന്നതിനും പിഴയുണ്ട്.

(മാ., 14/03)

**കോവിഡ് പ്രതിരോധത്തിന് ത്രിതലസമിതികൾ വരുന്നു.**

നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിൽ കോവിഡ് മാനദണ്ഡങ്ങൾ പാലിക്കുന്നുണ്ടെന്ന് ഉറപ്പുവരുത്താൻ സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് മൂന്നുതലങ്ങളിൽ ആരോഗ്യ ഏകോപനസമിതികൾ വരുന്നു. സംസ്ഥാന, ജില്ലാ, നിയോജകമണ്ഡലം തലങ്ങളിലാണ് ഏകോപനസമിതികൾ രൂപവൽക്കരിക്കുന്നത്. കോവിഡ് വ്യാപനത്തിന്റെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ, പ്രദേശീകതലത്തിൽ മാർഗരേഖ തയ്യാറാക്കി തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിന് അനുയോജ്യമായ സാഹചര്യമൊരുക്കാൻ കേന്ദ്ര തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് കമ്മീഷൻ സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങൾക്ക് നിർദ്ദേശം നൽകിയിരുന്നു. ഇതിന്റെയടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ മുഖ്യ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഓഫീസർ, ആരോഗ്യവകുപ്പ് പ്രിൻസിപ്പൽ സെക്രട്ടറി, ഡയറക്ടർ എന്നിവരുടേയ്ക്കു സഹായം ചർച്ചകൾ നടത്തിയാണ് നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ സമർപ്പിച്ചത്.

(മാ., 14/03)

**ഒൻപതാം ക്ലാസുകാരെ മുഴുവൻ ജയിപ്പിക്കും**

ഒൻപതാം ക്ലാസ് വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളെ മുഴുവൻ 10-ാം ക്ലാസിലേക്കു ജയിപ്പിക്കാൻ തീരുമാനം. 11-ാം ക്ലാസ് പരീക്ഷയെക്കുറിച്ച് പിന്നീട് തീരുമാനിക്കും. ഇപ്പോൾ 8-ാം ക്ലാസ് വരെ എല്ലാവരെയും ജയിപ്പിക്കുന്ന സംവിധാനമുണ്ട്. നിബന്ധനകൾക്കു വിധേയമായി 9-ാം ക്ലാസിലും ഇതു നടപ്പാക്കും. ഓൺലൈൻ ക്ലാസിലെ ഹാജർ ഉൾപ്പെടെ പരിഗണിച്ചായിരിക്കും തീരുമാനം. കഴിഞ്ഞവർഷം ഒന്ന്, രണ്ട് ടോ

പരീക്ഷകളുടെ മാർക്ക് കണക്കിലെടുത്തായിരുന്നു 9-ാം ക്ലാസിലെ വിജയികളെ തിരമാനിച്ചത്. ഇത്തവണ ടോപരീക്ഷകൾ പോലും നടത്താനായില്ല.

(മ.മ., 15/03)

**ട്രാൻസ്ജെൻഡേഴ്സിന് എൻസിസി പ്രവേശനത്തിന് അനുമതി**

ട്രാൻസ്ജെൻഡേഴ്സിന് എൻസിസി പ്രവേശനത്തിന് അനുമതി നൽകാൻ ഹൈക്കോടതി ഉത്തരവിട്ടു. എൻസിസി ആക്ട് വിവേചനപരമാണെന്നു നിരീക്ഷിച്ച കോടതി വ്യവസ്ഥകൾ ആറുമാസത്തിനകം ഭേദഗതിചെയ്യാൻ കേന്ദ്രസർക്കാരിന് നിർദ്ദേശം നൽകി. എൻസിസിയിൽ പ്രവേശനം നിഷേധിച്ചതിനെതിരെ തിരുവനന്തപുരം യൂണിവേഴ്സിറ്റി കോളേജിലെ വിദ്യാർഥിനി ഹിന ഹനീഫ സമർപ്പിച്ച ഹർജി പരിഗണിച്ചാണ് ജസ്റ്റിസ് അനൂപ് ശിവരാമന്റെ ഉത്തരവ്. ട്രാൻസ്ജെൻഡേഴ്സിന് അവകാശങ്ങൾ ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്ന 2019ലെ നിയമത്തിന് വിരുദ്ധമാണ് എൻസിസി വ്യവസ്ഥകളെന്ന് കോടതി ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടി. ട്രാൻസ്ജെൻഡേഴ്സിന് നിയമം മൂന്നാംലിംഗ വിഭാഗത്തിന് മൗലികാവകാശങ്ങൾ ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്നതാണെന്നും എൻസിസി ആക്ടിലെ വ്യവസ്ഥകൾ അതിനു തടസ്സമാകരുതെന്നും കോടതി വ്യക്തമാക്കി. എൻസിസിയിൽ മൂന്നാംലിംഗക്കാർക്ക് പ്രവേശനം നൽകാൻ വ്യവസ്ഥയില്ലെന്നും നിലവിൽ ആൺകുട്ടികൾക്കും പെൺകുട്ടികൾക്കും മാത്രമേ അവസരമുള്ളൂ എന്നുമുള്ള കേന്ദ്രസർക്കാർ വാദം കോടതി തള്ളി. ഹർജിക്കാരിക്ക് പ്രവേശനനടപടിയിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാമെന്നും സീനിയർ പെൺകുട്ടികളുടെ വിഭാഗത്തിൽ അപേക്ഷ പരിഗണിക്കാനും കോടതി നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചു.

(ഭേ., 16/03)

**പത്താം ക്ലാസ് അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കിയ പൊതു പരീക്ഷ എഴുത്താത്തവർക്കായി അഞ്ചാം ഘട്ടവും നടത്തും**

പത്താം ക്ലാസ് യോഗ്യത വേണ്ട തസ്തികകളിലേക്കു പിഎസ്സി നടത്തിയ പൊതു പരീക്ഷയുടെ നാലു ഘട്ടങ്ങളിലും മതിയായ കാരണം മൂലം പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ സാധിക്കാത്തവർക്കായി അഞ്ചാം ഘട്ട പരീക്ഷ നടത്താൻ പിഎസ്സി യോഗം തീരുമാനിച്ചു. കോവിഡ്, പ്രസവം, അപകടം, ഗുരുതരമായ മറ്റെന്തെങ്കിലും പ്രശ്നം എന്നിവ മൂലമാണു പരീക്ഷ എഴുതാൻ സാധിക്കാത്തതെന്ന തെളിവു ഹാജരാക്കുന്നവർക്കു മാത്രമായിരിക്കും വീണ്ടും അവസരം നൽകുകയെന്നു പിഎസ്സി ചെയർമാൻ എം.കെ.സക്കീർ അറിയിച്ചു. ഗതാഗത തടസ്സം മൂലം എത്താത്തവർക്കും മറ്റും വീണ്ടും അവസരം നൽകില്ല. ഇതു സംബന്ധിച്ച് ഉദ്യോഗാർഥികൾ ഹാജരാക്കുന്ന രേഖകൾ



പരിശോധിച്ച പിഎസ്സിക്കു ബോധ്യപ്പെട്ടാൽ അടുത്ത ഘട്ട പരീക്ഷയിൽ പങ്കെടുപ്പിക്കും. വ്യാജ രേഖകളും മറ്റും ഹാജരാക്കിയാൽ നടപടി ഉണ്ടാകുമെന്നും ചെയർമാൻ അറിയിച്ചു. പരീക്ഷ എഴുതാൻ സാധിക്കാത്ത 13,000 പേർ ഇതിനോടകം പിഎസ്സിക്ക് അപേക്ഷ നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. കഴിഞ്ഞ 13 നു പരീക്ഷ എഴുതാൻ സാധിക്കാത്തവർക്കും അപേക്ഷിക്കാം.

(മ.മ., 16/03)

**തപാൽ വോട്ടിനോട് താൽപര്യം പോരാ**

സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് ആദ്യമായി, 80 വയസ്സിനുമേലുള്ളവർക്കും ഭിന്നശേഷിക്കാർക്കും കോവിഡ് ബാധിതർക്കുമായി ഏർപ്പെടുത്തിയ തപാൽ വോട്ടിനോട് താൽപര്യം കാട്ടാതെ വോട്ടർമാർ. 7.63 ലക്ഷം അപേക്ഷകൾ വിതരണം ചെയ്തതിൽ 3.72 ലക്ഷം അപേക്ഷകളാണു തിരികെ കിട്ടിയത്. ഇതിൽ 1.98 ലക്ഷം പേർ മാത്രമാണ് തപാൽ വോട്ടു തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്നതായി അപേക്ഷയിൽ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നത്. 1.73 ലക്ഷം പേർ തപാൽ വോട്ടു വേണ്ടെന്നും നേരിട്ടു ബൃത്തിലേത്തി വോട്ടു ചെയ്യാമെന്നും ബിഎൽഒമാരെ അറിയിക്കുകയും അപേക്ഷ മടക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. എന്നാൽ, മറ്റു സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളെ അപേക്ഷിച്ച് കേരളത്തിൽ തപാൽ വോട്ട് തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തവരുടെ എണ്ണം വളരെ അധികമാണെന്നും ഇതു തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർക്കു ഭാരിച്ച ജോലിയാണെന്നും കമ്മീഷൻ വൃത്തങ്ങൾ വ്യക്തമാക്കി. തപാൽ വോട്ടിന്റെ പേരിൽ കള്ളവോട്ടു നടന്നേക്കുമെന്ന വോട്ടർമാരുടെ ആശങ്കയാണ് നിരസിക്കലിനു കാരണമെന്നാണു തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് കമ്മീഷന്റെ വിലയിരുത്തൽ. ആകെ 9.39 ലക്ഷം പേരാണ് ഇതുവരെ തപാൽ വോട്ടിന് അർഹരാണെന്നു കമ്മീഷൻ കണ്ടെത്തിയിട്ടുള്ളത്.

(മ.മ., 17/03)

**വോട്ടു കൊടുക്കല്ലേ, കോവിഡിന്; നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങളുമായി ആരോഗ്യവകുപ്പ്**

ആരോഗ്യ വകുപ്പു പറയുന്നു: കോവിഡ് കേരളം വിട്ടുപോയിട്ടില്ല. ഒന്നാം തരംഗം അവസാനിക്കുന്ന ഘട്ടമാണിപ്പോൾ. ഒരു മാസത്തിനകം രണ്ടാം തരംഗം വന്നേക്കാം. മറ്റു സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിൽ രണ്ടാം തരംഗം തുടങ്ങിക്കഴിഞ്ഞു. തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് നിയന്ത്രണങ്ങളെല്ലാം ലംഘിക്കപ്പെടുന്നതിനാൽ രണ്ടാം തരംഗം നേരത്തെയായാലും അട്ഭുതപ്പെടാനില്ല. കോവിഡ് ബാധിച്ചാൽ രണ്ടാഴ്ചയെങ്കിലും പ്രചാരണരംഗത്തുനിന്നു മാറി നിൽക്കേണ്ടിവരും. വോട്ടെടുപ്പിന് ഇനി 3 ആഴ്ച മാത്രമേയുള്ളൂ. അതുകൊണ്ടു സ്ഥാനാർഥികൾ പ്രത്യേക ജാഗ്രത പുലർത്തണമെന്നു വിദഗ്ധർ പറയുന്നു. വോട്ടുഭൃമനയുമായി പാർട്ടി പ്രവർത്തകരെത്തുമ്പോൾ

വോട്ടർമാരും സുരക്ഷാ മുൻകരുതലുകളെടുക്കണം. സ്ഥാനാർത്ഥികൾക്ക് കോവിഡ് വാക്സിൻ നൽകാൻ നിർദ്ദേശമുണ്ടായിരുന്നെങ്കിലും കേന്ദ്രസർക്കാർ അനുവദിച്ചിട്ടില്ലെന്ന് ആരോഗ്യവകുപ്പ് വൃത്തങ്ങൾ പറഞ്ഞു.

(മ.മ., 17/03)

**സിവിൽ ഡിഫൻസുകാരുടെ സേവനം ഇനി പോലീസിലും**

അടിയന്തര സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ സിവിൽ ഡിഫൻസ് വോളന്റിയർമാരുടെ സേവനം ഇനി പോലീസും പ്രയോജനപ്പെടുത്തും. അഗ്നിരക്ഷാസേവനയുടെ സ്റ്റേഷൻ ഓഫീസർമാരുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് ഇതിനുള്ള നടപടി സ്വീകരിക്കാൻ പോലീസ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരോട് ഡി.ജി.പി. നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചു. ദുരന്തനിവാരണത്തിന് പൊതുജനങ്ങളുടെ സേവനം കൂടി വിനിയോഗിക്കാൻ അഗ്നിരക്ഷാസേനയാണ് സിവിൽ ഡിഫൻസ് സേനയ്ക്ക് രൂപം നൽകിയത്. സേവനസന്നദ്ധരായ ആളുകൾ പ്രതിഫലേച്ഛയില്ലാതെയാണ് ഇതിൽ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നത്. ഓരോ സ്റ്റേഷന്റെയും പരിധിയിൽ താമസിക്കുന്ന വോളന്റിയർമാരുടെ വിശദാംശങ്ങൾ പോലീസ് ശേഖരിക്കണം ജന മൈത്രി പോലീസ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരും ഇവരുമായി നല്ലബന്ധം പുലർത്തണം. പോലീസ് സ്റ്റേഷൻ സന്ദർശിക്കാനെത്തുമ്പോൾ ഇവർക്ക് പ്രത്യേക പരിഗണന നൽകണമെന്നും ഡി. ജി. പി. നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ദുരന്തമുഖങ്ങളിലെ യഥാസമയ ഇടപെടൽകൊണ്ട് ജീവൻ രക്ഷിക്കുക, ആപൽഘട്ടങ്ങളിൽ സ്വത്തുവകകളുടെ നഷ്ടം പരമാവധി കുറയ്ക്കുക, ജനങ്ങളുടെ മനോവിര്യം ഉയർത്തുക എന്നിവയാണ് സിവിൽ ഡിഫൻസിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങൾ.

(മാ. 18/03)

**ഗാർഹിക പീഡനത്തിന് ഇരയാകുന്നുണ്ടോ? പോസ്റ്റ് ഓഫീസിലെത്തി 'തപാൽ' എന്നു പറയൂ....**

ഗാർഹിക പീഡനത്തിൽ നിന്ന് വനിതകളെ സംരക്ഷിക്കാൻ നൂതനപദ്ധതിയുമായി സംസ്ഥാന വനിതാ ശിശുവികസന വകുപ്പ്. തപാൽവകുപ്പുമായി ചേർന്ന് 'രക്ഷാദൂത് ' എന്ന പദ്ധതിയാണ് നടപ്പാക്കുന്നത്. അതിക്രമങ്ങളിൽപ്പെടുന്ന സ്ത്രീകൾക്കും കുട്ടികൾക്കും ലളിതമായി പരാതിപ്പെടാനുള്ള പദ്ധതിയാണിത്. അതിക്രമത്തിനിരയായ വനിതകൾക്കോ കുട്ടികൾക്കോ അവരുടെ പ്രതിനിധിക്കോ പദ്ധതി പ്രയോജനപ്പെടുത്താം. അടുത്തുള്ള പോസ്റ്റ് ഓഫീസിലെത്തി 'തപാൽ' എന്ന കോഡ് പറഞ്ഞാൽ പോസ്റ്റ് മാസ്റ്റർ/പോസ്റ്റ്മിസിസിയുടെ സഹായത്തോടുകൂടി പിൻകോഡ് സഹിതമുള്ള സ്വന്തം മേൽവിലാസമെഴുതിയ പേപ്പർ ലെറ്റർബോക്സിൽ നിക്ഷേപിക്കാം.

പീഡനമനുഭവിക്കുന്ന സ്ത്രീക്കോ കുട്ടിക്കോപോസ്റ്റ് ഓഫീസ് അധികൃതരുടെ സഹായമില്ലാതെയും ഇതു ചെയ്യാവുന്നതാണ്. വെള്ളപേപ്പറിൽ പൂർണ്ണമായ മേൽവിലാസമെഴുതി പെട്ടിയിൽ നിക്ഷേപിക്കുമ്പോൾ കവറിനപ്പുറത്ത് 'തപാൽ' എന്ന് രേഖപ്പെടുത്തണം. സ്റ്റാമ്പ് പതിക്കേണ്ടതില്ല. ഇത്തരത്തിൽ ലഭിക്കുന്ന മേൽവിലാസമെഴുതിയ പേപ്പറുകൾ പോസ്റ്റ്മാസ്റ്റർ സ്റ്റാൻചെയ്തു വനിതാ ശിശുവികസന വകുപ്പിന് ഇ-മെയിൽ വഴി അയച്ചുകൊടുക്കും. ഗാർഹിക അതിക്രമവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട പരാതികൾ അതത് ജില്ലകളിലെ വനിതാ സംരക്ഷണ ഓഫീസർമാരും കുട്ടികൾക്കെതിരെയുള്ള പരാതികൾ ജില്ലാ ശിശുസംരക്ഷണ ഓഫീസർമാരും അന്വേഷിച്ച് തുടർനടപടികൾ സ്വീകരിക്കും.

(മാ. 18/03)

**എയ്ഡഡ് സ്കൂൾ അധ്യാപകരുടെ മത്സരവിലക്കിന് സ്റ്റേ**

എയ്ഡഡ് സ്കൂൾ അധ്യാപകർ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിൽ മത്സരിക്കുന്നതു വിലക്കിയ കേരള ഹൈക്കോടതി ഉത്തരവു സുപ്രീം കോടതി സ്റ്റേ ചെയ്തു. ചീഫ് ജസ്റ്റിസ് എസ്.എ. ബോബ്ബയെ അധ്യക്ഷനായ ബെഞ്ചിന്റേതാണ് നടപടി. ഇതോടെ, നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിൽ എയ്ഡഡ് സ്കൂൾ അധ്യാപകർക്കു മത്സരിക്കാൻ വഴിതെളിഞ്ഞു. നെന്മാറയിലെ ബിഡിജെഎസ് സ്ഥാനാർഥി എ.എൻ. അനൂരാഗ്, യുവ ജനതാദൾ ദേശീയ പ്രസിഡന്റ് സലീം മടവൂർ എന്നിവർ നൽകിയ ഹർജിയിലാണ് സ്റ്റേ. ഇരുവരും അധ്യാപകരുമാണ്. എയ്ഡഡ് സ്കൂൾ അധ്യാപകർക്കു മത്സരിക്കാൻ ഇളവനുവദിക്കുന്ന 1951 ലെ നിയമനിർമ്മാണസഭ (അയോഗ്യതാ നീക്കൽ) നിയമത്തിലെ 2(4) വ്യവസ്ഥ ഭരണഘടനാ വിരുദ്ധമെന്നു ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടിയായിരുന്നു ഹൈക്കോടതി ഉത്തരവ്. നാമനിർദ്ദേശ പത്രിക സമർപ്പിക്കാൻ ഇന്നു കൂടി മാത്രമേ അവസരമുള്ളൂവെന്നും വി. ഗിരി കോടതിയെ അറിയിച്ചതു പരിഗണിച്ചാണ് സ്റ്റേ.

(മ.മ. 19/03)

**വന്യജീവി ആക്രമണ നഷ്ടപരിഹാരം: അപേക്ഷകൾ ഓൺലൈൻവഴി നൽകാം**

വന്യജീവി ആക്രമണങ്ങൾക്ക് വനംവകുപ്പ് നൽകുന്ന നഷ്ടപരിഹാരം ലഭിക്കാനുള്ള അപേക്ഷകൾ ഓൺലൈൻ വഴി നൽകാം. ഇ-ഡിസ്ട്രിക്ട് സൈറ്റിലൂടെയോ അക്ഷയകേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾ, വനംവകുപ്പിന്റെ ഔദ്യോഗിക വെബ്സൈറ്റായ [www.forest.kerala.gov.in](http://www.forest.kerala.gov.in), <https://edtsirict.kerala.gov.in> എന്നിവ മുഖേനയോ അപേക്ഷിക്കാം. വന്യജീവി ആക്രമണത്തെത്തുടർന്നുള്ള ജീവഹാനി, സ്ഥിരം അംഗഭംഗം, പരിക്ക്, കൃഷിനാശം, വനത്തിനു പുറത്തുവെച്ച് പാമ്പുകുടിയേറ്റുള്ള മരണം എന്നിവയ്ക്കാണ് വനംവകുപ്പ് നഷ്ടപരിഹാരം നൽകുന്നത്. വന്യജീവി

ആക്രമണത്തെത്തുടർന്ന് ജീവഹാനി സംഭവിച്ചാൽ ആശ്രിതർക്ക് 10 ലക്ഷം രൂപയും സ്ഥിരം അംഗഭംഗം സംഭവിച്ചാൽ രണ്ടു ലക്ഷം രൂപയും പരിക്കിന് ഒരു ലക്ഷം രൂപയും നൽകും. പട്ടികവർഗ വിഭാഗത്തിൽ പെടുന്നവർക്ക് സിവിൽ സർജൻ റാങ്കിൽ കുറയാത്ത മെഡിക്കൽ ഓഫീസറുടെ സാക്ഷ്യപത്രത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ മുഴുവൻ ചികിത്സാച്ചെലവും നഷ്ടപരിഹാരമായി നൽകും. കൃഷിനാശം, വീട്, കന്നുകാലി നഷ്ടം എന്നിവയ്ക്ക് മുഴുവൻ തുകയും പരമാവധി ഒരു ലക്ഷം രൂപയും വനംവകുപ്പ് നൽകും.

(മാ., 20/03)

**ഹൈക്കോടതി നിർദ്ദേശം: അനധികൃത കുടിവെള്ള യൂണിറ്റുകൾ ഇല്ലെന്ന് സർക്കാർ ഉറപ്പാക്കണം**

സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് അനധികൃത കുടിവെള്ള യൂണിറ്റുകൾ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നുണ്ടെന്ന് സർക്കാർ ഉറപ്പാക്കണമെന്നു ഹൈക്കോടതി. കുടിവെള്ള യൂണിറ്റുകൾക്കു നിയമാനുസൃതമായ ലൈസൻസ്, മറ്റ് അനുമതികൾ എന്നിവയുണ്ടെന്നു സർക്കാർ ഉറപ്പാക്കണമെന്നും ചീഫ് ജസ്റ്റിസ് എസ്.മണികമാർ, ജസ്റ്റിസ് ഷാജി. പി.ചാലി എന്നിവർ ഉൾപ്പെട്ട ഡിവിഷൻ ബെഞ്ച് നിർദ്ദേശം നൽകി. പുതിയ കുടിവെള്ള യൂണിറ്റുകൾക്ക് ലൈസൻസ് നൽകുമ്പോൾ ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട ചട്ടങ്ങൾ പ്രകാരമുള്ള നിലവാരം നിലനിർത്താൻ നിർദ്ദേശം നൽകണം. കൂടാതെ, ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട അധികൃതരിൽനിന്ന് ആവശ്യമായ അനുമതികളും ക്ലിയറൻസും മറ്റും നേടിയതിനു ശേഷമാണ് പ്രവർത്തനം തുടങ്ങുന്നതെന്ന് ഉറപ്പാക്കണമെന്നും കോടതി നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചു. സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് 106 കുടിവെള്ള പ്ലാന്റുകൾ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നുണ്ടെന്നും 20 എണ്ണത്തിനു കൂടി സർക്കാർ അനുമതി നൽകാനൊരുങ്ങുകയാണെന്നും ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടിയാണ് ഹർജി നൽകിയത്. ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട അധികൃതരിൽ നിന്ന് കൃത്യമായ ലൈസൻസില്ലാതെയാണ് ഭൂരിഭാഗം യൂണിറ്റുകളും പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നതെന്നും നിലവാരം കുറഞ്ഞ ഐസ് ബാറുകുളാണ് വഴിയോരത്തു കുലുക്കി സർബത്ത് ഉൾപ്പെടെയുണ്ടാക്കാൻ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നതെന്നും ഹർജിക്കാർ ആരോപിച്ചു.

(മ.മ., 21/03)

**കെഎസ്ആർടിസി: പണിമുടക്കിയ ദിവസങ്ങളിലെ ശമ്പളം നൽകും**

കെഎസ്ആർടിസിയിലെ തൊഴിലാളി സംഘടനകൾ പണിമുടക്കു നടത്തിയ ഫെബ്രുവരി 23, മാർച്ച് 2 എന്നീ ദിവസങ്ങളിലെ ശമ്പളം നൽകാൻ തീരുമാനം. സമര ദിനങ്ങളിൽ സർക്കാർ ജീവനക്കാർക്കു ശമ്പളത്തോടെ അവധി അനുവദിച്ചുകൊണ്ടുള്ള സർക്കാരിന്റെ മറ്റൊരു ഉത്തരവ് ഇക്കഴിഞ്ഞ ഫെബ്രുവരി രണ്ടിനു ഹൈക്കോടതി

റദ്ദാക്കിയിരുന്നു. ശമ്പള പരിഷ്കരണം നടപ്പാക്കുക, സ്വിഫ്റ്റ് കമ്പനിക്കു ദീർഘദൂര സർവീസുകൾ കൈമാറാനുള്ള തീരുമാനം ഉപേക്ഷിക്കുക എന്നീ ആവശ്യങ്ങൾ ഉന്നയിച്ചായിരുന്നു ഫെബ്രുവരി 23 ലെ പണിമുടക്ക്. ഇന്ധന വിലവർധനയിൽ പ്രതിഷേധിച്ച മാർച്ച് രണ്ടിനു നടത്തിയ വാഹന പണിമുടക്കിൽ കെഎസ്ആർടിസി സംഘടനകളും പങ്കെടുത്തു. ഈ ദിവസങ്ങളിൽ ജോലിക്ക് എത്താത്തവരിൽ മെഡിക്കൽ സർട്ടിഫിക്കറ്റ് ഹാജരാക്കിയവർക്കു മാത്രം അവധി അനുവദിക്കാനാണ് ആദ്യം നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചിരുന്നത്. എന്നാൽ ഈ ദിവസങ്ങളിലെ ശമ്പളം തടഞ്ഞുവയ്ക്കേണ്ടെന്നാണ് പുതിയ തീരുമാനം.

(മ.മ., 22/03)

**ആകെ വോട്ടർമാർ 2.74 കോടി**

നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിലെ ആകെ വോട്ടർമാരുടെ എണ്ണം 2,74,46,039 ആയി. അന്തിമ വോട്ടർപട്ടിക പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ച ജനുവരി 20 നു ശേഷം ലഭിച്ച അപേക്ഷകളിൽ അർഹരായ 7,40,486 പേരെക്കൂടി ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തിയതോടെയാണിത്. ആകെ വോട്ടർമാരിൽ 1,32,83,724 പുരുഷന്മാരും 1,41,62,025 സ്ത്രീകളും 290 ട്രാൻസ്ജെൻഡർമാരുമാണുള്ളത്. പ്രവാസി വോട്ടർമാരായ 87,318 പുരുഷന്മാരും 6086 സ്ത്രീകളും 11 ട്രാൻസ്ജെൻഡർമാരും പട്ടികയിലുണ്ട്. തപാൽ വോട്ടിന് അപേക്ഷിച്ച 8.85 ലക്ഷത്തിൽ 4,00,444 പേർക്ക് അനുമതി നൽകി.

(മ.മ., 23/03)

മെഗാ സീഹൂഡ് പാർക്ക് റെഡി സമുദ്രോൽപ്പന്ന കയറ്റുമതിക്ക് ഊർജ്ജം പകരാൻ ചേർത്തല പള്ളിപ്പുറത്തെ മെഗാ സീഹൂഡ് പാർക്ക് തയ്യാർ. 99 ശതമാനം നിർമ്മാണവും പൂർത്തിയായി. ഓപ്പറേഷൻ മെയിന്റനൻസ് കോൺട്രാക്ടിലാണ് നിർമ്മാണം. ശുദ്ധീകരണ പ്ലാന്റും മലിനജലം ഒഴുക്കാനുള്ള പൈപ്പുകളും സ്ഥാപിച്ചു. കെട്ടിട നിർമ്മാണവും ഉപകരണങ്ങൾ സ്ഥാപിക്കലും മിക്കവാറും പൂർത്തിയായി. പ്രതിദിനം 20 ലക്ഷം ലിറ്റർ മലിനജലം ശുദ്ധീകരിക്കാൻ ശേഷിയുള്ള ഇഫ്ലുവന്റ് പ്ലാന്റും വെള്ളം പുറത്തേക്ക് കളയാനുള്ള പൈപ്പുകളുമാണ് സ്ഥാപിച്ചത്. ഇതോടെ സംരംഭകർ കമ്പനികൾ സ്ഥാപിക്കാനും തുടങ്ങി. ഇതുവരെ 30 കമ്പനികൾക്ക് സ്ഥലം കൊടുത്തു. 56 ഏക്കറിൽ മൂന്നേക്കർ മാത്രമാണ് ഇനി ബാക്കിയുള്ളത്. വ്യവസായ വകുപ്പിനു കീഴിലുള്ള പാർക്കിന് മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി പിണറായി വിജയൻ 2017 ലാണ് കല്പിട്ടത്. 3000 ഓളം പേർക്ക് നേരിട്ടും പരോക്ഷമായും തൊഴിൽ ലഭിക്കും. കോമൺ ഫെസിലിറ്റി സെന്ററും വ്യവസായികൾക്ക്

വാടകയ്ക്ക് എടുക്കാവുന്ന സ്റ്റാൻഡേർഡ് ഡിസൈൻ ഫാക്ടറി, ഇലക്ട്രിക്കൽ സബ്സ്റ്റേഷൻ എന്നിവയും പൂർത്തിയായി. 3000 മെട്രിക് ടണ്ണിന്റെ കോൾഡ് സ്റ്റോറേജിന്റെ കമ്മീഷനിങ് മാത്രമാണ് ബാക്കി. ദിവസം 10 മെട്രിക് ടൺ ശേഷിയുള്ള ഡീപ്പ് ഫ്രീസറിന്റെയും മീനിന്റെ മുള്ള് നീക്കുന്നതിന് 10 മെട്രിക് ടൺ ദിവസ കപ്പാസിറ്റിയുള്ള പ്ലാന്റ് നിർമ്മാണവും 95 ശതമാനം പൂർത്തിയായി. മത്സ്യ കയറ്റുമതി സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾക്കു പുറമേ, പാക്കിങ് ഫാക്ടറികൾ, പൊടിമില്ലുകൾ, മീൻതീറ്റ ഉൽപ്പാദന യൂണിറ്റുകൾ, മറ്റ് ഭക്ഷ്യസംസ്കരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളും സ്ഥലം എടുത്തിട്ടുണ്ട്.

(ഭേ., 23/03)

**ക്ഷയരോഗ നിവാരണം: കേരളത്തിന് കേന്ദ്ര പുരസ്കാരം**

ക്ഷയരോഗനിരക്ക് കുറച്ചുകൊണ്ടുവന്ന പ്രദേശങ്ങൾക്ക് നൽകുന്ന കേന്ദ്രസർക്കാരിന്റെ അവാർഡ് കേരളത്തിന്. സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിൽ കേരളം മാത്രമാണ് ഈ അവാർഡിന് അർഹമായത്. നാഷണൽ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഓഫ് എപ്പിഡെമിയോളജി, ലോകാരോഗ്യസംഘടന, ഇന്ത്യൻ അസോസിയേഷൻ ഓഫ് പ്രിവന്റീവ് ആൻഡ് സോഷ്യൽ മെഡിസിൻ എന്നിവയിൽ നിന്നുള്ള 26 അംഗ വിദഗ്ധസംഘം എറണാകുളം, മലപ്പുറം, കാസർകോട്, കൊല്ലം ജില്ലകൾ സന്ദർശിച്ച് വിലയിരുത്തിയാണ് കേന്ദ്രസർക്കാരിന് റിപ്പോർട്ട് സമർപ്പിച്ചത്. സ്വകാര്യ മേഖലയിലെ ഡോക്ടർമാരുമായും മെഡിക്കൽ ഷോപ്പുകളുമായും ചർച്ചകൾ നടത്തി. സുസ്ഥിര വികസന ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങൾ കൈവരിക്കാൻ ആരോഗ്യവകുപ്പ് നടപ്പാക്കിയ "എന്റെ ക്ഷയരോഗ മുക്തകേരളം" പദ്ധതിയുടെ കീഴിൽ "അക്ഷയ കേരളം" ഉൾപ്പെടെ മാതൃകാപരമായ പദ്ധതികളിലൂടെയാണ് കേരളത്തിൽ ക്ഷയരോഗനിവാരണം സാധ്യമായത്. തുടർച്ചയായി 12 മാസം അഞ്ചു വയസ്സിൽ താഴെയുള്ള കുട്ടികളുടെ ക്ഷയരോഗമില്ലാത്ത 561 പഞ്ചായത്തിനെയും ക്ഷയരോഗ ചികിത്സ ഇടക്കുവച്ചു നിർത്താത്ത 688 തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ പ്രദേശത്തെയും ഡ്രഗ് റെസിസ്റ്റന്റ് ടിബി ഇല്ലാത്ത 707 തദ്ദേശ സ്ഥാപനത്തെയും കണ്ടെത്തി സർട്ടിഫിക്കറ്റ് നൽകി.

(ഭേ., 24/03)

**45 നു മുകളിലുള്ളവർക്ക് വാക്സിനേഷൻ: അറിയിപ്പ് ലഭിച്ചില്ലെങ്കിലും കേരളം സജ്ജം**

രാജ്യത്തു 45 വയസ്സിനു മുകളിലുള്ളവർക്കെല്ലാം കോവിഡ് വാക്സിൻ നൽകാനുള്ള കേന്ദ്ര തീരുമാനപ്രകാരമുള്ള കോവിഡ് വാക്സിൻ നൽകാനുള്ള കേന്ദ്ര തീരുമാനപ്രകാരമുള്ള നടപടികൾക്ക് കേരളം സജ്ജം. പുതുക്കിയ മാനദണ്ഡങ്ങൾ അനുസരിച്ചുള്ള മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ കേന്ദ്ര ആരോഗ്യമന്ത്രാലയം ഇന്നലെ രാത്രി സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങൾക്ക്

അയച്ചു. കേരളത്തിൽ നിലവിൽ 13 ലക്ഷം ഡോസ് വാക്സിൻ സ്റ്റോക്ക് ഉണ്ട്. ഉടൻ 5 ലക്ഷം ഡോസ് കൂടി എത്തും. തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഡ്യൂട്ടിയുള്ള സർക്കാർ ജീവനക്കാരിൽ 2% പേർ ഇനിയും വാക്സിൻ സ്വീകരിക്കാനുണ്ട്. സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് ഇതുവരെ 23,65,061 പേർ വാക്സിൻ സ്വീകരിച്ചു. ഇതിൽ 12,58,920 സ്ത്രീകളും 10,65,232 സ്ത്രീകളും ട്രാൻസ്ജെൻഡർ വിഭാഗത്തിൽ 215 പേരും ഉൾപ്പെടും. തിരുവനന്തപുരമാണു ജില്ലകളിൽ മൂന്നിൽ: 2,93,042 പേർ. ഇടുക്കി പിന്നിൽ : 58,544 പേർ.

(മ.മ., 24/03)

**സാമ്പത്തിക സംവരണം: മൂന്നാക്ക സമുദായങ്ങളുടെ പട്ടിക പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിക്കണമെന്ന് ഹൈക്കോടതി**

സാമ്പത്തിക സംവരണത്തിന് അർഹതയുള്ള മൂന്നാക്ക സമുദായങ്ങളുടെ പട്ടിക ഒരു മാസത്തിനകം പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിക്കാൻ ഹൈക്കോടതി സർക്കാരിനു നിർദ്ദേശം നൽകി. സർക്കാർ നിയമപരമായ ഉത്തരവാദിത്തം നിർവഹിക്കുന്നതിനാൽ പട്ടിക പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിക്കുന്നതിനു തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പു പെരുമാറ്റച്ചട്ടം തടസ്സമല്ലെന്നും ജസ്റ്റിസ് എൻ.നഗരേഷ് വ്യക്തമാക്കി. എൻഎസ്എസ് ജനറൽ സെക്രട്ടറി ജി.സുകുമാരൻ നായർ നൽകിയ ഉപഹർജിയിലാണ് ഹൈക്കോടതി ഉത്തരവ്. മൂന്നാക്ക സമുദായങ്ങൾക്കു സംവരണം നൽകുന്നതു പഠിക്കാനും ശുപാർശ നൽകാനും പട്ടിക തയ്യാറാക്കാനുമായി സർക്കാർ 2016 ൽ കേരള സംസ്ഥാന മൂന്നാക്ക സമുദായ കമ്മീഷനു രൂപം നൽകിയിരുന്നു. കമ്മീഷന്റെ റിപ്പോർട്ടും പട്ടികയും സർക്കാർ 2020 മേയിൽ അംഗീകരിച്ചെങ്കിലും പട്ടിക ഇതുവരെ വിജ്ഞാപനം ചെയ്തിട്ടില്ലെന്നും അർഹരായവർക്കു സാമ്പത്തിക സംവരണം ലഭിക്കുന്നില്ലെന്നും ഹർജിയിൽ ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടി. സംവരണത്തിന്റെ റൊട്ടേഷനിൽ മൂന്നാം ഊഴം വേണമെന്നും സാമ്പത്തിക സംവരണം നൽകാൻ സർക്കാർ തീരുമാനിച്ച തീയതി മുതലുള്ള പിഎസ്സി ലിസ്റ്റുകളിൽ സംവരണം പ്രവേശിപ്പിക്കണമെന്നാവശ്യപ്പെട്ട് എൻഎസ്എസ് നേരത്തെ നൽകിയ ഹർജിയിലാണ് ഉപഹർജി നൽകിയത്.

(മ.മ., 25/03)

**45 വയസിന് മുകളിലുള്ളവർ സ്കൂളുകൾ തുറക്കുന്നതിനുമുമ്പേ വാക്സിൻ സ്വീകരിക്കണം; വിപുലമായ സംവിധാനങ്ങളൊരുക്കി ആരോഗ്യവകുപ്പ്**

ഏപ്രിൽ ഒന്ന് മുതൽ 45 വയസിന് മുകളിൽ പ്രായമുള്ള എല്ലാവർക്കും വാക്സിൻ നൽകുന്നതിന് വിപുലമായ സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ ഏർപ്പെടുത്തിയതായി ആരോഗ്യ വകുപ്പ് അറിയിച്ചു. കേന്ദ്ര, സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാർ ആശുപത്രികൾ, സർക്കാർ നിശ്ചയിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള

സ്വകാര്യ ആശുപത്രികൾ, പൊതുകെട്ടിടങ്ങൾ എന്നിവിടങ്ങളിൽ വാക്സിനേഷൻ സൗകര്യം ലഭ്യമാണ്. 45 വയസിന് മുകളിൽ പ്രായമുള്ള ആരും തന്നെ വാക്സിൻ എടുക്കാൻ വിമുഖത കാണിക്കരുത്. മറ്റ് സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിൽ കോവിഡ് കേസുകൾ വർദ്ധിക്കുന്ന സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ ഈ വിഭാഗത്തിലെ എല്ലാവരും കോവിഡ് വാക്സിൻ സ്വീകരിക്കേണ്ടത് കോവിഡ് പ്രതിരോധ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ ഊർജിതമാക്കുവാൻ അത്യാവശ്യമാണെന്ന് സ്റ്റേറ്റ് മെഡിക്കൽ ബോർഡ് വിലയിരുത്തി. മാർച്ച് 23 ന് പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ച സീറോ സർവ്വേലൻസ് പഠന റിപ്പോർട്ട് പ്രകാരം സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് 89.3 ശതമാനം ആളുകൾ കോവിഡ്-19 രോഗബാധ ഇതുവരെ ഉണ്ടാകാത്തവരാണ്. കേരളത്തിൽ ആദ്യ കേസ് റിപ്പോർട്ട് ചെയ്ത ഒരു വർഷത്തിന് ശേഷവും 10.7 ശതമാനം ആളുകൾക്ക് മാത്രമേ രോഗബാധ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുള്ളൂ എന്നത് രോഗപ്രതിരോധത്തിൽ വളരെ പ്രധാനമായ കാര്യമാണ്. എന്നാൽ 89.3 ശതമാനം ആളുകൾക്ക് രോഗബാധ ഇനിയും ഉണ്ടാകുവാൻ ഇടയുള്ളതിനാൽ കോവിഡ് മഹാമാരി തുടരുവാനും രോഗവ്യാപനത്തിന്റെ പുതിയ തരംഗങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകുവാനുമുള്ള സാധ്യതയുണ്ട്. സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് നടപ്പിലാക്കിയ റിവേഴ്സ് ക്യാമ്പിന്റെ നടപടികളാണ് പ്രത്യേക പരിഗണന അർഹിക്കുന്ന വിഭാഗങ്ങളിലെ കുറഞ്ഞ സീറോ പ്രിവലൻസ് നിരക്കിന് കുറയാൻ കാരണം. കുറഞ്ഞ രോഗബാധാ നിരക്ക് സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് തുടർന്നും നിലനിർത്തണമെങ്കിൽ സ്കൂളുകൾ തുറക്കുന്നതിന് മുമ്പായി മുൻഗണനാ ക്രമമനുസരിച്ച് വാക്സിൻ സ്വീകരിക്കേണ്ടവർ വാക്സിൻ സ്വീകരിക്കണം.

(ഭേ., 26/03)

**ടൂറിസ്റ്റുകൾക്കുള്ള വിലക്ക് നീക്കി**

വയനാട്ടിലെ കുറുവ അടക്കമുള്ള ഇക്കോ ടൂറിസം കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ ടൂറിസ്റ്റുകളെ പ്രവേശിപ്പിക്കാൻ ഹൈക്കോടതി അനുമതി നൽകി. പ്രവേശനത്തിന് വിലക്കേർപ്പെടുത്തിയ ഇടക്കാല ഉത്തരവ് ഡിവിഷൻ ബെഞ്ച് ഭേദഗതി ചെയ്തു. കേന്ദ്ര വനം-പരിസ്ഥിതി മന്ത്രാലയത്തിന്റെ മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശമനുസരിച്ചും കോവിഡ് മാനദണ്ഡങ്ങൾ കർശനമായി പാലിച്ചും ആളുകളെ പ്രവേശിപ്പിക്കാം. വനം-പരിസ്ഥിതി മന്ത്രാലയത്തിന്റെ മുൻകൂർ അനുമതിയില്ലാതെയും മാനദണ്ഡങ്ങൾ പാലിക്കാതെയുമുള്ള പ്രവേശനം പരിസ്ഥിതിക്ക് ഹാനികരമാണെന്നു ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടി വയനാട് പരിസ്ഥിതി സംരക്ഷണ സമിതി സമർപ്പിച്ച ഹർജിയിലാണ് ചീഫ് ജസ്റ്റിസ് എസ് മണികമാറും ജസ്റ്റിസ് ഷാജി പി ചാലിയും അടങ്ങുന്ന ഡിവിഷൻ ബെഞ്ചിന്റെ ഉത്തരവ്. കേന്ദ്ര ഏജൻസി നടത്തിയ സാധ്യതാപഠന റിപ്പോർട്ട് പരിശോധിച്ചശേഷമാണ് കോടതിയുടെ അനുമതി.

(ഭേ., 26/03)



തൊഴിൽ തേടുന്നവരാണോ? സർക്കാർ ജോബ് പോർട്ടലിൽ രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യാം  
അഭ്യസ്തവിദ്യരായ തൊഴിൽ അന്വേഷകരാണോ നിങ്ങൾ. തൊഴിൽ തേടി ഇനി  
അലയേണ്ട. സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാർ ആരംഭിച്ച 'ഡിജിറ്റൽ വർക്ക്ഫോഴ്സ് മാനേജ്മെന്റ്  
സിസ്റ്റം കേരളയിലൂടെ' തൊഴിൽതേടാം. <https://knowledgmission.kerala.gov.in/>  
എന്ന ലിങ്കിൽ കയറി ഇ-മെയിൽ ഐഡി നൽകി രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യാം. ബയോഡാറ്റയും  
അപ്ലോഡ് ചെയ്യാം. രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്തവരെ കെ ഡിസ്കിൽനിന്ന് ബന്ധപ്പെടും. അഞ്ചു  
വർഷത്തിനുള്ളിൽ 20 ലക്ഷം പേർക്ക് വീട്ടിലിരുന്ന് ജോലി ചെയ്യാനുള്ള അവസരം  
ഒരുക്കുമെന്ന ബജറ്റ് പ്രഖ്യാപനമാണ് സർക്കാർ നടപ്പാക്കുന്നത്. ഫെബ്രുവരി ഒമ്പതിന്  
മുഖ്യമന്ത്രി പിണറായി വിജയൻ ഉദ്ഘാടനം ചെയ്ത പദ്ധതിയിലൂടെ ഇതുവരെ 32  
പേർക്ക് ജോലി ലഭിച്ചു. പോർട്ടലിൽ 13,000 ഓളം പേർ ഇതുവരെ അംഗത്വമെടുത്തു.  
രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്തവർക്കുള്ള പരിശീലനം ഉടൻ ആരംഭിക്കും. പരിശീലനം  
പൂർത്തിയാക്കുന്നവരുടെ വിവരം ഒരു പ്ലാറ്റ്ഫോമിൽ ലഭ്യമാക്കും. ഇവിടെ നിന്നാണ്  
തൊഴിൽദാതാക്കൾ നിയമനം നടത്തുന്നത്. തൊഴിൽ ലഭിച്ചവരുടെ പിഎഫ്,  
ഗ്രാറ്റുവിറ്റി, ഇൻഷുറൻസ് എന്നിവ സർക്കാർ നൽകും.

(ഭേ., 27/03)

**ആദ്യ വോട്ട് പെട്ടിയിൽ; സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് തപാൽ വോട്ടെടുപ്പു തുടങ്ങി**

കേരളത്തിൽ നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിന്റെ ആദ്യ വോട്ടുകൾ പെട്ടിയിൽ വീണു.  
ഭിന്നശേഷിക്കാർ, 80 വയസ്സ് കഴിഞ്ഞവർ, കോവിഡ് പോസിറ്റീവായവർ,  
ക്വാറന്റീനിൽ കഴിയുന്നവർ എന്നിവർക്കുള്ള തപാൽ വോട്ടെടുപ്പാണ് ഇന്നലെ  
തുടങ്ങിയത്. ദിവസവും സമയവും മുൻകൂട്ടി അറിയിച്ച ശേഷമാണ് പോളിങ്  
ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർ വീടുകളിലെത്തിയത്. സൂക്ഷ്മ നിരീക്ഷകർ, 2 പോളിങ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർ,  
വിഡിയോഗ്രാഫർ, പൊലീസ് എന്നിവരുൾപ്പെട്ടതാണ് സംഘം. ഈ മാസം 17  
വരെയുള്ള സമയത്തിനിടെ 4.02 ലക്ഷം പേരാണ് തപാൽ വോട്ടിന് അപേക്ഷിച്ചത്.  
ഇവർക്കെല്ലാം അനുവദിച്ചു. ഇവർക്ക് ബൂത്തിൽ നേരിട്ടെത്തി വോട്ട് ചെയ്യാനാകില്ല.  
തപാൽ വോട്ടുകൾ അതതു ദിവസം തന്നെ പോളിങ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർ ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട  
വരണാധികാരികൾക്ക് മടക്കി നൽകണം.

(മ.മ., 27/03)

**ഇരട്ട/വ്യാജ വോട്ട്: കമ്മീഷനും പരിശോധിക്കും; പട്ടിക 30 ന്**

ഇരട്ട/വ്യാജ വോട്ടുകളുടെ പൂർണ്ണപട്ടിക മറ്റനാൾ സമർപ്പിക്കാൻ ബൂത്തുകളുടെ

ചുമതലയുള്ള ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർക്ക് (ബിഎൽഒ) കലക്ടർമാരുടെ നിർദ്ദേശം. കേന്ദ്ര തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് കമ്മീഷന്റെ കർശന ഇടപെടലിനെത്തുടർന്നു മുഖ്യ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ഓഫീസർ ടിക്കാറാം മീണ വിളിച്ച യോഗത്തിൽ കലക്ടർമാർക്കു നൽകിയ നിർദ്ദേശത്തെത്തുടർന്നാണിത്. രമേശ് ചെന്നിത്തല നൽകിയ പട്ടികയിൽ 4.34 ലക്ഷം ഇരട്ട/വ്യാജ വോട്ടുകളാണുള്ളത്. ഇതിനു പുറമേ കമ്മീഷൻ സ്വന്തം നിലയിലും പരിശോധിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ഇതിനായി സാങ്കേതിക വിദഗ്ധരുടേതായ സംഘത്തെയും ചുമതലപ്പെടുത്തി. കള്ളവോട്ട് തടയുന്നതിനും ഇരട്ട/വ്യാജ വോട്ടുകൾ മരവിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും ഇതുവരെ സ്വീകരിച്ച നടപടികൾ നാളെ ഹൈക്കോടതിയെ സത്യവാങ്മൂലത്തിലൂടെ കമ്മീഷൻ അറിയിക്കും. തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് നീട്ടിവയ്ക്കേണ്ടതില്ലെന്നും വെബ്കാസ്റ്റിങ്ങിലൂടെയും വോട്ട് മരവിപ്പിക്കലിലൂടെയും കള്ളവോട്ട് തടയാനാകുമെന്നുള്ള നിലപാടിലാണ് കമ്മീഷൻ.

(ഭേ., 28/03)

**തപാൽ വോട്ട്: ആദ്യദിവസം 30,000**

എൺപതു വയസ്സു പിന്നിട്ടവർ, കോവിഡ് പോസിറ്റീവായും ക്വാറന്റീനിലും കഴിയുന്നവർ, അംഗപരിമിതർ എന്നിവർ ഉൾപ്പെടെ മുപ്പതിനായിരത്തിലേറെപ്പേർ നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിൽ തപാൽ വോട്ട് രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയതായി അനുഭവ്യാഗിക കണക്കുകൾ. ആദ്യദിവസത്തെ കണക്കാണിത്. സംസ്ഥാനത്താകെ 4.02 ലക്ഷം ഇത്തരം വോട്ടർമാർ ഉണ്ടെന്നാണു കണക്ക്. ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർ വീടുകളിൽ നേരിട്ടെത്തിയാണു തപാൽ വോട്ടിനു സൗകര്യമൊരുക്കുന്നത്. സത്യപ്രസ്താവനകളും തപാൽ തപാൽ വോട്ടുകളും പ്രത്യേക കവറുകളിലാക്കി ഒട്ടിച്ച ശേഷം വരണാധികാരികളുടെ ഓഫീസുകളിലെ സ്കോൺ റൂമുകളിലാണു സൂക്ഷിക്കുന്നത്. സ്കോൺ റൂമുകൾ ഓരോ ദിവസവും തുറക്കുമ്പോഴും അടയ്ക്കുമ്പോഴുമുള്ള നടപടികൾ വിഡിയോയിൽ പകർത്തുന്നുണ്ട്. നിയമസഭാ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി അവശ്യ സർവീസ് വിഭാഗത്തിൽപ്പെട്ടവർക്കുള്ള തപാൽ വോട്ടിങ്ങും ആരംഭിച്ചു. നാളെ വൈകിട്ട് 5 ന് അവസാനിക്കും. പൊലീസ്, ഫയർഫോഴ്സ്, ഹോം ഗാർഡ് തുടങ്ങിയവരാണ് വോട്ട് ചെയ്യുന്നത്. 140 മണ്ഡലങ്ങളിലും സജ്ജീകരിച്ച പ്രത്യേക തപാൽ വോട്ടിങ് കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലാണു വോട്ടെടുപ്പ്.

(മ.മ., 29/03)

**ഇക്കറി തൃശൂർ പുരം പൊടിപുരമാകും**

പുരം മാറ്റു കുറയ്ക്കാതെ, എന്നാൽ കോവിഡ് നിയന്ത്രണങ്ങളോടെ നടത്താൻ കലക്ടറുടെ അധ്യക്ഷതയിൽ ചേർന്ന യോഗത്തിൽ തീരുമാനം. പുരം പ്രദർശനത്തിൽ ഒരു ദിവസം 200 പേർക്കു മാത്രം പ്രവേശനമെന്ന നിയന്ത്രണം നീക്കി. ഓൺലൈൻ ടിക്കറ്റ്

സംവിധാനം വേണമെന്ന നിർദ്ദേശവും പിൻവലിച്ചു. പൂരത്തിന്റെ ചടങ്ങുകൾ എല്ലാം നടത്താൻ മുൻപേ സർക്കാർ അനുമതി നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇതുപ്രകാരം കുടമാറ്റവും വെടിക്കെട്ടും അടക്കമുള്ള ചടങ്ങുകൾ കോവിഡ് നിയന്ത്രണത്തോടെ നടക്കും. പൂരം പ്രദർശനം നടത്താൻ ദേവസ്വങ്ങൾ സമർപ്പിച്ച നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ അംഗീകരിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു. ഇതു പ്രകാരം കോവിഡ് മുൻകരുതലുകൾ പാലിക്കുന്നതിന്റെ ഉത്തരവാദിത്തം ഏറ്റെടുക്കാമെന്നു തിരുവമ്പാടി, പാറമേക്കാവ് ദേവസ്വങ്ങൾ ഉറപ്പു നൽകി. മേൽനോട്ടം കൊച്ചിൻ ദേവസ്വം ബോർഡ് വഹിക്കണമെന്നു കലക്ടർ നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചു. ഏപ്രിൽ ഒന്നുമുതൽ ഇരു ദേവസ്വങ്ങളുടെയും 45 വയസ്സിനു മുകളിലുള്ള സംഘാടകർക്ക് വാക്സിനേഷൻ നൽകും.

(മ.മ., 29/03)

**ഒരാൾ ഒരു വോട്ട് മാത്രമേ ചെയ്യുന്നുള്ളൂ എന്ന് ഉറപ്പുവരുത്തണം; തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് കമ്മീഷൻ ഹൈക്കോടതിയുടെ നിർദ്ദേശം**

തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിൽ ക്രമക്കേട് നടക്കുന്നില്ലെന്ന് ഉറപ്പാക്കാൻ തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് കമ്മീഷൻ ഹൈക്കോടതിയുടെ നിർദ്ദേശം. ഒരു പൗരൻ ഒരു വോട്ട് മാത്രമേ ചെയ്യുന്നുള്ളൂ എന്ന് കമ്മീഷൻ ഉറപ്പാക്കണമെന്ന് കോടതി ഇടക്കാല ഉത്തരവിൽ നിർദ്ദേശിച്ചു. ഇതിനായി സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന നടപടികൾ കമ്മീഷൻ നാളെ അറിയിക്കണം. വോട്ടർ പട്ടികയിൽ വ്യാജ - ഇരട്ട വോട്ടുകൾ കടന്നു കൂടിയത് ഗൗരവമുള്ള വിഷയമാണെന്നും പൗരന്റെ അവകാശത്തെ ബാധിക്കുന്നതാണെന്നും കോടതി ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടി. വ്യാജ - ഇരട്ട വോട്ടുകൾ കണ്ടെത്താൻ നടപടി സ്വീകരിച്ചതായും ഇത്തരം വോട്ടുകൾ രേഖമെടുത്താൻ അനുവദിക്കില്ലെന്നും തെരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് കമ്മീഷൻ അറിയിച്ചു. ക്രമക്കേട് തടയണമെന്നാവശ്യപ്പെട്ട് പ്രതിപക്ഷ നേതാവ് രമേശ് ചെന്നിത്തല സമർപ്പിച്ച പൊതുതാൽപ്പര്യ ഹർജിയാണ് ചീഫ് ജസ്റ്റിസ് അധ്യക്ഷനായ ബഞ്ച് പരിഗണിച്ചത്.

(ഭേ., 30/03)

**പൊലീസിലെ കുറ്റക്കാരുടെ വിവരങ്ങൾ ഒരു മാസത്തിനകം പ്രസിദ്ധപ്പെടുത്തണം**

അഴിമതിയുടെയും മനുഷ്യാവകാശ ലംഘനങ്ങളുടെയും പേരിൽ കോടതി കുറ്റക്കാരെന്നു കണ്ടതോ സർവീസിൽനിന്നു പിരിച്ചുവിട്ടതോ ആയ പൊലീസ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരുടെ വിവരങ്ങൾ കേരള പൊലീസിന്റെ വെബ്സൈറ്റിൽ ഒരു മാസത്തിനകം പ്രസിദ്ധപ്പെടുത്തണമെന്നു ഹൈക്കോടതി ഉത്തരവിട്ടു. വിവരാവകാശ നിയമപ്രകാരം ഇതു വെളിപ്പെടുത്താം. ഈ വിവരങ്ങൾ മറച്ചുവയ്ക്കുന്നതു ന്യായമല്ലെന്നു കോടതി വ്യക്തമാക്കി. അതേസമയം, അന്വേഷണത്തിൽ കുറ്റക്കാരെന്നു കണ്ടാലും കോടതിയുടെ

തീരുമാനം വന്നിട്ടില്ലാത്ത ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരുടെ കാര്യത്തിൽ പേരു പുറത്തുവിടാനോ പ്രസിദ്ധപ്പെടുത്താനോ ബാധ്യതയില്ലെന്നും കോടതി വ്യക്തമാക്കി. വിവരങ്ങൾ പ്രസിദ്ധപ്പെടുത്തണമെന്ന സംസ്ഥാന വിവരാവകാശ കമ്മീഷന്റെ ഉത്തരവിനെതിരെ സംസ്ഥാന ക്രൈം റെക്കോർഡ്സ് ബ്യൂറോയിലെ സ്റ്റേറ്റ് പബ്ലിക് ഇൻഫർമേഷൻ ഓഫീസർ നൽകിയ ഹർജി തീർപ്പാക്കിയാണു ജസ്റ്റിസ് രാജ വിജയരാഘവന്റെ ഉത്തരവ്.

(മ.മ., 30/03)

**ഇരട്ടവോട്ടുകളുടെ പട്ടികയായി**

സംസ്ഥാനത്തെ എല്ലാ നിയമസഭാ മണ്ഡലങ്ങളിലെയും ഇരട്ട വോട്ടുകൾ സംബന്ധിച്ച പട്ടികയായി. ബൃത്ത് ലെവൽ ഓഫീസർമാർ നേരിട്ട് പരിശോധിച്ച് തയ്യാറാക്കിയ പട്ടിക കളക്ടർമാർ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് കമ്മീഷന് കൈമാറി. പട്ടികയ്ക്കൊപ്പം നേരിട്ട് ബൃത്തിലെത്തി വോട്ടു ചെയ്യേണ്ടാത്തവർ, മണ്ഡലം മാറിയവർ, മരിച്ചുപോയവർ എന്നിവരുടെ പട്ടികയും തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പിനു മുമ്പ് തയ്യാറാക്കും. ഇതും പ്രിസൈഡിങ് ഓഫീസർമാർക്ക് കൈമാറും.

(മാ., 31/03)

**ഫസ്റ്റ്ബെൽ ഡിജിറ്റൽ ക്ലാസുകൾ പത്തുമാസം പൂർത്തിയാക്കി**

കോവിഡ് -19 പ്രതിസന്ധിയെത്തുടർന്ന് കൈറ്റ് വികേന്ദ്രീകൃത ആരംഭിച്ച ഫസ്റ്റ്ബെൽ ഡിജിറ്റൽ ക്ലാസുകൾക്ക് മാർച്ച് 31-ന് പത്തുമാസം പൂർത്തിയാകുന്നു. ജനറൽ, തമിഴ്, കന്നഡ മീഡിയങ്ങളിലായി 3750 മണിക്കൂർ ദൈർഘ്യത്തിൽ 7500 ക്ലാസുകളാണ് ഇതുവരെ പൂർത്തിയായത്. പൊതുപരീക്ഷ നടക്കുന്ന പത്ത്, പ്ലസ് ടു ക്ലാസുകൾക്കായുള്ള ലൈവ് ഫോൺ ഇൻ ക്ലാസുകളും പൂർത്തിയായി. സാധാരണ ക്ലാസുകൾക്ക് പുറമെ ഫോക്കസ് ഏരിയ അധിഷ്ഠിതമായ റിവിഷൻ ക്ലാസുകൾ, കാഴ്ച പരിമിതർക്കുൾപ്പെടെ പ്രയോജനപ്പെടുന്ന ഓഡിയോ ബുക്കുകൾ, ശ്രവണ പരിമിതർക്കുള്ള സൈൻ അഡോപ്റ്റഡ് ക്ലാസുകൾ തുടങ്ങിയവയുടെ സംപ്രേഷണവും പൂർത്തിയായി.

(മാ., 31/03)

**ഇ-ഇൻവോയ്സിങ് നാളെ മുതൽ**

50 കോടിക്കു മുകളിൽ വാർഷിക വിറ്റുവരവുള്ള വ്യാപാരികളുടെ ഇടപാടുകൾക്ക് ഏപ്രിൽ ഒന്നുമുതൽ ഇ-ഇൻവോയ്സിങ് നിർബന്ധമാക്കി. ഈ വ്യാപാരികൾ നികുതി ബാധ്യതയുള്ള ചരക്കുകൾക്കും സേവനങ്ങൾക്കും കൂടാതെ വ്യാപാരി നൽകുന്ന ക്രെഡിറ്റ്, ഡെബിറ്റ് നോട്ടുകൾക്കും ഇ-ഇൻവോയ്സിങ് നടത്തണം. ജി.എസ്.ടി. കോമ്മൺ പോർട്ടൽ വഴിയോ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ഇ-ഇൻവോയ്സിങ് രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ പോർട്ടലായ

<https://invoice1.gst.gov.in> വഴിയോ രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യാം. നികുതിരഹിതമായവയുടെ കച്ചവടങ്ങൾക്ക് ഇ-ഇൻവോയ്സിങ് ആവശ്യമില്ല. പ്രത്യേക സാമ്പത്തികമേഖലയിലെ യൂണിറ്റുകൾ, ഇൻഷുറൻസ്, നോൺ ബാങ്കിങ് ഫിനാൻഷ്യൽ കമ്പനികൾ അടക്കമുള്ള ബാങ്കിങ് മേഖല, ഗുഡ്സ് ട്രാൻസ്പോർട്ടിങ് ഏജൻസികൾ, പാസഞ്ചർ ട്രാൻസ്പോർട്ട് സർവീസ്, മൾട്ടിപ്ലക്സ് സിനിമാപ്രവേശനം എന്നിവയെ ഇ-ഇൻവോയ്സിങ്ങിൽ നിന്നു ഒഴിവാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

(മാ., 31/03)

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**NATIONAL NEWS**

**PSLV-C51 launches Brazil's Amazonia-1 satellite**

India's Polar rocket on Sunday successfully launched Amazonia-1 satellite of Brazil from the spaceport here, in the first mission of the year for space agency ISRO. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C51, also carrying 18 other satellites, lifted off at around 10.24 am from the first launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR) and injected into orbit primary payload Amazonia-1 about 17 minutes later in a textbook launch. The co-passenger satellites, including one from Chennai-based Space Kidz India (SKI), which is engraved with a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will be launched over the next two hours during which the fourth-stage of the PSLV-C51 would be re-started twice. "I am extremely happy to declare that PSLV-C51 successfully launched in precise orbit Amazonia-1 today. The satellite is in very good health and solar panels have been deployed," Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K Sivan announced amid applause from the scientists. PSLV-C51 is the first dedicated commercial mission of NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), ISRO's commercial arm, and the launch was watched among others by Brazilian government officials at the mission control centre here, over 100 kms from Chennai.

**(P., 01/03)**

**'Sindhu Netra' launched to boost country's defence, civilian surveillance**

In a boost for the country's surveillance capabilities to monitor activities of both military warships and merchant shipping in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the 'Sindhu Netra' satellite developed by a team of young scientists from Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) was successfully deployed in space on Sunday. The satellite was launched using the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) PSLV-C51 which took off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh at 10:30 am today. The Sindhu Netra satellite has been developed by the young scientists of the DRDO and is capable of automatically identifying the warships and merchant ships operating in the IOR. The satellite has also started communicating with the ground systems, government sources told. The satellite, if required, can also help in carrying out surveillance in specific areas such as the South China Sea or the pirate-infested areas near the Gulf of Aden and the African coast, the sources said. They added that the Sindhu Netra is one of the first in the series of satellites that would help the nation in enhancing its surveillance capabilities on land in areas such as the Ladakh region with China and the border areas with Pakistan.

**(P., 01/03)**

**Manipur's news website becomes first target of Centre's new rules on digital media**

Manipur government on Tuesday issued a directive to a news website "The Frontier Manipur" based in Imphal, asking the portal to furnish relevant documents showing it ensured compliance of the new regulation introduced by the Centre on digital media. The directive was

issued by Naorem Praveen, Deputy Commissioner Imphal West on March 1, addressing the publisher/intermediary of “Khanasi Neinasi”, a weekly online discussion, of The Frontier Manipur (TFM). Apparently, this was the first notice served to a digital media organisation in the country after the Central government introduced new rules on February 25 to regulate digital media in India. Citing the new rules, the notice said, “You are hereby directed to furnish all the relevant documents showing that you ensure compliance of the provision of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guideline and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.” Failing to comply with the directive, the DC warned that steps “as deemed fit” shall be initiated against the TFM without further notice.

(I.E., 02/03)

### **Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha channels merged into Sansad TV**

Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha TV channels have been merged into one channel- Sansad television. Retired IAS officer Ravi Capoor has been appointed the Chief Executive Officer of the channel for a period of one year with immediate effect, or until further orders, whichever is earlier, read a order by Sunil Minocha, the under secretary of Sansad Television.

(N.I.E., 02/03)

### **1.47 lakh people above 60 and 45-plus with comorbidities get Covid shots on opening day**

On a day the nationwide Covid-19 vaccination drive opened for people above 60 and those between 45-59 years with specific comorbidities, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first one to take the jab at the AII India Institute of Medical Sciences in the national capital. The glitches in the CoWin platform, which has been designed to drive the initiative, meant that most who wanted to register for inoculation could not do so but the figures by the Centre showed that over 1.47 lakh citizens in the new category of beneficiaries still managed to take the shots on the first day of the second phase of the vaccination drive. A total of about 4.27 lakh jabs were administered on Monday and the majority, nearly 65% were healthcare and frontline workers, who are being covered from before. Among the general citizens, who were inoculated on Monday, 1,28, 630 were the elderly while 18, 850 were people under 60 with underlying conditions. Though the details shared by the government did not specify it, sources said that most of the vaccinations in this category were through walk-in facilities.

(N.I.E., 02/03)

### **COVID-19 vaccination: Non-empanelled private hospitals can give jabs**

In a move that will allow a significant rise in the number of health facilities being used as Covid vaccination centres, the Centre permitted states to start inoculation at private hospitals, not empanelled under any Central or state-run health insurance schemes. The states and Union territories were also urged not to store, preserve, conserve or create a buffer stock of the COVID-19 vaccines, the Union Health Ministry said in a statement, a day after the start of the second phase of India's inoculation drive in which the coverage has been expanded to include everyone above 60 and those over 45 with specified co-morbidities. The development came as the vaccinations for those above 60 and those over 45 with underlying diseases crossed the

2.1-lakh mark. When the second phase of the nationwide Covid vaccination drive started on Monday, the Centre had permitted only private hospitals empanelled under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, Central Government Health Scheme and state health insurances. At an official review meeting with the states, the Centre reiterated there is no shortage of the vaccines and hence, adequate vaccine doses should be allocated to the COVID Vaccination Centres (CVCs). "The central government has adequate stock and will provide the required vaccine doses to the states and UTs," it said.

(N.I.E., 03/03)

### **India's present overall case positivity rate suggests COVID-19 close to being under control**

India's present overall COVID-19 case positivity rate of 5.11 per cent suggests the pandemic is close to being under control, the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday. Addressing a weekly press conference, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said though certain states, including Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, are seeing a surge in number of COVID-19 active cases, "the fact remains that recovered cases are still more than 97 per cent and India's total active cases are less than 2 per cent (1.51 per cent)". Bhushan said that central teams have been deputed to Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. "We are monitoring Haryana also," he said. Two states, Maharashtra and Kerala, account for 75 per cent of the total active COVID-19 cases in the country, he stated. "According to WHO, if 140 tests per million are being conducted per day and case positivity rate is 5 per cent or below, it means the COVID-19 pandemic is under control. We are very close to that mark with the present overall case positivity being 5.11 per cent," he said. NITI Aayog member (Health) V K Paul urged people to come forward and get vaccinated to break the chain of transmission while stressing that public compliance for COVID-19 appropriate behaviour cannot be diluted. He said a large proportion of the population was still susceptible to disease and cautioned against any laxity.

(N.I.E., 03/03)

### **COVID-19: SC proposes to lift extension of limitation period for filing appeals**

The Supreme Court Wednesday said it proposes to lift the extension of limitation period for filing appeals which was granted by it with effect from March 15 last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The apex court had on March 23 last year invoked its plenary power under Article 142 of the Constitution to extend the limitation period of appeals from courts or tribunals on account of the pandemic. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde on Wednesday told Attorney General K K Venugopal that it proposes to lift the extension of limitation period with effect from March 15 this year and it might give a period of 90 days thereafter for the eventuality if restrictions may be re-imposed due to the pandemic. The bench, also comprising Justices L Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat, told Venugopal to draft the clauses which would help litigants after lifting of extension of limitation period in



case the restrictions would come into effect again. At the outset, Venugopal told the bench that the apex court could exclude the period of one year from March 15, 2020 to March 15 this year from the period of limitation and grant some further time uniformly across the board. "We propose to lift the extension of limitation period from March 15, 2021," the bench said.

(N.I.E., 04/03)

### **Make in India epitomises trade hurdles, says US report**

A report sent to the US Congress, the first on the Joe Biden administration's trade agenda, has said that the Narendra Modi government's Make In India initiative has epitomised the trade-restrictive challenges confronting the two countries while adding that the Biden administration's priority would be removing trade barriers. "Recent Indian emphasis on import substitution through a 'Make in India' campaign has epitomized the challenges facing the bilateral trade relationship. Opening markets and reducing trade barriers are fundamental to any trade agenda. This will be a priority for the Biden administration, particularly since export-oriented producers, manufacturers, and businesses enjoy greater than average productivity and wages," the report, titled '2021 Trade Policy Agenda and 2020 Annual Report', stated. It also throws light on the negotiations that took place between the two countries in 2019 and 2020 to finalise a trade agreement and called them a package of meaningful market access outcomes.

(N.I.E., 04/03)

### **India bats for inclusion of Chabahar Port in international freight corridor**

India on Thursday proposed the inclusion of Chabahar Port in the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and expressed hope that member states will agree to the proposal. Located in Iran and operated by India, Chabahar's strategic position provides connectivity between India, Iran, Afghanistan, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Uzbekistan. "I am hopeful that during the INSTC Coordination Council meeting, member states would agree to the expansion of the INSTC route to include the Chabahar Port and also agree on expanding the membership of this project. We also welcome the interest of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan to join the multilateral corridor project. Establishing an eastern corridor through Afghanistan would maximise its potential," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said during his address at the Chabahar Day event at the Maritime India Summit. The International North South Transport Corridor is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode transport project used for moving freight between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, the Central Asia and Europe.

(N.I.E., 05/03)

### **Bengaluru, Shimla ranked 'most livable' cities in govt's Ease of Living Index 2020**

Bengaluru topped the list of 111 cities in the government's 'Ease of Living Index' on Thursday, followed by Pune, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Surat, Navi Mumbai, Coimbatore and Vadodra.

According to the index released by Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Shimla was ranked top in the category of cities with 'population less than million'. New Delhi Municipal Council topped the 'Municipal Performance Index' list in the 'less than million population' category. Indore was ranked top on the 'Municipal Performance Index' list in the million-plus population category.

(N.I.E., 05/03)

### **Unhealthy living pushing Indians to 'silent killers'**

With nearly one-third adults physically inactive, over 32 % consuming tobacco and nearly 16% taking alcohol, a majority of Indians are at a significant risk of developing lifestyle diseases, according to a nation-wide survey. Over 98% people surveyed did not consume the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables every day, said the first comprehensive nationwide survey by the ICMR and nearly 18 government institutions to assess the risk factors for non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The average consumption was 2 servings per day, much less than the WHO recommendations. Indian adults consume about 8 gm salt per day, it said. Higher than the recommended salt intake of 5 mg per day is considered a major risk factor for hypertension. The survey, conducted during 2017–18, was based on a sample size of about 12,000 households in rural and urban parts, is based on responses from adults aged 18-69. The findings would contribute to plan future state-based surveys and also frame policies for prevention and control of NCDs, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer, which have emerged as the biggest killers. NCDs accounted to 65% of total deaths in 2019 and, over a period of 25 years — since 1990 — the burden of diseases has transitioned from communicable to NCD cases. The total disability adjusted life years from NCDs was 30.5% in 1990 which increased in 2016 to 55.4%. Men consumed more salt than women and always or often added extra salt right before eating food. Also, a larger proportion of men (69.7%) than women (58.4%) thought lowering salt consumption is important and took steps to reduce salt intake.

(N.I.E., 06/03)

### **Four Indian scientists challenge Big Bang Theory**

In what could dramatically change the way astrophysicists look at the birth of the Universe, four Indian scientists, including one from Bengaluru, have challenged the Big Bang theory related to its origin. The theory holds that the Universe was born out of a highly compressed, dense and microscopic point (called singularity) which exploded with a huge force some 13.8 billion years ago, resulting in everything arising from that singularity moving outwards in all directions. From this, all cosmic matter (as we know it today) was formed at different stages through time until now. The Big Bang theory was based on observation of the 'red shift' in the light spectrum. The light wavelength emitted from an astronomical object that is moving away from us exhibits a shift in the light spectrum (VIBGYOR) towards the red end. The Big Bang theory is supported by the understanding that the shift of light towards the red band in the spectrum is continuous and uniform in nature — an indication of all matter (galaxies and all

cosmic matter) moving outwards steadily, but at great speed. Working the outward movement backwards, it would mean that it all began from a single starting point in the centre of the Universe (singularity), which is how the Big Bang theory was popularised among astrophysicists. But now, in a research paper published recently in the prestigious international journal *Astronomy & Astrophysics*, Prof Sisir Roy from the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru; Arindam Mal from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Ahmedabad; and Sarbani Palit and Ujjwal Bhattacharya from the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Kolkata, have revealed findings contrary to the continuous and uniform nature of movement of light towards the red band of light in the spectrum — casting doubts and challenging the Big Bang theory itself.

(N.I.E., 06/03)

### **Agri laws: Another farmer from Haryana commits suicide near Tikri border**

A 49-year-old farmer from Haryana's Hisar district on Sunday allegedly hanged himself from a tree, about seven kilometers from the Tikri border protest site, police said. The farmer, who supported the agitation against Centre's new farm laws, has purportedly left a suicide note, they said. "The victim, Rajbir, hailed from a village in Hisar district. He was found hanging from a tree," Bahadurgarh City police station SHO, Vijay Kumar said over phone. His body was found hanging by some farmers who informed the police. In the suicide note purportedly left behind by Rajbir, it is mentioned that the three farm laws were responsible for him to take the extreme step. He also said that the Centre should fulfil his last wish by repealing the legislations, police said. Last month, a farmer from Jind in Haryana who was also supporting the agitation against the Centre's farm laws had allegedly hanged himself from a tree, merely two kilometres from the Tikri border protest site. Earlier, another farmer from Haryana had allegedly consumed a poisonous substance at the Tikri border. He had died during treatment at a Delhi hospital later. In December last, a lawyer from Punjab had allegedly killed himself by consuming poison a few kilometres away from the protest site at the Tikri border.

(N.I.E., 07/03)

### **CAGed? Top audit body's reports on Centre's money management down by 75 per cent**

The number of reports brought out by the country's top audit body, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, has come down sharply in the past five years, raising concerns that the government's financial accountability is not coming under the CAG's gaze very closely. The total number of CAG reports relating to central government ministries and departments came down from 55 in 2015 to just 14 in 2020, a fall of nearly 75%, a reply to an RTI application filed by this newspaper said. The CAG's mandate is to serve as a watchdog, bringing out financial, performance and compliance reports of the government. "The CAG is the supreme audit institution of India and is expected to promote financial accountability and transparency in the affairs of the audited entities," the CAG said in its 2019-20 own performance report. The power its reports yield came out starkly during the United

Progressive Alliance government of Manmohan Singh. Its scathing reports on the 2G auction, coal block auction, Adarsh housing society and the Commonwealth Games of 2010 blighted Singh's corruption-free image and brought down his government. The information received through the RTI application revealed that the number of CAG reports tabled in Parliament was the highest in 10 years during the early years of the National Democratic Alliance government. But the numbers have fallen steadily after that. The RTI reply revealed that defence audit reports prepared and tabled in Parliament have also come down during the last few years. While eight audit reports were tabled in Parliament in 2017, it was zero last year.

(N.I.E., 07/03)

### **Satellite set for March 28 launch will help India keep an eye on borders near real-time**

India plans to launch on March 28 an earth observation satellite that will provide it near real-time images of its borders and also enable quick monitoring of natural disasters. GISAT-1 is slated to be lofted into space by GSLV-F10 rocket from Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district, about 100 kms north of Chennai. "We are looking to launch this Geo imaging satellite on March 28, subject to weather conditions", an official of the Bengaluru-headquartered Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) told PTI on Sunday. The rocket will place the spacecraft in a geosynchronous orbit. It will be subsequently positioned in geostationary orbit, about 36,000 kms above earth's equator, using its onboard propulsion system. The launch of GISAT-1 onboard GSLV-F10 rocket was originally planned for March 5 last year but postponed a day before the blast-off due to technical reasons. Experts said positioning the state-of-the-art agile earth observation satellite in geostationary orbit has key advantages. Listing the objectives of the mission, ISRO has earlier said the satellite would provide near real-time imaging of the large area region of interest at frequent intervals. It would help in quick monitoring of natural disasters, episodic and any short-term events. The third objective is to obtain spectral signatures of agriculture, forestry, mineralogy, disaster warning, cloud properties, snow and glacier and oceanography.

(N.I.E., 08/03)

### **PM promotes Janaushadhi centres, urges people to visit**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that the Janaushadhi Yojana is becoming a big friend of poor and middle class families, besides emerging as the medium of both service and employment. He called upon people to access affordable medicines from Janaushadhi centres. On Sunday, the 7500th centre of Janaushadhi at Shillong was unveiled. "The scheme is providing affordable medicine to people in hilly areas, Northeast and tribal areas. The dedication of 7500th center is important as there were not even 100 centres in India six years ago," said the Prime Minister, while asking for meeting the target of 10000 centers soon. The Prime Minister stated that the poor and middle class families are saving about Rs 3600 crore every year on expensive medicines. "The scheme is promoting Aatamnirbharta among women as more than 1000 centers are being run by the women. In order to promote the scheme, incentive has been enhanced from Rs 2.5 lakh to Rs 5 lakh with additional incentive of Rs 2

lakh for Dalit, Adivasi women and people of the Northeast,” he added.

**(N.I.E., 08/03)**

### **ISRO develops radar for joint earth observation satellite mission with NASA**

ISRO has completed development of a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) capable of producing extremely high-resolution images for a joint earth observation satellite mission with the US space agency NASA. NASA-ISRO SAR (NISAR) is a joint collaboration for a dual-frequency L and S-band SAR for earth observation. "NISAR will be the first satellite mission to use two different radar frequencies (L-band and S-band) to measure changes in our planet's surface less than a centimeter across", according to NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration). NASA and Bengaluru-headquartered ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) signed a partnership on September 30, 2014, to collaborate on and launch NISAR. The mission is targeted to launch in early 2022 from ISRO's Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district, about 100 kms north of Chennai. NASA is providing the mission's L-band SAR, a high-rate communication subsystem for science data, GPS receivers, a solid-state recorder and payload data subsystem. ISRO is providing the spacecraft bus, the S-band radar, the launch vehicle and associated launch services for the mission, whose goal is to make global measurements of the causes and consequences of land surface changes using advanced radar imaging.

**(N.I.E., 09/03)**

### **Serum Institute seeks government's intervention over import of COVID vaccine raw material from US**

Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's largest vaccine manufacturer by volume, has sought the central government's intervention so as to enable the firm import essential raw materials from the US for uninterrupted manufacturing and supply of COVID-19 vaccines. In a letter to Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhawan and Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Director, Government and Regulatory Affairs at Pune-based SII, Prakash Kumar Singh said the US government has invoked the Defence Production Act because of which the firm is facing difficulties in importing necessary products like cell culture medias, raw material, single-use tubing assemblies and some specialty chemicals from the US. He said in the letter that Covishield vaccine manufactured by the SII is being widely used in India and across the globe and millions of people have been vaccinated with it. Singh further said the Serum Institute is working on many other COVID-19 vaccine projects in technical collaboration with various Institutions i.e. Novavax (US), Codagenix(US) etc. for which it depends on import of many necessary products like raw materials, consumables and components from various foreign manufacturers, especially from the US.

**(N.I.E., 09/03)**

### **Immunity stronger after second Covaxin dose: Study**

As per a study published in The Lancet journal on March 8 on the safety and immunogenicity of the Phase-2 trials of Covaxin (BBV152), the primary outcome was that neutralising

antibody titers and seroconversion rates were four fold higher at four weeks after the second dose (day 56). Seroconversion is when antibodies become present in the blood. “In the Phase-1 trial, BBV152 induced high neutralising antibody responses that remained elevated in all participants at three months after the second (dose). In Phase-2, (it) showed better reactogenicity and safety outcomes, and enhanced humoral and cell-mediated immune responses compared to Phase-1,” the study said. Simply put, Dr Ravindra Mehta, senior consultant and HOD, Pulmonology and Interventional Pulmonology, Apollo Speciality Hospitals said, neutralising antibodies are the most important antibodies which neutralise the Covid attack. “In Phase-2, the study states that the vaccine activates all parts of the immune response, be it to curtail the infection at an early stage or even long term. If the body is re-challenged with the virus later, it will have long-term memory of antibody response,” he said. Due to the difference in dosing regimens between Phase-1 (two doses given two weeks apart) and Phase-2 (two doses given four weeks apart) trials, neutralisation responses were significantly higher in Phase-2. Additionally, the proportion of participants reporting adverse reactions in the Phase-2 trial were lower than in Phase-1.

**(N.I.E., 10/03)**

### **States asked to provide Covid-19 vaccine doses for 2-4 weeks to every hospital**

The Centre on Tuesday asked states to register and activate all private facilities for Covid-19 vaccinations and also provide sufficient stock of vaccine doses to hospitals for 15-28 days so that the facilities can offer online open slots to citizens. “Visibility of more open slots not only assures the citizens about the services but also helps avoid overcrowding on account of perceived scarcity in absence of clear visibility of vaccination slots,” said the instructions by the Union government to the states. The directions come following complaints from several parts that upon registration on specified portals and apps for vaccinations, beneficiaries are struggling to find slots for several weeks and a larger number of vaccinations are happening through walk-ins. In a high-level review meeting of the drive, chaired by P K Mishra, principal secretary to the Prime Minister, top officials at the Centre also reiterated that there is no shortage of vaccine doses in any state. States and UTs were particularly urged to leverage the private sector to the maximum to enhance coverage, taking advantage of the liberal guidelines issued by the Centre, providing sufficient stock of vaccines necessary for these centres to work at their optimum and providing any other facilitation required.

**(N.I.E., 10/03)**

### **PM to launch 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' on Friday, flag off march from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Friday inaugurate the 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' event by flagging off a 241-mile march from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to Dandi in Gujarat's Navsari district to commemorate the 75th anniversary of India's Independence, Union Minister Prahlaad Singh Patel said Thursday. Addressing the media, the culture and tourism minister said the government has decided to organise a series of events to

commemorate the 75th anniversary of India's Independence as 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' from March 12, 2021, to August 15, 2022. States and Union Territories will also organize programmes on Friday, he said. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' and flag-off the march from Sabarmati Ashram tomorrow. "The 25-day march will cover 241 miles from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to Dandi in Navsari, and will end on April 5. Eighty-one people will participate in the padyatra and different groups of people will be joining it on the way to Dandi. "I will lead the first lap of 75 kilometers till Nadiad," Patel said. Explaining the significance of choosing March 12 for the padyatra, the minister said it was on this day in 1930 that Mahatma Gandhi took out the famous Dandi march along with 81 people to break the law imposing tax on salt. The government has decided to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Independence as 'Amrut Mahotsav'.

**(N.I.E., 11/03)**

### **Railways ensures 100% compliance of payment of minimum wages to contract workers through Shramik Kalyan Portal**

Indian Railways has ensured 100 per cent compliance of payment of minimum wages to contract workers through e-application Shramik Kalyan Portal, the Ministry of Railways informed on Thursday. Rs 3,49,590 lakh of wage amount and about 6 crores man-days were registered on Indian Railway Shramik Kalyan e-application as on Tuesday, it said. A total of 15,812 contractors and 3,81,831 contract workers also registered on this portal till Tuesday. Indian Railway Shramik Kalyan e-application has been developed and launched on October 1 2018. "E-Application ensures the compliance of provisions of the Minimum Wages Act and also ensures that contractual workers working in Indian Railways get their rightful due by enforcing the contractors to regularly upload wage payment data into e-application. This helps Railways as Principal Employer, to keep vigil over wages disbursed by contractors to contract workers," read the release. "As of March 9, a total of 15,812 contractors and a total of 3,81,831 contract workers are registered on this portal. Along with this, a total of 48,312 no. of letter of acceptance (LOA), Rs 3,49, 590 lakhs (More than Rs 3495 crores) wage amount and about 6 crores man-days are also registered on this portal across Indian Railways," it said. The ministry said all Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) working under the Ministry of Railways are also using this e-application.

**(N.I.E., 11/03)**

### **Under mega Quad initiative, India to produce COVID-19 vaccines for Indo-Pacific region**

In their first-ever summit, leaders of the Quad countries on Friday finalised a landmark initiative under which huge investments will be made in India to create additional production capacities for the export of doses of COVID-19 vaccines to the Indo-Pacific region, seen as an effort to counter China's expanding vaccine diplomacy. The Quad leaders -- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden, Australian PM Scott Morrison and Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga -- vowed to strive for an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, inclusive,

healthy, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion, in an apparent message to China. In his opening remarks at the virtual summit, Modi said Quad has come of age and its agenda covering areas like vaccines, climate change and emerging technologies makes it a force for global good. Modi said India's formidable vaccine production capacity will be expanded with support from Japan, US and Australia to assist countries in the Indo-Pacific region and that Quad would now remain an important pillar of stability in the Indo-Pacific region. "We are united by our democratic values, and our commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. Our agenda today - covering areas like vaccines, climate change and emerging technologies - makes the Quad a force for global good," he said.

(N.I.E., 12/03)

### **ISRO, Japanese space agency review 2024 joint lunar mission**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Japanese space agency, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), on Thursday held a virtual meeting to review projects the two are collaborating on, in particular the Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) mission that is likely to be launched some time in 2024. It involves sending a lander and rover on the Moon's south pole region, much like Chandrayaan-2 attempted. ISRO Chairman K Sivan interacted with the Japanese delegation, led by JAXA president Hiroshi Yamakawa, wherein they reviewed their ongoing cooperation in Earth observation, lunar exploration and satellite navigation. The Lupex mission is being planned to demonstrate new surface exploration technologies related to vehicular transport and lunar night survival for sustainable lunar exploration in the polar regions — the south pole of the Moon in this case. The mission will use a lunar features-matching algorithm along with a navigational equipment from JAXA's Smart Lander for Investigating Moon mission, and the rover will carry instruments from both the space agencies. The lander's payload capacity will be a minimum 350 kg, while the rover will carry multiple instruments, which include a drill to collect sub-surface samples from 1.5 mt depth. Besides this, water prospecting and analysis are also likely to be the mission's objectives. The mission aims at an in-situ observation of areas where water is believed to exist, and obtain ground data on the quantity of water, besides understanding the distribution, conditions, form and other parameters of lunar water resources in the polar region. The mission is also meant to obtain data on the quantity and forms of the water resources present on the Moon.

(N.I.E., 12/03)

### **With over 20 lakh doses, India records highest single-day COVID-19 vaccinations**

With over 20 lakh COVID-19 vaccine doses, India on Friday recorded the highest number of vaccinations administered in a single day, the Union Health Ministry informed on Saturday. As many as 20,53,537 vaccine doses were administered on Day 56 of the vaccination drive ( March 12) through 30,561 sessions. A total of 16,39,663 beneficiaries that included Health Care Workers (HCW) and Front Line Workers (FLW) were vaccinated the first dose and 4,13,874 HCWs and FLWs received the second dose of the vaccine. So far, a cumulative total



of 2,82,18,457 doses of the vaccine have been administered through 4,86,314 sessions. Eight states constituted 74 per cent of the 20,53,537 doses administered in the last 24 hours. Uttar Pradesh has topped the list with more than 3.3 lakh doses. Ten states account for 69 per cent of the second dose vaccinations in the country. Uttar Pradesh alone accounts for 9.71 per cent (4,99,242) of the total second dose vaccinations. There are currently 2,02,022 active cases in the country, 1.78 per cent of the total positive cases, including 24,882 new cases in the last 24 hours. Maharashtra, one of the worst affected states, accounts for 63.57 per cent of the total active cases. 15,817 new cases reported in the last 24 hours in the state. As many as 20 States/UTs have less than 1,000 active Cases.

(N.I.E., 13/03)

### **ISRO's business arm to invest Rs 10k crore in next five years**

The Indian Space Research Organisation's commercial arm NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL), which started operations in 2019 and clocked a revenue of Rs 300 crore in the first year, is now looking at revenue of Rs 400 crore in 2020-2021. It is also looking to investment Rs 2,000 crore per year over the next five years, and increase its manpower capability to from the existing 20-25 to 300, to cater to the country's and international space requirements. The money will be raised through a mix of equity and debt, NSIL chairman Narayanan G told mediapersons on Friday. The enterprise foresees a paradigm shift, from having a mandate to produce and operate launch vehicles for ISRO, to procuring, owning, launching and providing space-based services, primarily in the communication sector, to its various customers. As per a top source in the organisation, more revenue comes from satellite-related missions than launches. The NSIL has already started discussions with users about communication satellite capacities. It is also in talks with the Department of Space to take ownership of two communication satellites. The NSIL is also looking at owning the already operating satellites in space. "We propose to take over the satellites run by ISRO," said Narayanan. The space enterprise which is incorporated as a wholly government owned enterprise with a paid-up capital of Rs 10 crore on March 6, 2019, has an authorised capital of Rs 100 crore. The recent budget identified Rs 700 crore for the company in the coming financial year.

(N.I.E., 13/03)

### **Indus Commissioners of India, Pakistan to meet in New Delhi on March 23-24**

The Indus Commissioners of India and Pakistan will meet here on March 23 and 24 to discuss a host of issues, including Islamabad's concerns about the design of Indian hydropower projects on the Chenab River, a top official said on Sunday. This will be the annual meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission. Under the provisions of the Indus Water Treaty, both the commissioners are required to meet at least once a year alternately in India and Pakistan. "The meeting will take place in New Delhi on March 23-24," P K Saxena, India's Indus Commissioner, told PTI. This will also be the first meeting between the two commissioners after the nullification of special provisions under Article 370 that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir. The state was later carved into two union territories -- Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir. Since then, India has cleared several

hydropower projects in Ladakh. India had conveyed the projects to Pakistan and the issue is expected to come for discussion during the meeting. Saxena said that Pakistan's concerns about the design of Indian hydropower projects on the Chenab river will also be discussed.

(N.I.E., 14/03)

### **More women judges likely in Supreme Court**

With the retirement of Justice Indu Malhotra from the Supreme Court on Saturday, the top court is left with only one woman judge in Indira Banerjee. Justice Malhotra was the first woman lawyer to become a Supreme Court judge. With her retirement, the number of vacancies rose to five. The collegium is considering a few women judges for elevation. The name of senior judge BV Nagarathna from Karnataka HC is doing the rounds. If elevated now, she will be in line to become the first woman CJI in 2027 for a period of eight months. Chief Justice of Telangana HC, Hima Kohli's name is also discussed. If appointed now, she will have a tenure till 2024. Otherwise, she retires in September. Across 26 HCs, there are only 82 women judges out of 1,079. Madras tops the list with 13, followed by Punjab and Haryana with 11. The Delhi and Bombay HCs have eight women judges each, with one each in Gauhati, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Sikkim. Though there are no fixed rules to appoint judges for the top court, seniority and regional representation are usually the major criteria.

(N.I.E., 14/03)

### **Farmers' protests: NH-24 carriageway from Delhi to Ghaziabad reopened for traffic movement**

The carriageway of NH-24 going towards Ghaziabad from Delhi, which was closed since January 26, was reopened for commuters on Monday, police said. The carriageway from Ghaziabad towards Delhi, however, remains closed, they said. In view of the prevailing law and order situation at the Ghazipur border and keeping in mind the aspect of public convenience, the carriageway of NH-24 going towards Ghaziabad from Delhi has been opened in due consultation with the police officials of the district, a senior official said. The stretch had been closed since January 26, when violence broke out in the national capital during a tractor parade by farmers. The carriageway was briefly opened on March 2. The Tikri and the Singhu borders continue to be closed due to the farmers' agitation. Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at Delhi's border points -- Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur -- for over three months, demanding a repeal of the three farm laws and a legal guarantee on the minimum support price for their crops. The protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that these laws would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price (MSP) system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations.

(N.I.E., 15/03)

### **SC issues notice on plea to nullify election result if maximum votes for NOTA**

The Supreme Court on Monday sought response from the Centre and the Election Commission on a plea seeking to direct the poll panel to nullify an election result and

conducting a fresh poll if the maximum votes are for None of the above (NOTA) in a particular constituency. A bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian issued notices to the Ministry of Law and Justice and the Election Commission of India while seeking their replies on the plea. Senior advocate Maneka Guruswamy appeared for the petitioner. The top court was hearing a plea filed by advocate and BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay which also sought a direction to the Election Commission to restrict those candidates and political parties, whose election has been nullified, from taking part in the fresh polls. "The right to reject and elect a new candidate will give power to the people to express their discontent. If voters are dissatisfied with the background or performance of the contesting candidate, they will opt for NOTA (none of the above) to reject such candidate and elect a new candidate," the petition said.

**(H.T., 15/03)**

**Nearly 146 tonnes Covid-related bio-medical waste generated daily in country: Centre**

Nearly 146 tonnes of bio-medical waste is generated per day in the country due to diagnostic activities and treatment of COVID-19 patients, the Ministry of Environment informed Parliament on Monday. Responding to a query in the Upper House of Parliament, Minister of State for Environment Babul Supriyo said that as per the figures from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), approximately 146 Tons per day of incremental BMW is generated in the country due to diagnostic activities, treatment and quarantine of COVID-19 patients. He said that as per the CPCB, approximately 616 Tons per day of Bio-Medical Waste(BMW) was generated in the country during 2019. Responding to a query on actions being taken for disposal of the waste, the minister said that for ensuring safe disposal of biomedical waste including COVID-19 waste, the CPCB has brought out dedicated guidelines for handling, treatment and disposal of waste generated during treatment, diagnostics and quarantine of COVID-19 patients. As per the provisions of Bio Medical Waste Management (BMWM) Rules, 2016, State Government(s)/UT Administration(s) are required to ensure that adequate infrastructure exists in their jurisdiction for treatment and disposal of BMW. Accordingly, state pollution control boards and pollution control committees (SPCBs/ PCCs) have authorized 202 Common Bio-medical Waste Treatment and Disposal Facilities (CBWTFs) to collect and dispose the BMW, including COVID-19 waste.

**(N.I.E., 16/03)**

**Arms imported by India decline by 33 percent in the previous decade: SIPRI**

At the time India is taking initiatives to decrease dependence of the Indian military on foreign made arms and equipment an independent international research institute has found that while international arms transfer has remained same in a decade's time, a major decline in Indian imports of the same. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in its new data on global arms transfers published on Monday has mentioned that Indian import declined by about one-third in 2016-2020. SIPRI is dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. The report has factored a decade of import data and mentions,

“Arms imports by India decreased by 33 per cent between 2011–15 and 2016–20.” and added, “The drop in Indian arms imports seems to have been mainly due to its complex procurement processes, combined with an attempt to reduce its dependence on Russian arms. India is planning large-scale arms imports in the coming years from several suppliers.” As per SIPRI, Russia was the most affected supplier, although India’s imports of US arms also fell, by 46 per cent. The decline in Indian Arms import does not reflect the international trend the arms transfer has remained same since a decade, between 2011-2015 and 2016-2020.

**(N.I.E., 16/03)**

**For first time, WCD Ministry to work on children’s mental health as finalizes budget of Rs 56 crore**

The Union Women and Child Development Ministry has launched a project, for the first time, to address the mental health challenges being faced by children across India and is spending Rs. 56 crore on it for over five years. Under the scheme, the ministry has tied up with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences, Bengaluru to train teachers, judicial officers, cops and those working in child care institutions across the country. Through the programme launched in June 2020, during the Covid19 lockdown, nearly 41,000 stakeholders across 28 states have been trained so far to recognize the children dealing with mental health issues and help them. In a press briefing, Union WCD minister Smriti Irani said on Tuesday that talks are also on with the Union Panchayati Raj ministry to address the issues faced by kids in rural areas. As per a recent UNICEF report, while an estimated 50 million children in India suffered from mental health issues even before the Covid-19 pandemic, the outbreak had a profound impact on the health and psycho-social well-being of the kids.

**(N.I.E., 17/03)**

**Indian Army’s two longest serving Artillery Systems de-commissioned**

Indian Army on Tuesday de-commissioned two of its longest serving Artillery systems. The Mahajan Field Firing Ranges witnessed the decommissioning ceremony marked by the customary firing of last salvos of the 130mm Self Propelled M-46 Catapult Guns and the 160mm Tampella Mortars in the presence of the Director General Artillery Lieutenant General K Ravi Prasad, the head of the Arm of Artillery. The proud end of the systems followed a long operational experience. The 130mm Catapult, with a range of more than 27 km, was a successful merger of two existing weapon systems: Vijayanta tanks and 130mm M-46 guns. This hybrid platform was a response to the need for a mobile Artillery gun system to support strike formations on the Western borders, after the 1965 and 1971 wars. The guns were inducted in 1981 and were employed successfully during a number of operations. The 160mm Tampella mortars, with a range of 9.6km, were inducted after the 1962 war with China to fulfill the need for a weapon system to clear high crests of the Northern borders. Originally an import from the Israeli Defence Forces, this mortar was successfully deployed on the Line of Control in the Leepa valley and the Hajipir Bowl and played a crucial part in maintaining the sanctity of the Line of Control. The

mortars also played a significant part in the 1999 Kargil war.

(N.I.E., 17/03)

### **RS passes Bill to increase upper limit for abortion to 24 weeks**

The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed two legislations—The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 paving way for increasing the upper limit for permitting abortions from the present 20 weeks to 24 weeks for “special categories of women” which include rape survivors and The National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2020 which seeks to provide for regulation and maintenance of standards of education and services by allied and healthcare professionals. The Bill on MTP (Amendment) 2020 also provides for setting up of State-level Medical Boards to decide if a pregnancy may be terminated after 24 weeks in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities. The Bill was passed in March last year in the Lok Sabha. “A demand to send the bill to a select committee of Rajya Sabha was defeated by voice vote, along with some other amendments proposed by members. “The bill as amended is passed,” Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh said. The Bill increases the time period within which abortion may be carried out. Currently, abortion requires the opinion of one doctor if it is done within 12 weeks of conception and two doctors if it is done between 12 and 20 weeks. The Bill allows abortion to be done on the advice of one doctor up to 20 weeks, and two doctors in the case of certain categories of women between 20 and 24 weeks. Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said the amendments in the bill have been made after studying global practices and wide consultation within the country. “Under the leadership of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we will not frame any law which harms women. This is to preserve and protect dignity of women,” he said. However, various Opposition parties like the Congress, CPI-M and the NCP demanded that the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 be sent to a select committee of the Rajya Sabha.

(P., 18/03)

### **Day after record inoculation, number falls by 36%**

A day after achieving the highest inoculation figures, the country’s vaccination number fell by over 11 lakh with just over 19 lakh beneficiaries turning up for their immunisation against Covid-19 on Tuesday, according to the data available from the Union Health Ministry. On March 15, 8.34 million COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered worldwide, of which India alone administered 36 per cent of doses, he said. This, even as the average of Covid-19 vaccine wastage in India is 6.5 per cent, with Telangana topping the list at 17.6 per cent wastage followed by Andhra Pradesh (11.6 per cent), Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Jammu and Kashmir. Concerned at this wastage, the Ministry on Wednesday called for optimal utilisation of the jabs. Addressing a press conference, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said that 3.51 crore vaccine doses have been administered till now in the country, which include 1.38 crore beneficiaries aged 45-60 years with specific co-morbidities and those above 60 years who have been given the first dose. Bhushan also expressed concern at vaccine wastage in some States and said that they have been told to optimally utilized the shots. On the increase

in daily Covid-19 cases from March 1-15, he said about 70 districts in 16 states have registered more than 150 per cent increase in active cases, while 55 districts in 17 states have registered 100-150 per cent rise in cases. Noting that the high positivity rate is a matter of concern, he said the tests numbers are not increasing at the same rate as the positivity rate is increasing.

**(P., 18/03)**

### **South India staring at second Covid wave?**

In a worrying development, most southern states have been witnessing a significant surge in Covid-19 cases over the past few days. Karnataka has added up to 1,488 fresh infections to its Covid tally, taking the total cases to 9.65 lakh. The toll rose to 12,415 with eight related fatalities, the Health department said on Thursday. This is for the third consecutive day that the state is reporting over 1,000 new cases. Out of the 1,488 fresh cases reported on Thursday, 925 were from Bengaluru Urban alone. Bengaluru accounts for over 72 per cent of the total active cases in the state at present. As of March 18 evening, cumulatively 9,65,102 positive cases have been confirmed in the state, which includes 12,415 deaths, the Health Department said in its bulletin. Given the situation, Karnataka has shifted gears and is reintroducing measures taken during the peak of the pandemic last year to prevent a possible second wave and mitigate its impact. For the next 50 days, doctors, healthcare workers and officials will work in mission mode to take preventive measures as well as to ramp up the vaccination drive.

**(N.I.E., 19/03)**

### **From aircraft to submarines, Navy takes local route to boost operation capacity**

Indian Navy has gone for local to boost the country's maritime operational capacity. There have been orders placed with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for fixed wing aircraft and rotary wing helicopters. Shripad Naik, Minister of State (MoS), Defence said on Wednesday: "Indian Navy has placed orders for Aircraft 12 Dorniers, 16 Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH MK III), 8 Chetak helicopters by (HAL)." MoS Defence was replying in Lok Sabha to a question asked by Ravindra Kushwaha, MP from Salempur in UP. The minister admitted delays into the delivery process and also informed about delays in delivery of the submarines being constructed in Mazgaon Dockyard Limited (MDL), Mumbai. "Six Scorpene class submarines are built by Mazagon Dock and Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) under Project-75," the minister said. He added there have been delays in the projects. The pandemic has further impacted the delivery schedule. Aircraft deliveries have been delayed due to supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic and delays in submarine delivery have been caused due to defects observed during trials. "In the interest of national security, details cannot be divulged," Naik. "However, the existing submarine fleet is being maintained combat worthy through life extensions and modernization/ upgradation." Indian Navy has been facing issues of obsolescence in underwater combat capabilities. Projects 75 and 75 (India) will plug this gap.

**(N.I.E., 19/03)**

**Chances of getting re-infected with Covid minimal, suggests latest research**

A latest study has shown that reinfection in Covid-19 is rare and natural infection appears to elicit strong protection against reinfection with an efficacy of nearly 95 per cent for at least seven months. This comes a day after a research published in the Lancet said that while those with previous history of infection may be protected for a long time, protection drops dramatically for people over the age of 65. The study called “SARS-CoV-2 reinfection in a cohort of 43,000 antibody-positive individuals followed for up to 35 weeks” done in Qatar, which has significance for other countries too, has shown that while the incidence rate of reinfection was 0.66 per 10,000 people in those who were antibody positive, it was 2.15 per 10,000 people in those never infected before. Based on this, researchers have concluded that the efficacy of natural infection against reinfection could be about 95.2%. They also noted that reinfections were less severe than primary infections and only one reinfection was severe, two were moderate, while none were critical or fatal. Most reinfections 66.7% were diagnosed through random or routine testing, or through contact tracing.

**(N.I.E., 20/03)**

**Amid farmers' protests, Parliament panel asks Modi government to implement Essential Commodities Act**

A Parliamentary Panel has asked the government to implement in "letter and spirit" the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act - one of the laws against which farmers are protesting at Delhi borders for more than 100 days now. This panel also has members from opposition parties including Congress, TMC and AAP. These parties have been demanding repeal of all three farm laws enacted by the Centre recently. In its report tabled in the Lok Sabha on March 19, the Standing Committee on Food chaired by TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay recommended the government to "implement the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 in letter and spirit, and without let or hindrances so that the farmers and other stakeholders of farming sector in this country receive the benefits intended under the said Act". It said although the country has become surplus in most agri-commodities, farmers have been unable to get better prices due to lack of investment in cold storage, warehouses, processing and export as entrepreneurs get discouraged by the regulatory mechanisms in the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

**(N.I.E., 20/03)**

**NRIs may vote online from 2024 LS poll**

The Election Commission (EC) has expressed hope the concept of remote voting will see “the light of day” by the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, and said that a pilot project could begin in the next two-three months. According to the EC, after the Assembly polls in five States, the Election Commission will hold consultations with all stakeholders to allow non-resident Indians (NRIs) to vote remotely through electronically-transmitted postal ballot system (ETPBS) from their country of residence. Addressing at the Sansad Ratna awards function on

Saturday, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora said the EC had early this year started a research project for enabling remote voting, in consultation with IIT Madras and eminent technologists from IITs and other leading institutions. He also expressed hope the concept of remote voting will see “the light of day” by the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, and said that a pilot project could begin in the next two-three months. Over the last few months, a dedicated team has been working hard for giving shape to this project, he said, adding the concept would hopefully “see the light of day” by 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The first pilot project could be rolled out in the next “two to three months”, the CEC said. It needs to be underscored that the project is neither aimed at internet-based voting nor does it imply voting from home, he observed. For the Commission, transparency and confidentiality of voting has always been a guiding consideration in ensuring free, fair and credible elections, he said, adding the Commission will soon be giving shape to the final model of such voting, after due deliberation on various options. This will entail some process changes as well, he said, adding there will be wider consultations with political parties and other stakeholders.

**(P., 21/03)**

### **Sensor developed for identification of new cancer therapeutic drugs**

Researchers from inStem, Bangalore in collaboration with Curie Institute, Orsay, France, have developed the first tubulin nanobody - or sensor to study the dynamics of microtubule modifications in living cells and use this for identification of new cancer therapeutic drugs. Microtubules are part of the cytoskeleton, a structural network within the cell’s cytoplasm, and they alter in response to several chemicals. This work published recently in the Journal of Cell Biology has been funded by Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advanced Research (IFCPAR/CEFIPRA), a bilateral organization supported by Department of Science & Technology (DST) and Government of France. Understanding tubulin modifications has remained a challenge till date because of unavailability of tools that can mark them in living cells. The researchers from Bangalore and Orsay devised a method to design synthetic proteins, known as nanobodies, which can bind specifically to modified microtubules. These nanobodies are similar to antibodies made in our body as a defense mechanism against pathogens. However, unlike antibodies, the nanobodies are smaller in size and easily amenable for protein engineering, said Minhaj Sirajuddin (inStem) Bangalore, India. The nanobody was then coupled with a fluorescent molecule to serve as a detection tool, called sensor. They developed and validated a live cell sensor against a unique microtubule modification called tyrosinated form of microtubules that is already known to be important for cell division and intracellular organization, added researcher Carsten Janke (Institut Curie) Orsay, France.

**(P., 21/03)**

### **Ceasefire agreement between India, Pakistan shows result; no incident of cross-firing along LoC in March**

The ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan is showing results as per latest statistics which show that March did not witness even a single incident of cross-firing along the



International Border as well as the Line of Control, this newspaper has learned. This year, a total of 66 cross-border firing incidents have taken place but all such incidents took place in the first two months-44 in January and 22 in February, according to sources in security establishment. A BSF personnel was also injured in January during one such incident. Official data reveals that ceasefire violations have been increasing drastically from 2018 to 2020. In 2018, 2,140 ceasefire violations took place, which further increased in 2019 (3,479) but saw a massive jump in 2020 where such violations were 5,133 in which 46 security force personnel were killed. On February 25, India and Pakistan released a joint statement announcing a ceasefire along LoC from February 25, following talks between their Directors General of Military Operations. While there have been zero incidents of cross-border firing in March, there has been no let-up in smuggling of drugs along the entire 3323-km IB as well as along 740-km LoC, despite strict vigil being maintained by security agencies. Last week, the union ministry of home affairs had informed parliament that terror attacks, incidents of violence and infiltration attempts in Jammu and Kashmir have come down in the last two years, but ceasefire violations have been on the rise.

(N.I.E., 22/03)

#### **Aadhaar not mandatory for life certificate: Centre**

In a huge relief to elderly pensioners, the central government has declared that Aadhaar is no longer mandatory for getting digital life certificate or Jeevan Pramaan, which is required to collect pensions. “Aadhaar authentication in Jeevan Pramaan is on a voluntary basis and user organisations shall provide alternate means of submission of life certificate. National Informatics Centre (NIC) shall comply with provisions of Aadhaar Act 2016, Aadhaar Regulation 2016 and the O.Ms (official memorandum), circulars and guidelines issued by UIDAI from time to time,” a notification by the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) dated March 18 said. Aadhaar authentication has also been made voluntary for biometrics attendance systems used in government offices through another notification. Digital life certificate for pensioners was introduced to address the woes that pensioners faced as they were required to be present before pension disbursing agency or had the life certificate issued by authority where they served earlier and delivered that to the disbursing agency. The digital life certificate helped pensioners from physically travelling to the respective organisation. However, many pensioners complained about problems in getting pension due non-availability of Aadhaar cards or their fingerprints becoming unreadable.

(N.I.E., 22/03)

#### **ISRO makes breakthrough demonstration of free-space Quantum Key Distribution over 300 metres**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said on Monday it has successfully demonstrated free-space Quantum Communication over a distance of 300 metres, for the first time in the country. A number of key technologies were developed indigenously to accomplish this major feat, which included the use of indigenously developed 'NAVIC' receiver for time synchronisation between the transmitter and receiver modules, and gimbal mechanism systems

instead of bulky large-aperture telescopes for optical alignment, it said. "The demonstration has included live videoconferencing using quantum-key-encrypted signals. This is a major milestone achievement for unconditionally secured satellite data communication using quantum technologies", the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency said in a statement. The Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) technology underpins Quantum Communication technology that ensures unconditional data security by virtue of the principles of quantum mechanics, which is not possible with the conventional encryption systems, ISRO explained. The conventional cryptosystems used for data-encryption rely on the complexity of mathematical algorithms, whereas the security offered by quantum communication is based on the laws of Physics.

(N.I.E., 23/03)

### **EC bans bike rally 72 hours before voting**

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Monday announced a ban on bike rallies 72 hours before voting takes place in poll-bound States in coming weeks. This has been done because the commission came to know that these rallies are being used to intimidate voters. Officials said that complaints were received during the Commission's visit from several political parties that bike rallies are resorted to intimidate the voters in the last couple of days before the poll. In a directive issued to chief electoral officers of poll-bound West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Puducherry, the EC pointed out that it has been brought to its notice that "in some places bikes are used by anti-social elements to intimidate the voters before the poll day and/or on poll day." "After considering the reports, the Commission has decided that "bike rallies shall not be allowed at any place 72 hours before the date of poll or on the poll day in all poll-going constituencies," the directive said. The EC also asked its chief electoral officers to inform all stakeholders concerned, including candidates, political parties and the Commission's observers, to ensure strict compliance of the directions. Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry will be held in a single phase on April 6. Besides these states, elections will also be held in Assam and West Bengal between March 27 and April 29 in three and eight phases, respectively. The counting of votes in all the four states and the Union Territory will be held on May 2.

(N.I.E., 23/03)

### **Rs 2.2K crore to be released for MPLADS**

After receiving representation from several MPs, the Centre has decided to release Rs 2,200 crore under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) for installments pending prior to March 31, 2020. The cabinet in its meeting last April had decided not to operate MPLADS for 2020-21 and 2021-22 and accordingly directed that annual budgetary outlay for 2020-21 and 2021-2022 be placed at the disposal of ministry of finance for managing the adverse economic and health impacts of Covid-19 pandemic. However, pursuant to implementation of the decision, the ministry started receiving references from MPs, state nodal departments and district authorities requesting for the release of installments.

“The Department of Expenditure has conveyed its decision to allot a sum of Rs 2,200 crore to enable the release of pending installments subject primarily to certain conditions. Release of pending installments in respect of Members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for 2019-20 shall get first priority,” said a circular issued by the ministry of statistics and programme implementation.

(N.I.E., 24/03)

### **Lok Sabha passes NaBFID Bill; commercial decision-making kept out of CVC, CBI, CAG purview**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the development finance institution (DFI) being set up to fund the infrastructure sector will remain outside the purview of the CAG, CVC and CBI, a move aimed at enabling faster decision-making. The DFI, called the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID), however is going to be answerable to Parliament. The Lok Sabha later passed the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) Bill 2021 with voice vote. Replying to the debate on the Bill, the finance minister said, "It will be absolutely answerable to the Parliament. So we are not going to one extreme. Where there is no oversight at all, but that heavy fear of taking decisions as a result of overlapping oversight is now being given space wherein legitimate commercial decisions can be taken professionally." Market watchers say genuine bonafide decisions in the banking sector are being impacted because of the worry of undue harassment by the '3Cs -- Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and Comptroller and Audit General (CAG).

(N.I.E., 24/03)

### **Parts of India to see deadly heat waves in coming decades: Study**

Limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius will likely reduce the impact of deadly heatwaves by half, but the heat waves will become commonplace across South Asia, including major crop-producing regions in India -- such as West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, says a new study. The findings, published in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, indicated that these deadly heat waves will likely become more commonplace in the coming decades even if global warming is limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius. "Even at 1.5 degrees, South Asia will have serious consequences in terms of heat stress," said researcher Moetasim Ashfaq from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in the US. "The future looks bad for South Asia, but the worst can be avoided by containing warming to as low as possible," Ashfaq added. The results differ from a similar study conducted in 2017, which predicted that heat waves of lethal temperatures will occur in South Asia toward the end of the 21st century, the researchers said.

(N.I.E., 25/03)

### **Budget Session ends as both Houses adjourned sine die**

The Rajya Sabha on Thursday was adjourned sine die ahead of the assembly polls in four states and one union territory, thus bringing an end to the Budget Session of the Parliament.

The Lok Sabha too was adjourned sine die earlier in the day. The month-long second part of the Budget session had started on March 8 was earlier scheduled to end on April 8. Several MPs at the behest of their parties had earlier approached the Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Chairman of Rajya Sabha M Venkaiah Naidu to curtail the session, citing elections as the reason. Trinamool Congress leaders Sudip Bandyopadhyay and Derek O'Brien had written respectively to the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman, requesting them to adjourn the proceedings. The first part of the Budget Session commenced with the address of President Ram Nath Kovind on January 29 and concluded on February 29. Elections are due to be held in Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry from March 27 to April 29. The results for the same will be announced on May 2.

(N.I.E., 25/03)

### **3,095 criminal cases pending against lawmakers, 68% from UP**

As many as 3,095 criminal cases are pending against MPs and MLAs across the country with over 68 per cent cases accounting from UP (2,127) alone, according to the Law Ministry. Responding to a question on politicians with criminal background in Parliament on Thursday, the government said there was no proposal under consideration for prescribing a life-time ban on politicians who have been convicted in criminal cases. Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said a total of 12 special courts have been set up in 11 states/UTs to hear criminal cases involving politicians in pursuance of a Supreme Court order. While two such courts have been set up in Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, MP, UP, Bihar and Bengal have one special court each for expeditious trial and disposal of criminal cases involving elected MPs/ MLAs, Prasad said.

(N.I.E., 26/03)

### **Physical fitness crucial for securing place in Army, says SC**

Physical fitness is crucial for securing a place in the Army and while exercising judicial review, courts must be circumspect on dealing with policies prescribed for Armed Forces personnel on physical and mental fitness, the Supreme Court said on Thursday. The apex court said it is cognizant that there can be no judicial review of the standards adopted by the Army with respect to medical criteria, unless they are "manifestly arbitrary". A bench of Justices D. Y. Chandrachud and M. R. Shah observed this in its 137-page verdict in which it said that evaluation criteria set by the Army for granting permanent commission (PC) to women SSC officers constituted "systemic discrimination" which has caused an economic and psychological harm and an "affront to their dignity". The top court dealt with the issue related to SHAPE-1 qualification for grant of PC. The bench noted that SHAPE-1 has a "specific meaning" - 'S' denotes the physiological features including cognitive function abnormalities, 'H' stands for hearing, 'A' for appendages, 'P' for physical capacity and 'E' for eye-sight. "With respect to the medical criteria prescribed by the Army, we are cognizant that there can be no judicial review of the standards adopted by the Army, unless they are manifestly arbitrary and

bear no rational nexus to the objects of the organization. The SHAPE criterion is per se not arbitrary," the bench said.

(N.I.E., 26/03)

### **Action plan for cities with toxic air**

In a move to curb air pollution in 132 identified cities under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), the Centre on Friday roped in 82 knowledge partners and institutes of repute for the implementation of city-specific action plans. The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) is a long-term, time-bound, national-level strategy to tackle air pollution problem across the country in a comprehensive manner with targets to achieve 20 per cent to 30 per cent reduction in Particulate Matter concentrations by 2024. The city action plans have been prepared to control specific air pollution sources through multidimensional actions by bringing several implementation agencies together. Expansion of ambient air quality network, source apportionment studies, public awareness, grievance redressal mechanism and sector specific action points are part of these action plans. A National Knowledge Network comprising leading air quality specialists has also been constituted. States have also been asked to quickly procure e-buses for public transport. The Centre said that despite allocation of funds for 6,000 e-buses across the country only 600 buses have been procured.

(N.I.E., 27/03)

### **ISRO revises launch schedule of GISAT-1 after 'minor issue' with satellite**

The Indian Space Research Organisation has revised the launch schedule of geo imaging satellite GISAT-1 onboard GSLV-F10 rocket following a "minor issue" with the spacecraft. The Bengaluru-headquartered space agency was earlier looking to launch the satellite on March 28, subject to weather conditions. "There is a minor issue with the satellite", ISRO sources told PTI. "As of now, we are planning to launch it on April 18". GISAT-1 was originally planned to be launched from Sriharikota spaceport, about 100 kms north of Chennai, on March five last year but was postponed a day before the blast-off due to technical reasons. ISRO sources had earlier said the delay in the launch was due to COVID-19-induced lockdown which affected normal work. According to ISRO, GISAT-1 will facilitate near real-time observation of the Indian sub-continent, under cloud-free conditions, at frequent intervals. Weighing about 2,268kg, GISAT-1 is the first state-of-the-art agile earth observation satellite that will be placed in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit by GSLV-F10. "Subsequently, the satellite will reach the final geostationary orbit using its onboard propulsion system", ISRO had said a few days before the planned launch in March last year.

(N.I.E., 27/03)

### **Jal Shakti Ministry approves Rs 465 crore performance incentive to seven states**

The Jal Shakti Ministry has approved Rs 465 crore as performance incentive grant to Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh

under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), a statement said on Saturday. It said Gujarat was among the best performing states in implementing JJM to ensure tap water supply to every household. Northeastern states have implemented JJM with speed and scale despite hilly terrain and forested areas, the statement said. It is for the first time that five northeast states have qualified for the performance incentive grant, it added. "Seven states viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh qualified for performance incentive grant for 2020-21 under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), Har Ghar Jal to provide assured tap water supply to every rural home by 2024," the statement said. "For performance incentive grant, the criteria include physical and financial progress under JJM, functionality of piped water supply schemes and capacity to utilise the fund. Today, Union Minister, Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Sekhawat approved Rs 465 crore as performance incentive to these states," it added. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdowns and disruption, speedy implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission on the ground has set an example and during the financial year, more than 3.16 crore rural households have been provided tap water connection, the statement said. Currently, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa and Telangana have become 'Har Ghar Jal' states/UT, and every household in 55 districts and 85,000 villages of the country have tap water supply, it said.

(N.I.E., 28/03)

### **India pushes for strategic Kaladan transit project through Myanmar to ramp-up its Act East Policy**

Keeping an eye on the strategic interests of the country, the Indian government has mobilised its strategic road infrastructure to Myanmar through Mizoram, aiming to boost India's Act East Policy even while disturbance prevails along the Indo-Myanmar borders, with refugees trickling in. Brigadier Digvijay Singh, 23 Sector Assam Rifles Commandant said, "The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport (KMMTTP) is progressing at a fast pace without any hindrance from the Arakan Army. It will have a huge impact on society both economic as well as on the development of South Mizoram." Colonel Bejoy R, Commandant of the Assam Rifles battalion at Lunglei told, "The road route will have 33 bridges, out of which 8 are on the Indian side and work on seven is in advanced stages." The area linking India and Myanmar with a bridge falls under his Unit. All these bridges will be of class 70 bridge. Class 70 means the bridge can bear a load of 70 tonnes. Military machines like T-90 tanks, surface-to-air missiles, and infantry combat vehicles can easily be transported. The situation along the borders has been palpable with the refugees entering India since February 1 when the Myanmar military seized power.

(N.I.E., 29/03)

### **Farmers celebrate 'Holika Dahan' by burning copies of Centre's farm laws**

Farmers camping at Delhi borders on Sunday burnt copies of the Centre's new farm laws they have been protesting against during 'Holika Dahan', the Samyukta Kisan Morcha said. The protesting farmers celebrated Holi at the borders and maintained that their agitation will

continue till the farm laws are repealed and a separate law on minimum support price is enacted, it said in a statement. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a joint front of farmer unions, also said that it will observe "FCI Bachao Diwas" on April 5, adding that offices of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) will be gheraoed from 11 am to 5 pm across the country. "The government has made several attempts to end the minimum support price (MSP) and public distribution system (PDS) indirectly. The FCI's budget has also been reduced over the last few years. Recently, the FCI also changed the rules for procurement of crops," the statement said. The SKM also condemned the passage of the Haryana Recovery of Damages to Property during Disturbance to Public Order Bill, 2021 by the Haryana Assembly, saying it aims to suppress agitations.

(N.I.E., 29/03)

### **Indian Army donates 1 lakh doses COVID-19 vaccines to Nepal military**

The Indian Army on Sunday gifted one lakh doses of made-in-India anti-COVID-19 vaccines to the Nepal Army, according to the sources. The vaccines brought on Air India aircraft were handed over by the Indian Army officials to their counterparts from the Nepal Army at the Tribhuvan International Airport. Earlier India, which has provided made-in-India vaccines to several countries, has provided 1 million doses to Nepal in January. Previously, India has also provided medicines and testing kits to Nepal. Nepal has so far reported 276,839 cases of coronavirus and 3,027 deaths related to it, according to my Republica.

(N.I.E., 29/03)

### **OCI card holders no longer required to carry old passports for India travel; diaspora welcomes move**

People of Indian origin and the Indian diaspora having Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards are now not required to carry their old, expired passports for travel to India, as required earlier, according to a government notification that has been welcomed by members of the community. The Overseas Citizens of India or OCI card is issued to people of Indian origin globally which gives them almost all the privileges of an Indian national except for the right to vote, government service and buying agricultural land. The OCI card gives them a visa free travel to India. In a March 26 press release, the Indian missions in the US said that in order to ease the travel of OCI card holders, it has been decided that the "time line for re-issuance of OCI cards in r/o OCI card holders, who may be required to get their OCI card reissued has been extended until 31 December, 2021. Further "requirement of carrying old and new passports along with the OCI card has been done away. Henceforth, the OCI card holders travelling on the strength of their existing OCI card bearing old passport number are not required to carry their old passport. However, carrying a new passport is mandatory. New York-based social activist Prem Bhandari, who has been taking up the cause of OCI card holders for the past several years, welcomed the announcement.

(N.I.E., 30/03)

**Over four crore rural households provided with tap water supply under Jal Jeevan Mission**

Over 4 crore rural households in the country have been provided with tap water supply since the Jal Jeevan Mission was launched in August 2019, the Jal Shakti Ministry said in a statement on Monday. Now, 7.24 crore households (38 per cent), that is, more than one-third of the rural households are getting potable water through taps, it said. Goa has become the first state in the country to provide 100 per cent tap water supply followed by Telangana and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. "Announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 15, 2019, with the aim to provide tap water supply to every rural home by 2024, the Jal Jeevan Mission has reached a new milestone of providing over 4 crore rural households with tap water supply," the statement stated. The Jal Jeevan Mission is being implemented in partnership with the states to provide potable water in adequate quantity and of prescribed quality on regular and long-term basis. Extensive planning exercise is undertaken by the states/Union Territories (UTs) following 'bottom-up approach', it added. Accordingly, they have firmed up the action plan to provide tap water connection to every rural household.

**(N.I.E., 30/03)**

**CSIR recommends anti-Covid sewage, air surveillance in Parliament**

The country's premier scientific body, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has recommended setting up sewage and air surveillance systems in Parliament to detect the prevalence of Covid-19 to estimate the number of people infected in a population to be used to understand the progression of infection even when mass scale tests for individuals are not possible. A presentation in this regard was made on Tuesday before Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu who, being the chairperson of Rajya Sabha, said he would discuss the issue with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and the government. Elaborating on the relevance of sewage surveillance in his presentation, Director General of CSIR Shekhar C Mande said, "Covid-19 patients shed SAR-CoV-2 in stools. Apart from symptomatic individuals, asymptomatic people also shed the virus in their stools." Sewage surveillance provides a qualitative as well as a quantitative estimate of the number of people infected in a population and could be used to understand the progression of Covid-19 even when mass scale tests for individuals are not possible, an official statement said quoting the CSIR chief. It is a measure to comprehensively monitor the prevalence of the disease in communities in real time, Mande said. Presenting data of sewage surveillance carried out to find the trend of infection in Hyderabad, Allahabad, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Nagpur, Puducherry and Chennai, he said it provides an unbiased estimate of numbers since the sampling is not done at the individual level. Mande said that sewage surveillance of Covid-19 would not only help understand the present epidemiology of the disease but would be an indispensable tool for early and easier detection of future coronavirus outbreaks.

**(P., 31/03)**



**ITBP plans to double its women contingent for LAC**

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) that secures the frontier along China has plans to double its women contingent from the present 500 to 1,000 for deployment along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh and Northeast. The move comes amid a standoff between India and China in eastern Ladakh since May last year. However, under the disengagement process that began on February 10, both the countries' troops have moved back from their positions at the Pangong Tso Lake's northern and southern banks. In a first, the ITBP had in 2019 raised a women contingent comprising 500 troops of ITBP, breaking the proverbial glass ceiling and traditionally a male forte of deployment at high-altitude border posts along the Indo-China border with treacherous sub-zero temperatures and difficulties of survival in cold desert. The Contingent was subjected to rigorous 44 weeks of training in battle craft and mountain survival. Like their male counterparts, the women combatants had undergone grueling drills and learnt to handle weapons, read maps, gather intelligence and were trained in commando tactics, official had then said. Earlier, women in the paramilitary force were deployed for maintaining law and order and VIP duties and were also posted at the cantonments and hospitals. The total number of women troops in ITBP was 2,000, mostly constables, head-constables, sub-inspectors and inspectors posted at various places.

**(P., 31/03)**

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## **NEWS FROM OTHER STATES**

### **ANDHRA PRADESH**

#### **Govt to supply 1 lakh electric vehicles to employees**

In a bid to encourage the usage of electric vehicles in the state, especially among the government employees, the New and Renewable Energy Development Corporation of Andhra Pradesh (NREDCAP) has formulated a new policy. As a part of the policy, the corporation will facilitate provision of one lakh electric two-wheelers to government employees over the next one year. While the expression of interest (EOI) for the supply of the e-vehicles to government employees has been invited, the purchase will be on a voluntary basis, vice-chairman and managing director S Ramana Reddy said. "As a part of promotion of e-mobility, one lakh electric two-wheelers are proposed to be supplied to government employees. The number may increase based on the demand. The supplier/manufacturer will provide financing options and the EMIs will be deducted from the salary of those who buy the vehicles," he said. NREDCAP is a state-owned corporation and is the nodal agency for implementing e-mobility and all renewable energy programmes. As per the e-mobility policy, the state government aims to phase out all the internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles in four major cities including Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada and Tirupati by 2024, and across all cities by 2030. NREDCAP has also taken up a pilot project in Pulivendula Municipal Corporation last year where four electric two-wheelers were provided free of cost to ward/village secretariat staff for effective delivery of government services.

**(N.I.E.,18/03)**

#### **Andhra Pradesh government plans to give three lakh COVID vaccine jabs per day**

With the spurt in COVID-19 cases, the State government has decided to conduct a massive awareness campaign to sensitise people on the preventive measures to curb the spread of the pandemic. Deputy Chief Minister (Health) Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Nani) and Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy held a review meet on Tuesday and decided to organise awareness programmes involving all the government departments. The medical officials were asked to administer COVID vaccine to more than three lakh beneficiaries a day. The vaccination drive will be continued in all the village and ward secretariats, 1,930 government and 634 Aarogyasri network hospitals in the State, Nani said.

**(N.I.E.,24/03)**

### **ASSAM**

#### **Covid-19 safety protocols maintained in polling stations; Assam voters happy**

The fear of COVID looms large and Assam's voters stepped out of their homes with caution to

exercise their franchise and they seemed satisfied with the facilities to check the spread of the virus in polling stations in the first of the three-phased election in 47 of the 126 assembly constituencies. Besides, voters were happy with arrangements to take care of children while their mothers voted, and ferry people with disabilities to polling stations. There are 479 polling stations where only women polling personnel have been deployed with 128 of them turned into model polling stations and decorated aesthetically with Assamese handicrafts, including the 'japi' (traditional head-gears), bamboo crafted gates, designs made with 'gamosas' (traditional towels) and 'rangolis' at the entrance. "We were first given the sanitiser, then tested with a thermal scanner and then 'Aita' (grandmother) was welcomed with a 'gamosa'. She was also presented with a neem sapling which we planted in the school ground," a visibly excited Saikia, who is 22-year-old, said. In traditional Assamese culture, respected guests are welcomed with the offering of 'gamosas'. Wearing of masks by voters has been made mandatory or those coming without one will be provided with a mask at the polling station, Assam's Chief Electoral Officer Nitin Khade said. Sanitiser, thermal scanner, soap and handwashing facilities are a part of the Assured Minimum Facilities in each polling stations across Assam, Chief Electoral Officer Nitin Khade said. A distance of six feet between two voters while waiting to cast their votes must be maintained while each voter will be provided with disposable gloves for touching the EVMs, he said.

**(N.I.E.,28/03)**

## **BIHAR**

### **Bihar judicial records and free legal advice in digital mode**

In a move aimed at ensuring that common people get easy access to the law through digital technology, the status of 46.18 lakh cases, 8.3 lakh orders and judgements of various courts in Bihar have been uploaded on the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), created in collaboration with the Supreme Court of India. As part of the plan, nearly four lakh Common Services Centres listed as entities under the Ministry of Electronics & IT of the Government of India are working with lawyers are providing free litigation advice to those who log in from across the country. Sharing the details after inaugurating the Patna High Court's centenary building on Saturday, Patna Sahib MP and Union IT and Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the status of 18.09 crore cases and 13.59 crore orders have been uploaded on NJDG. "Case status and orders available can be accessed by anyone at the click of a button. This is the way to ensure justice through the digital initiative," Prasad said. Prasad added that the Common Services Centres are facilitating free litigation advice from a panel of acclaimed lawyers.

**(N.I.E.,01/03)**

### **Bihar first state to have two green towns**

If everything goes as per plan, Bihar is set to become the country's first state to have two green energy efficient towns in Rajgir and Bodh Gaya. The towns will start getting solar

energy through the first of its kind renewable energy project from 2023. After Rajgir and Bodh Gaya, Patna's many important government offices including the governor house, the Patna High Court, the Bihar Museum and the Vidhyut Bhawan would also get round the clock green energy supply being developed with the help of the Solar Energy Corporation of India. To implement this project, the state government has decided to use the land available in Lakhisarai and Bhagalpur district to construct solar energy plants. Confirming this, Bihar's secretary of energy Sanjeev Hans said that the 500-megawatt solar energy plants will be set up at Lakhisarai and Bhagalpur. "The Solar Energy Corporation of India has agreed to provide green energy and develop the system. The project will get started by June 2023," Hans said. He also said that the excess solar energy generated through the proposed plants will also be used to run the turbines for water supply and other power-driven works.

(N.I.E.,30/03)

## CHHATTISGARH

### **Chhattisgarh creates new record, provides 16.07 crore jobs under MNREGA**

Chhattisgarh yet again emerged as the best-performing state in the country in providing jobs under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Setting a new record of sorts, the state has also achieved over 107 percent of the given target during the current financial year 2020-21. According to the released official data, Chhattisgarh has so far created over 16.07 crore jobs as against the target of 15 crore man-days of employment. "Chhattisgarh created a new record of providing employment for the highest number of man-days under the MNREGA in the current financial year. The achievement has played a significant role in reviving the rural economy keeping it robust during the Covid-19 pandemic. The state has topped having achieved 107 percent of the target so far," a government spokesperson said. West Bengal stood at second position with 105 percent followed by Assam and Bihar each at 104 percent and Odisha at 103 percent of the given target.

(N.I.E.,14/03)

### **Chhattisgarh plans to use Covaxin as Centre drops 'clinical trial mode' tag**

The Chhattisgarh government is considering allowing the use of Covaxin, a vaccine against COVID-19, in the state after the Centre dropped its 'clinical trial mode' tag, state Health Minister T S Singh Deo said on Sunday. In January, Singh Deo had requested Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan to halt the supply of Covaxin, developed by Bharat Biotech, to the state until its phase-3 trials are completed and results are made available. The Serum Institute of India (SII)-made vaccine Covishield is being used in the state as part of the vaccination drive. Talking to PTI, Singh Deo said, "We are considering allowing Covaxin for those who wish to opt for it after the Government of India dropped the vaccine from clinical trial mode, even though the complete data of its third phase of trials is yet to be published." "The data (of phase-2 trials) of Covaxin published in the Lancet Infectious Diseases journal has indicated

that its safety is not in question so now the only question pending is about its efficacy," he said. "However, when the Centre has removed the vaccine from clinical trial method, then there are many people who are willing to take it. So that is the issue," he said. "The sole point I had been trying to make was that we must complete the procedure. This is an emergency situation so that is why vaccines, which were (generally) made in 10 to 15 years, were prepared in 10 months.

(N.I.E.,15/03)

### **COVID vaccine beneficiaries in Chhattisgarh can now choose between Covishield or Covaxin**

The beneficiaries in Chhattisgarh will now be allowed to opt between the two Covid-19 vaccines—Covishield and Covaxin from Monday. Till now, only the Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, was being used in the state. The Covaxin doses will be initially administered only at the Pt Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College in Raipur. The state health minister T S Singhdeo was earlier not in favour of using indigenous Covaxin until its efficacy was proven through the clinical trial processes. However, after he learnt that it is safe, he has considered approving the vaccine. Though the minister is willing to seek the details about the completion of the testing procedure of Covaxin and its efficacy from the Centre that recently has dropped the 'clinical trial mode' tag. According to the health department, this is the first time the choice has been given to the beneficiaries after the mega inoculation drive began in Chhattisgarh in January.

(N.I.E.,15/03)

## **GOA**

### **Goa Port to set up special ferry service for inbound cruise tourists**

Goa's only major port, the Mormugao Port Trust, operated by the Centre is planning to develop a ferry circuit to cater to the international cruise ship tourists visiting the state. Speaking virtually at the Maritime India Summit 2021, Chairman of the Trust E. Ramesh Kumar said that the ferry service would connect several beach destinations in the coastal states, both in North Goa and South Goa districts. "The ferry service that we are planning is designated to be on three or four identified routes whether from South of Goa to Dona Paula and onwards, South of Goa to Captain of Ports jetty at Panaji and onwards to Old Goa or from South of Goa to any of the beach destinations like Candolim, Calangute, Baga and so on," Kumar said. "With a dedicated colour-coded ferry service, we are also contemplating to receive passengers on the other side with hop-on-hop-off buses, with the same colour codes with refreshments served en route, multilingual audio commentary," he also said. The top official also said that the Port Trust was also in the process of setting a commercial hub spread over 4,000 sq mt area near the port terminal itself for visiting cruiseship holidayers.

(P.,04/03)

**COVID-19: Section 144 imposed in Goa ahead of festivals; MLAs asked to get tested**

The Goa administration on Saturday imposed section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) in both its districts, to prohibit public gatherings ahead of Holi, Shab-e-Barat, Easter and Eid-ul-Fitr festivals to control the spread of COVID-19. The district collectors of both North and South Goa issued the order banning gatherings under section 144 of the CrPC. A fresh surge in COVID-19 cases is being witnessed in parts of the country and the situation might further escalate during the festivals of Holi, Shab-e-Barat, Easter and Eid- ul-Fitr with gatherings, congregations and public celebrations, the order states. The state health department has imposed local restrictions in observance of these festivals, as contained in the standard operating procedure of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It is essential to enforce social distancing of people to prevent the spread of the disease. Hence, section 144 of CrPC has been imposed, the order states. The state on Saturday recorded 170 new cases of coronavirus that have taken the tally of infections to 57,453, an official from the state health department said. At least 69 patients were discharged from various treatment facilities, while one died of the infection during the day, the official said. With this, the count of recoveries in the state has reached 55,250 and the toll stood at 824, he said. The Goa Legislature has asked all the MLAs in the state to get themselves tested, a day after one of the 40 members announced that he had been infected with coronavirus, an official said on Saturday.

(N.I.E.,28/03)

**GUJARAT**

**Entire Gujarat will be covered under Nal Se Jal Yojana by 2022: CM**

All households in Gujarat will get tap water connections under the Centre's 'Nal Se Jal Yojana' by the year 2022, ahead of the year 2024 target set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani told the Legislative Assembly on Saturday. Rupani said 17 lakh households in the state are yet to be covered under the ambitious scheme aimed at providing drinking water through taps. "People of north Gujarat suffered for years due to contaminated ground water. We want to eliminate our dependence on hand pumps and provide drinking water through tap connections. Though Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a target of the year 2024, Gujarat will meet this target in the next 17 months," Rupani told the House. He was responding to queries raised by Congress MLAs on the status of water supply in the state. The CM said the state government had allocated Rs 4,000 crore for the 'Nal Se Jal' project. He said 82 per cent of the total work on the project has already been completed. "We are planning to provide 1 lakh tap connections every month to cover the remaining 17 lakh houses in the next 17 months. Out of the total 95 lakh beneficiaries identified under the project, 17 lakh are yet to be covered," the CM said.

(P.,07/03)

**Bill penalising conversion by marriage to be tabled in Gujarat Assembly**

A bill penalising forcible or fraudulent religious conversion by marriage with three to ten years in jail and a fine of upto Rs five lakh is likely to be tabled in the Gujarat Assembly next week. The bill, which amends a 2003 Act, seeks to curb the "emerging trend in which women are lured to marriage for the purpose of religious conversion" as per its "statement of object". The copy of the Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill was made available in the Assembly on Friday. Similar laws have been enacted in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The bill says it is necessary to prohibit "forcible conversion by marriage or by getting a person married or by aiding a person to get married," and hence the amendment is being carried out. The Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003 deals with religious conversion "through allurement, force or by misrepresentation or by any other fraudulent means".

(N.I.E.,27/03)

**HARYANA**

**No confidence motion against BJP-JJP govt in Haryana Assembly tomorrow**

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Jannayank Janta Party (JJP) have asked their MLAs to be present in the House tomorrow and "support the stand of the government against the no-confidence motion". Kanwar Pal, Chief whip of BJP Legislature Party asks party MLAs to be present in the House on 10th March. Bharat Bhushan Batra, chief whip of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) on Tuesday issued a whip to party MLAs to be present in the House on Wednesday (March 10) to support No-Confidence Motion against the Manohar Lal Khattar government. "Hon'ble Members of CLP, Haryana are informed that No-Confidence Motion against the Government shall be listed on 10th March, 2021 in the business of the House. I issue whip, that you must ensure your presence in the House on 10th March, 2021 at 10.00 am positively and support the vote of No Confidence," read a note from Bharat Bhushan Batra. Members are advised not to leave the House without the prior permission of CLP Leader, it said. Former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda had said that his party also plans to bring many "Adjournment" and "Calling Attention" motions to draw the attention of the government to the multitude of problems faced by the people of the state.

(N.I.E.,10/03)

**Haryana passes Bill to recover damages from protesters**

Amid stiff opposition and apprehension raised by Congress members, the Haryana Assembly Thursday passed a Bill that will allow authorities to recover compensation from protesters for any damage to property. As Speaker Gian Chand Gupta was completing the process to pass 'The Haryana Recovery of damages to property during disturbance to public Bill, 2021', by a voice vote, some Congress members rushed to Well of the House demanding its withdrawal raising slogans of "Bill vapas lo, vapas lo". Later, justifying the Bill, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said it was "necessary to instill fear in the minds of those who damage property and this is our constitutional legal system". His predecessor and Leader of Opposition

Bhupinder Singh Hooda, however, said the law “is going to strangle democracy”. The Bill, which will become law after the Governor’s assent, “provides for recovery of damages to properties caused by persons during disturbances to public order by an assembly, lawful or unlawful, including riots and violent disorder”. It has also provision for the constitution of Claims Tribunal to determine the liability, to assess the damages caused and to award compensation. Uttar Pradesh was the first state to bring a Bill for recovery from the people for damages caused to public property during agitation and protests.

(I.E.,20/03)

### **No tuition fee for girl PG students in Haryana government colleges with family income less than Rs 1.8 lakh**

Girl students with annual family income less than Rs 1.80 lakh and pursuing post-graduation in government colleges and government-aided facilities of Haryana will not be charged tuition fee, according to an official statement on Monday. The Director-General of Higher Education Department, Haryana, has forwarded a letter in this regard to principals of all government and government-aided colleges in the state. Meanwhile, Chairman, Haryana Board of School Education, Bhiwani, Jagbir Singh said examination of classes nine and 11 will be conducted from 10 am to 12:30 pm in place of the earlier scheduled time of 8:30 am to 11 am. He said the examination of class 11 students be held from March 26 to April 23, and for Class nine it will be from March 30 to April 17. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, all candidates should ensure social distancing and wear mask at the examination centre according to government guidelines, the official said.

(N.I.E.,23/03)

## **JAMMU & KASHMIR**

### **150 Rohingyas detained in J&K verification drive**

In a major crackdown on illegal immigrants staying in Jammu and Kashmir more than 150 Rohingyas have been detained at a holding centre in Sub Jail Hiranagar at the end of the verification process of their travel documents. According to official sources, during the special drive conducted at the Maulana Azad stadium in Jammu on Saturday police authorities verified travel documents and collected biometrics of large numbers of illegal immigrants including Rohingyas from Myanmar. During the verification process the sports stadium was kept out of bounds from the local media persons as none of them were permitted to enter the premises. Their entry was restricted at the entry gate of the stadium where this verification drive was going on. After completing the daylong exercise Inspector General of Police, Jammu range, Mukesh Singh in a press statement said, “ 155 illegal immigrant Rohingyas staying in the Union Territory of J&K were sent to the holding center established vide Home department notification dated 5th March 2021 on Saturday”. According to police, “sub jail Hiranagar in Kathua district has been converted into a holding centre to accommodate these illegal immigrants”. IG Jammu said, “This was done under section 3(2)e of the Foreigners



Act. Due process of law was followed in this exercise. These immigrants were not holding valid travel documents required in terms of section (3) of the Passports Act”.

**(P.,07/03)**

### **Jharkhand all set to reserve 75% jobs for locals in private sector**

Days after Haryana notified its policy of 75 per cent reservation in private sector industries for the domiciles of the state, the Jharkhand Cabinet on Friday approved an employment policy ensuring 75 per cent of the private sector jobs up to a salary of Rs 30,000 for local candidates only. Though there is no official confirmation, sources in the Chief Minister’s office said that it is likely to be announced during the ongoing Budget Session of Jharkhand Assembly. “Thought the decision has been taken in the Cabinet, a few modalities are yet to be decided. The Chief Minister is likely to announce the decision during the Assembly Session on March 17,” said a senior official in Chief Minister’s Office. The Chief Minister, on several occasions, had hinted earlier that his government was contemplating a policy for ensuring jobs for the locals in private sector. Notably, a proposal of giving priority to the local youths in private jobs was a part of the manifesto of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in 2019 Assembly elections. The JMM lead alliance government, after coming to power, was striving to implement this policy.

**(N.I.E.,13/03)**

## **KARNATAKA**

### **Karnataka to vaccinate 1.5 lakh people daily from March 8**

Karnataka will intensify the inoculation drive from March 8, by providing vaccines at 3,000 centres including the primary health centres and district hospitals, with a target to vaccinate 1.5 lakh people everyday, state Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar said on Sunday. At a meeting held on Saturday to review the COVID-19 situation and progress of vaccination drive, the Minister instructed the officials to make the vaccines available at 3,000 centres from Monday, the minister’s office said in a statement. Sudhakar also appealed to the people to come forward in large numbers to take the vaccine. According to the health department, at present the 20,000 to 28,000 people are getting vaccinated and majority of them are people above the age of 60 years. Sudhakar expressed concern over the sudden spike in cases in the Bengaluru urban district from 200 to 250 cases a day for the past few weeks to 400 on Friday. “As many as 12 clusters have been identified in BBMP limits and testing will be increased to 40,000 from the current 30,000,” the statement read. The Minister underlined the need to make the contact tracing robust with tracking and tracing a minimum of 20 primary and secondary contacts for each positive case.

**(P.,08/03)**

### **Revised solar policy to help smaller players**

Karnataka, which was the first state to come out with a solar policy, is now working on revising it to ensure that large players do not monopolise the market. Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa had announced about the renewal of the solar policy in his budget presentation. The government has also declared that it will announce an electric vehicle and fuel storage policy. The aim of renewing the policy is to increase the production and use of electric vehicles and review of incentives. Additional Chief Secretary, Energy Department, Kapil Mohan said that the policy will be renewed for a five-year period, keeping in mind changing technologies and inventions, which need to be incorporated. Another official from energy department said the focus of the policy will be large players. "So far, it has been observed that large players dominate the market, do not complete projects and do not let smaller players grow. The new policy aims at creating spaces for smaller ventures to grow and make alternative energy resources affordable for all," the official said. The draft policy has also been hosted on the department website to elicit public opinion. The officials said most of the opinions are for reducing prices, but the cost of the panels and the services are market-driven.

**(N.I.E.,11/03)**

### **Karnataka to launch slew of ads to create awareness on Covid protocol**

With Covid-19 cases continuing to surge in Karnataka, the State Government on Tuesday said they would launch a slew of advertisements to create awareness on following protocol and increase the vaccination drive to contain the spread. Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar warned that stringent measures would be put in place if people continued to flout government guidelines on wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. He said COVID-19 cases were increasing in Karnataka and there was a spike in neighbouring states as well and noted that Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa had asked people to strictly follow the guidelines. "The Chief Minister has issued strict instructions to follow guidelines. Otherwise the government has no option but to take tougher steps," he said. Sudhakar said the government would launch a slew of advertisements to create awareness on following protocol. Besides, the vaccination drive, which has so far covered 15 lakh people, would also be increased, he said. Sudhakar said primary hospitals have been instructed to conduct at least 100 tests per day and general hospitals, 500 a day.

**(P.,17/03)**

### **Summer camps keep online options open**

Summer schools are set to welcome students after a break of one year. But with uncertainty about the duration of the vacation and the continuation of offline interaction, they too are gearing up, although hesitantly, to online practices. Last year, the lack of a proper academic calendar prevented many from rolling out their camps to students. Summer camp organisers told TNIE that they had to resort to online classes, despite the need for physical interaction which play a role in social skill development apart from motor and creative skills. Vijaya Jaju,

who started online art classes pro bono on Facebook Live during the pandemic and organises summer camps, emphasised that while activities like story-telling and interpretation can be taken online, art and craft is more hands-on. But the trend of online classes is likely to stay for at least the next six months, considering the current situation, he said. Latha Gangadharan, founder, The Alternative Learning Community, said that the last year since their alternative school had already started online classes, they continued summer school for their own students. This year, however, they are hoping the situation gets alright and are planning to roll out the summer school in a physical space for a small group of students. The summer school, she said, is an emotional quotient-based learning.

(N.I.E.,22/03)

### **Self-defence classes planned for girls at temples**

If everything goes according to plan, girls and young women in rural areas will be learning self-defence and other courses at their village temples. Members of the Karnataka Rajya Dharmika Parishath, who are meeting in Bengaluru on April 9, are expected to recommend to the state government that the temple premises should be used to teach karate, other self-defence and music classes to girls and women in rural parts. The state has over 34,000 temples run by the Endowments Department, of which 175 are categorised as Class A (with an annual income of above Rs 25 lakh), 158 as Class B (annual income of Rs 5-25 lakh) and the rest as Class C (income of less than Rs 5 lakh). This apart, thousands of temples are run by private trusts, organisations and individuals. Endowments Minister Kota Srinivas Poojary said that sometime back, there was a proposal to introduce the same programme, 'Devalayagalalli Atmasthanairya', for girls in villages. "But we could not go ahead because of Covid and lockdown. Now, the proposal has resurfaced. We will discuss it with officials and CM B S Yediyurappa, and take a final decision," he added. Department sources said, "To begin with, we will look at temples which are doing well financially. We may tie up with NGOs to conduct classes, which will be held in the evenings so that regular classes of school and college-going youngsters are not disturbed. Finances are low with the government, and we may approach private companies for their corporate social responsibility funds or any NGO to run the programme." They said that they will invoke the village deity to convince elders in the family to send womenfolk for training programmes.

(N.I.E.,30/03)

## **MADHYA PRADESH**

### **Madhya Pradesh govt starts 'factcheck' portal for authentic info to public**

The Madhya Pradesh government's public relations department has launched a 'Factcheck' portal aimed at curbing misinformation and making right information available to the public, a minister said on Monday. The announcement was made by state horticulture minister Bharat Singh Kushwaha while replying to the demand of grant of the MP public relations department in the

Assembly. He said the official factcheck portal aimed at curbing fake news and misinformation on social media and to provide authentic information to the public. The PR department is also using "news media monitoring and sentiment application" for monitoring and analysis of the news coming from across the state. Kushwaha said the state's PR department had given correct information to the public during the coronavirus outbreak and lockdown.

(N.I.E.,09/03)

### **Madhya Pradesh govt issues rules for 15-year-old vehicles**

The Madhya Pradesh government has issued a notification regarding old government and private vehicles, according to which vehicles that are over 15 years old will not be registered in the state. This is in tandem with the Centre's scrappage policy introduced by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman according to which cars that are older than 15 years would be required to undergo mandatory emission tests. In its notification, the Madhya Pradesh government has also said that cars older than 15 years will need a 'fitness certificate'. This will be applicable for both government as well as private vehicles and the policy is expected to be implemented from April. Apart from this, fitness certificates have now been made compulsory for new private vehicles of the state. It is believed that this rule will be implemented from April, along with the Centre's scrappage policy. The state government will also impose a green tax on older vehicles and has sent its report for the same to the Union ministry of transport and highways. Owners of vehicles who choose to scrap vehicles older than 15 years will also be given benefits by the state government—a maximum of 10 per cent discount on purchasing a new car and 1 per cent will be recovered from them in form of green tax. The state government will implement the rules after the Centre's approval.

(H.T.,16/03)

### **Milk to be served three days a week to children aged between 3 and 6 years at Anganwadis in MP**

Milk will be served three days a week to children aged between three and six years in Anganwadis across Madhya Pradesh, the state cabinet meeting chaired by chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan decided on Tuesday. According to the state government's official statement, the cabinet decided to re-start the regular distribution of milk for 3 days in a week to children of Anganwadi centers in the 3 to 6 age group by the Madhya Pradesh Mid-Day Meal Programme Council (Panchayat and Rural Development Department) from January-2021. In 2019, while there was a Congress government in power in MP, then women and child development minister Imarti Devi had mooted the idea of serving eggs to kids at Anganwadi centers, which had kicked up a political row in the state. In 2020, the Jyotiraditya Scindia loyalist minister Imarti Devi (who was then the WCD minister in Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led BJP government) had again rooted for serving eggs to kids at Anganwadis to fight malnutrition, but the idea was disapproved by the CM. Devi, just a few weeks later lost the assembly by-elections as BJP candidate.

(N.I.E.,17/03)

## MAHARASHTRA

### **Govt boost electric vehicles: Pilot project to be launched in Thane**

Thane city is set to become a model town for the adoption of Electric Vehicles (EVs), both in public transportation and private vehicles. In a town hall on air pollution organised by Climate Voices — a collective of three organisations — along with the Maharashtra Environment and Climate Change Department's Majhi Vasundhara initiative, the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) announced that a pilot project will be launched in Thane. Dr V M Motghare, Joint director (air quality), Maharashtra Pollution Control Board stated that given the rising air pollution from vehicles, the state government is pushing for EVs. "We will soon have a detailed electric vehicle policy for the entire state. Also, currently, we have nominated Thane as a model city across Maharashtra for implementing electric vehicles." An updated e-vehicles policy will be launched this year, which will include incentives and create infrastructure for private and public vehicles to make the transition to e-vehicles, said MPCB chairman Sudhir Srivastava in the town hall. Thane will be the first city in the state where private vehicle owners will be encouraged to make the transition to e-vehicles.

(I.E.,02/03)

### **Maharashtra slum-dwellers can sell their new house after five years: Minister**

Maharashtra housing minister Jitendra Awhad on Friday announced that slum dwellers who got a new house in the redevelopment project can sell their houses within five years from the date of slum demolitions. Awhad said that there are many people who could not afford to stay in the new high rise towers. "These people always struggle to sell their property. They have to wait for ten years to sell this developed property. We decided to bring down this duration from 10 years to five years while the five years will be counted from the date of demolition of the slum, not the occupation date in the new building. This move will give relief to several people," the minister said. The minister said that the government has also identified 55 sea-facing slums that they have decided to redevelop. "In Mumbai, the sea-facing property hold high value. There are several slums that need to be developed urgently. This will also open the land bank. So, the government can rehab the slum dwellers and the remaining land can be used for commercial or residential purpose. It will generate huge revenue for the government," the housing minister said.

(N.I.E.,12/03)

### **Rs 4 crore fine collected from maskless people in a month in Mumbai**

Mumbai police have collected a fine of Rs four crore in a month from two lakh people in the city, who were found not wearing mask despite the surge in COVID-19 cases, an official said on Thursday. The amount was collected from February 20, he said. "Rs four crore fine was collected from two lakh people at different locations across the city after they were found not wearing mask," Mumbai police spokesperson DCP S Chaitanya said. "While 50 per cent of the collected

fine will go to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the rest of the amount will be used for the police welfare activities," he said, adding that the drive would continue. Mumbai on Wednesday reported its highest one-day rise in COVID-19 cases so far with 5,185 new infections coming to light, which took the caseload in the country's financial capital to 3,74,611. There are 39 active containment zones in the city, which include slums and chawls, while 432 buildings have been sealed so far after patients were found there, the civic body has said.

(N.I.E.,25/03)

## MANIPUR

### **Manipur retracts letter on refugees**

The Manipur government has withdrawn a letter issued last week directing officials to not set up any camps for Myanmar nationals crossing the border into India and to "politely turn away" those seeking refuge. Meanwhile, even though the Union Home Ministry asserted that the refugees should be identified and deported, the Mizoram government is planning to provide them employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. "It appears that the contents of the letter have been misconstrued and interpreted differently. The State government has been taking all humanitarian steps had recently taken all steps, including taking them to Imphal, to treat the injured Myanmarese nationals. The State government continues to provide all aid,"

(H.,31/03)

## MEGHALAYA

### **Meghalaya bans public celebrations of Holi amid rising COVID cases**

The Meghalaya government on Thursday issued a new Standard operating procedure (SOP) for Holi celebrations amid the recent spike in COVID-19 cases wherein it banned public celebrations of the festival. "SOP for Holi celebrations issued by the Home (Political) Department, Government of Meghalaya. 25th March 2021," the Department of Information and Public Relations of the state tweeted. "Person above 65 years of age, persons with comorbidities, pregnant women and children below the age of 10 years are advised to stay at home. Individuals must maintain a minimum distance of five feet in public places, use of face-masks is mandatory along with proper hand sanitisation, social distancing," the order read. The installation and the use of the Aarogya Setu app is also mandatory. "Public celebrations and gatherings/congregations are not permitted in public places/ public grounds/public parks/markets/religious places. Playing with colours should be restricted to family members only and within people's homes. Playing of colours and/or congregations shall not be allowed on the public road or roadside and there shall be no obstruction on any path/roads/thoroughfare. In case of private celebrations, the number of persons inside the venue/private premises shall be restricted in accordance with the order issued by Home (Political) Department dated February 2, wherein the maximum number of persons in any private gathering is restricted to 75 per cent of the seating capacity," the order continued to read.

(N.I.E.,25/03)

## **ODISHA**

### **Odisha govt to decide liquor shops through lottery**

The State government has decided to settle all existing sanctioned IMFL 'Off' and Country Liquor (ENA based) shops for 2021-22 onwards through lottery by inviting applications on fixed monthly consideration money basis. The date for lottery shall be fixed by district Collectors. The initiative has been taken up under 5T action plan of Excise department. As per a notification, the Collectors will issue a notice inviting applications in next few days. Applications will have to be submitted online through the Excise department portal and a 14-day window will be provided for submission. The notification said that an applicant has to submit a non-refundable application fee of Rs 1 lakh online. He also needs to deposit an earnest money deposit (EMD) equivalent to three months consideration money of the shop applied for. In the case of unsuccessful applicants the EMD will be refunded online within 15 days of completion of lottery. The notification maintained that licence once granted will continue for five years including year of grant unless otherwise directed by the State government.

**(N.I.E.,03/03)**

### **New Mission Shakti dept likely from April**

The Department of Mission Shakti is all set to start functioning from the next financial year. A year after Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced formation of the department, the State government has begun the process to make it operational from April 1. The new department will strengthen the SHG initiatives already undertaken by different departments and bring all under one platform providing greater focus, synergy and resource mobilisation. Now apart from the Directorate of Mission Shakti under the Women and Child Development department, the SHGs are being promoted by Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) under Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department and National Urban Livelihood Mission under Housing and Urban Development department. The Mission Shakti Directorate, OLM and State Urban Development Agency will be brought under the new department as they work primarily for women SHGs and there will not be dual federating units. The SHGs will be federated into cluster, GP, block and district level federations as one of the 5T strategies is to have a State level federation (SLF) of SHGs, said an official. The department will have a Minister and Commissioner cum Secretary like any other department and it has been proposed to additionally sanction 55 new posts, including two each additional secretaries and deputy secretaries at the State level. Initially, no additional contractual manpower has been projected as it is proposed to utilise the sanctioned contractual manpower of the three agencies.

**(N.I.E.,06/03)**

### **Odisha government mulling to stop physical classes**

After educational institutions in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack reporting cluster outbreak of Covid-19, the Odisha government is contemplating to stop physical classes from April 1 and

ask students to only attend remedial sessions in schools. Currently, classes are being conducted in schools for the secondary (Class IX and X) and higher secondary (Class XI and XII) students in physical mode. School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash said courses of the students will be completed in schools by April 1 after which revision will start and the department is mulling to focus more on online classes during this period. Only those having doubts will be asked to visit school campus to attend doubt clearing sessions. The spread of infection in two private higher education institutes in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar has raised concern over safety of students in campuses across the State. The Minister, however, said Covid SOP is being implemented with all seriousness in schools for which the department has managed to check the spread of the infections in campuses effectively. He added that instructions have also been issued to the district authorities for proper enforcement of the safety guidelines in school hostels.

(N.I.E.,24/03)

## **RAJASTHAN**

### **2.5 lakh youths got unemployment allowance so far: Rajasthan government**

The Rajasthan government said on Monday it is fulfilling its election promise of giving allowance to the educated unemployed and so far about 2.5 lakh youths have benefited from it, Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship Minister Ashok Chandna said. During the Question Hour, the minister informed the Assembly that under the Chief Minister Yuva Sambal Yojana, started in February 2019, unemployment allowance has been given to 2,49,433, till date. He added that till date over 4.56 applications were received for the allowance. "Earlier, there was a cap of 1.60 lakh on the maximum number of beneficiaries, which now has been increased to 2 lakh," he said. In reply to the supplementary question of MLA Rajendra Rathore, Chandna also said 50,202 beneficiaries have opted out of the scheme. He informed that this scheme is being operated on first come first serve basis. The Minister of State for Entrepreneurship said the Rajasthan government is very sensitive towards the unemployed in the current economic situation.

(N.I.E.,09/03)

### **Rajasthan assembly passes state budget; implementation of insurance scheme for families announced**

The Rajasthan legislative assembly passed the state budget by a voice vote on Thursday with Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot announcing to implement 'CM Chiranjeevi Yojna' from May 1 in the state under which every family in the state will get medical insurance benefit of up to Rs 5 lakh. Gehlot announced renaming of Universal Health Coverage Scheme worth Rs 3,500 crore as CM Chiranjeevi Yojna and said registrations will start from April 1. The chief minister said the MLA development fund has been increased from Rs 2.25 crore to Rs 5 crore annually while announcing a slew of new development projects in almost all sectors.

(N.I.E.,19/03)



## TAMIL NADU

### **TN parties ready to roll out freebies despite State's huge revenue deficit**

Colour television sets, mixers, grinders, mobile telephones, clothes are some of the freebies rolled out by political parties in Tamil Nadu and has always included these freebies in their election manifestos. The state of Tamil Nadu is facing a huge deficit with the revenue deficit at 65,994 crores despite being a revenue surplus state a few years ago. The state's total debt by March 2022 will be around 5.70 lakh crore, a whopping sum by any measures. Despite all these hiccups and states fortunes nose diving the political parties are on a freebie culture with one party overtaking the other in promising the people with gifts and other freebies. DMK commenced the freebie culture in 1967 with the then Chief minister and the towering leader of Dravidian politics, CN Annadurai promising 3 measures of rice for Rupees 1. This had a huge impact and DMK romped home for the first time in Tamil Nadu unseating the Congress government led by Bhakthavalsalam. In 2006 DMK supremo, Muthuvel Karunanidhi announced a highly populist scheme of free colour televisions, 1 kg of rice at 2 rupees, free gas connection and free gas stoves for all women in Tamil Nadu. The DMK won the election easily. Spokesman of the DMK, Saravanan Annadurai while speaking to IANS said: "These are not freebies but populist schemes and in 2006 when we provided free gas stoves and subsidised gas cylinders it was a revolutionary decision to provide women solace from spending long hours in kitchen and now the Prime minister Narendra Modi has replicated the same move after so many years". There are divided opinions on the Governments doling out such schemes to the people.

**(P.,05/03)**

### **Schools in TN to be shut from tomorrow**

With Tamil Nadu witnessing a sudden surge in coronavirus cases over the last few days, the State Government on Saturday ordered closure of schools for classes 9, 10 and 11 from March 22 until further orders. However, they would continue to function for the 12th standard students for they have to take the board examination. Notifying the closure, the government said the director of public health and preventive medicine has recommended that it would not be advisable to continue classes for 9, 10 and 11 from the health point of view as there has been a rise in COVID-19 cases. With regard to 12th standard, the director said the students may be permitted to attend school as their numbers would be lesser and they have to sit for the board examination with strictly adherence to preventive measures such as wearing of masks and maintaining social distancing. "The government of Tamil Nadu hereby order that schools shall be closed for classes 9th, 10th and 11th with effect from March 22 until further orders," state Chief Secretary Rajeev Ranjan said in the order. However, online/digital mode of education shall continue for classes 9, 10 and 11, he said. Further, hostels too would be closed. Announcing relaxations in lockdown rules, the government had permitted the re-opening of schools for 10 and 12 classes from January 19 this year and for 9 and 11 from February 8 after a year, permitting also the re-opening of hostels for those students. The government allowed

conducting board exam for class 10 other than Tamil Nadu State Board as scheduled by those boards besides conduct of special classes to students appearing for the board exam for class 10 and also the functioning of hostels for those students.

**(P.,21/03)**

## **TELANGANA**

### **Telangana forms 10-member panel to mitigate human-wildlife conflict**

In the wake of multiple wild animal attacks, which had also resulted in two deaths, the Telangana government has constituted a 10-member committee to propose measures to mitigate human-animal conflicts. Incidents of cattle killed by wild animals like tigers and leopards, damage to crops and human habitations are being reported frequently from across the State. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, R Shobha, also one of the members of the new committee, had written to the state government in December 2020 proposing the need for such committee to be set up. The committee is mandated to propose measures to avoid the recurrence of incidents of tigers killing human beings and evolve a mechanism for mitigating human-wildlife conflict. It is also required to review and propose a revision, if any, to the existing compensation package and propose guidelines for settling the claims for human death, human injury, cattle kills, crop damage, etc.

**(I.E., 03/03)**

### **On Women's Day, CM Yogi to focus on women farmers**

The Yogi Adityanath Government will celebrate International Women's Day with a special focus on women farmers. The department of agriculture will be organising about 250 seminars with a special focus on women farmers and groups and more than 30,000 women farmers and entrepreneurs will be imparted training. For promoting women farmers, the department of agriculture will also be holding interactive sessions with scientists and officers who will be sharing new techniques of progressive farming. To be conducted virtually, the programme will be held on March 8 for three. For imparting technical knowledge and solution to the agricultural problems, special interactive programmes will be held with women scientists and experts of universities and Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Lucknow. Under the first module of Rabi Session 2020-21, a three-day Kisan Pathshala with a total of 5 lakh participants will be organised in 8000 gram panchayats. In addition, five tehsildars will be awarded by the revenue department on March 8 for the disposal of grievances of women. Along with this, tehsildars and revenue inspectors who have made maximum registries of women account holders under the Varaasat campaign will also be awarded. The Chief Minister, meanwhile, has directed all government departments to organize programmes related to women empowerment on the occasion of International Women's Day on March 8.

**(P., 04/03)**

### **Telangana to boast of largest floating solar power plant**

This year, Telangana will be home to the country's largest floating solar power plant which

will have a power generation capacity of 100 MW. The Rs 423-crore plant, which is expected to be commissioned by May-end this year, will be developed across 450 acres of water surface area in the NTPC reservoir at Ramagundam. With this, the share of renewable energy in Telangana is set to increase as the State will receive power from the 230-MW ground-mounted solar power plant being developed by the NTPC at Ettayapuram in Tamil Nadu, NTPC Regional Executive Director (South) CV Anand said on Wednesday at a virtual press meet. He said the corporation is developing two other floating solar power plants of 92 MW and 25 MW at Kayamkulam in Tamil Nadu and Simhadri in AP, respectively. The Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing unavailability of labour have delayed the commissioning of two coal-based Super Thermal Power Projects of 800 MW each, which are to come up near Ramagundam. However, the plants, being developed at a cost of Rs 10,598 crore, will be commissioned in the upcoming fiscal. Anand said while one unit will be commissioned in January 2022, the other will be in March. While 85 per cent of the power generated by these plants has been allocated for Telangana, the State government is pursuing with the Centre to make it 100 per cent, he said.

(N.I.E.,11/03)

### **Telangana IT department put fertiliser spraying and weeding on to-do list of robots**

For the first time since the Information Technology, Electronics and Communications department floated the idea of deploying robots in farming, it has now identified two specific applications for the same - fertiliser spraying and weeding. The project is a part of the IT department's AI4AI initiative. Officials in the IT department have advocated the need for robots in farming due to the acute labour shortage and the availability of hi-tech farming practices. Currently, weeding is a time and labour intensive farm operation. "Farmers indiscriminately spray pre-emergence and post-emergence weedicides. Their use is high in commercial crops like cotton and sugarcane. Indiscriminate use of weedicides only increases the cost of cultivation," states a document of the IT department. With camera-equipped robots, the IT department feels localised spraying in right concentrations and volumes could be possible. "Robots can be used with computer vision technology to detect weeds and then spray a targeted drop of herbicide onto them," the document read. The robot for the weedicide operation will have 98 per cent accuracy when it comes to positioning, spray one or more acres per hour and have a payload of 75-90 kg. It will be connected both through Bluetooth and WiFi.

(N.I.E.,22/03)

## **UTTARAKHAND**

### **Wildfires gut 4000 hectares forest area in Uttarakhand**

Uttarakhand has lost over 4,000 hectares of forest ecosystem to 765 wildfires in the past six months alone. The highest incidence was recorded in reserved forests, where in 642.11 ha

were lost to 473 wildfires. While areas under civil soyam and van panchayat witnessed lesser incidence, the 291 incidents gutted a whopping 3,546 ha. The state government on Monday last decided to induct 10,000 fire fighters, including 5,000 women under a two-prong strategy of tackling the outbreak of fire and empowering women in one go. Enumerating the losses sustained in the six months gives some startling figures. The hill state lost over 290 hectares of forest area, including 5,500-odd trees, in 235 fire incidents, leading to a monetary loss of Rs 9.71 lakh between October and December 2020. According to empirical data, the season of wildfires begins around February 15 in the state, and ends by June 15, which coincides with the arrival of the monsoon season. While the spark for the wildfires could be both natural and human, the forest department has been into an overdrive to amalgamate public participation through social media since 2019. People are encouraged to share photos, videos and location of the blazes on the official pages such that swift action could be taken. The state machinery is already banking on toll free numbers for expedited alerts, all the while using drones and ground staff.

(N.I.E.,27/03)

### **Transformation etched on walls with Uttarakhand's Roopantaran initiative**

Picture this: Colour - coordinated walls & ceilings, neat washrooms and smart TV sets equipped with web cameras - welcome to the government primary school in Kashipur block of Udham Singh Nagar. The school is a part of Roopantaran - an initiative to transform government schools, which has changed the face of at least 160 schools in the hill state with the number of enrolled students going up 3-4 folds. "I run a small kirana shop and would have never been able to afford my son's education in a private school," says Ramesh Chandra Bisht, a resident of Patali area of Almora district. His 11-year-old son is a student at the local government school. "This school is better than private ones. My son takes keen interest in studies and school activities. He doesn't want to miss a day," he adds. Students with neat uniforms in bright red, yellow, green and navy blue have ignited a new hope of quality education. "It began from Ranikhet of Almora district in 2015 as an individual effort, which now expanded to all 13 districts," says Geetika Joshi, deputy education officer of Kashipur. The state government has selected three schools in every district and allocated funds for their transformation. These schools are free to take donations, grants and financial help from officials, MPs, MLAs through various funds meant for the educational development and other welfare works.

(N.I.E.,29/03)

### **Connectivity to 13 villages in U'khand's Chamoli ravaged by flash floods restored**

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has constructed a 200-foot bailey bridge on Joshimat-Malari road across the Rishiganga river, restoring connectivity to the 13 border villages in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district affected by last month's flash floods. The bridge is near Reini village of the district and it was opened for public use on Wednesday, said the Defence

Ministry's statement. "With this, the BRO has restored connectivity, in a record time of 26 days, to the 13 border villages of Uttarakhand's Chamoli district that were cut-off due flash floods on February 7," it noted. According to the statement, BRO Director General Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhry said the bridge has been named 'The Bridge of Compassion' as a tribute to the fallen "Karma Yogis of the Reini power plant and the NTPC power plant". "He thanked the state government for providing support and assistance to the BRO in completing this difficult task," it mentioned. On February 7, the glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) in the Rishiganga river had washed away a 90-metre Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) bridge near Reini village on Joshimat-Malari road. "The bridge was the only link to Niti Border in Chamoli district. The GLOF had also washed away a hydro-electric plant located at the same site. More than 200 workers of the hydro-electric plant were trapped," it noted.

**(P.,06/03)**

### **Stressed? Come heal in the lap of woods at Devbhoomi**

Clean air, lush green surroundings, pleasant smell of vegetation and blue skies. That's not some movie shot, but the first Forest Healing Centre of India which was opened for public on Sunday. It is in Kalika of Ranikhet in Almora district of Uttarakhand. It was inaugurated by Joginder Bisht, a conservationist and environmentalist, who is also a recipient of the Indira Priyadarshini Vriksha Mitra Award. "Inauguration of this centre is in a way going back to our traditional way of life. We as a civilization have been living in sync with nature. This centre reminds us of that while teaching us. Unique experiences of this centre will pave the way for further sensitivity and awareness on ecology and environment," he said. Spread over 13 acres, this centre draws inspiration from the Japanese concept of forest bathing (shinrin-yoku) and ancient Indian traditions. It has been developed by the research wing of Uttarakhand forest department after conducting studies on healing properties of the forests and its revitalising impact on health and well-being. Activities include forest walks, tree hugging, forest meditation and sky gazing. These compounds help multiply natural killer cells in the blood, which help in fighting infections and cancerous growths, enhance overall immunity, other than having a positive impact on decreasing levels of stress hormones.

**(N.I.E.,08/03)**

## **UTTAR PRADESH**

### **UP CM Yogi Adityanath launches communicable disease control drive in UP**

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday emphasised on prevention as he launched the communicable disease control drive and Dastak Abhiyan in Varanasi. He said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, coronavirus cases significantly dropped to the minimum level in the state. Addressing the event at the Cholapur community health centre, Adityanath said control of Japanese encephalitis in eastern Uttar Pradesh was the prime example of how effective preventive measures combined with efficient health strategy could do wonders. The preparations made at this point of time would help tide over

the communicable diseases, which normally erupt during the summers and rainy season, he added. "There has been 75 per cent drop in the JE cases and 95 per cent fall in the number of JE deaths since 2017 when my government took up the task to eradicate the menace," Adityanath said. "Over the last 40-45 years, the previous governments kept ignoring the need to pay heed to JE, which was prevalent not only in the eastern Uttar Pradesh but 38 districts were also hit by it, claiming thousand of lives," he said.

(N.I.E., 01/03)

### **Classes 1 to 5 resume in UP govt schools with Covid rules in place**

Almost a year after the Covid-19 pandemic struck, government primary schools reopened from classes 1 to 5 from Monday, complying with Covid protocols such as wearing masks and faceshields, maintaining social distancing norm and washing hands. The Basic Education Department had earlier announced that classes 1 to 5 would start from March 1. Classes resumed after schools had taken written consent from guardians. Classes 6, 7 and 8 had started from February 10. The department also added that students of classes 1, 5 and 6 will go to school on Mondays and Thursdays, those belonging to classes 2, 4 and 7 on Tuesdays and Fridays, while those in classes 3 and 8 will be allowed on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

(I.E., 02/03)

### **Uttar Pradesh govt to purchase wheat directly from farmers under MSP**

Uttar Pradesh government will purchase wheat directly from farmers from April 1 to June 15 under the Minimum Support Price Scheme. The wheat purchase will start from April 1 on the fixed minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 1,975 per quintal this year, Uttar Pradesh Food Commissioner Manish Chauhan said in an official statement. For selling wheat, it will be mandatory for farmers to register on the website of the Department of Food, which has been started. Farmers can register themselves on their own or through cyber cafes and public convenience centres, he said. He said a total of 6,000 purchasing centres are proposed this year, including those of the Food Department and other purchasing agencies, where wheat will be procured from farmers. The purchasing centres will operated from 9 am to 6 pm. For the convenience of farmers, online token system has been arranged this year under which farmers will be able to get tokens for the sale of wheat at the purchasing centre as per their convenience, he said, adding that the geo tagging of the purchase centres is being done by the remote sensing application center to help farmers get the location and address of the centres easily.

(N.I.E.,10/03)

### **Uttar Pradesh engages 68,000 groups to facilitate its 'Take Home Ration' scheme**

A study published by Lancet Child & Adolescent Health says Uttar Pradesh is among the states with the highest malnutrition levels in the country. The state government has roped in thousands of women self-help groups (SHGs) to facilitate its Take Home Ration (THR)

scheme under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). These women have been entrusted with providing nutritious ration to the beneficiaries in their villages and blocks. THR, executed by UP State Rural Livelihood Mission (UPSRLM), focuses on children under six months of age, pregnant and lactating women, adolescent girls and severely malnourished children in the age group of six months to six years. Under the initiative, ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook food, dry rations and hot cooked meals are provided to the beneficiaries. The ration comprising staple food such as rice, pulses, wheat, and oil is given to the beneficiaries for consumption at home. “Under the scheme, cooked food with specific caloric value is also provided to new born babies, expecting and lactating mothers, children under the age of 6 years and other malnourished population,” says Yogesh Kumar, in-charge, UPSRLM, adding “Earlier the service was being run in the state by private players who were providing the Take Home Rations which was then distributed by the Anganwadi workers to the beneficiaries.”

(N.I.E.,13/03)

### **Uttar Pradesh madrasas see steady fall in number of students**

Despite the state government’s focus on lifting the standard of education in madrasas by bringing the curriculum at par with mainstream institutions, the number of students at these centres of Islamic education in Uttar Pradesh has been dwindling. The trend is prominent in aided and recognised madrasas. The state government allocated Rs 479 crore for the Madrasas Modernization scheme in its 2021-22 budget to upgrade the traditional institutions and connect students with emerging opportunities. As per data from UP Madrasa Shiksha Board, there are around 16,500 recognised madarsas, of which 558 are totally aided. At madrasas, students mainly from the minority community are imparted knowledge of Islamic theology and jurisprudence. By rough estimates, there are around 40,000-50,000 private madrasas in the state. “Almost all mosques have a madrasa,” says Maulana Khalid Rasheed Firangi Mahali, rector of Darul Uloom, Firangi Mahal and chairman of Islamic Centre of India, one of the biggest madarsas in UP. The pandemic played its role. Due to paucity of funds in the absence of donations during Ramzan, students could not be offered hostel facilities. The scare of the pandemic also kept students away.

(N.I.E.,14/03)

### **Yogi govt high on reform, perform & transform mantra**

Stepping into the final year of its term on Friday, the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has decided to mark the event under the theme ‘Reform, Perform, Transform’. There will be week-long celebrations at all district headquarters March 19 onwards. Each day will be dedicated to a separate segment of society, such as women, traders, farmers, and others. Officials will interact with people about various initiatives and schemes. A 64-page booklet ‘4 years of service & good governance, opportunities in disaster’ released by the state government has a long list of achievements and some challenges. The list opens with the largest-ever ₹ 5.5 lakh crore state budget for 2021-22 which, the government claims, is a

confident step towards making UP a \$1 trillion economy. “UP is ahead of other states in implementing 44 development schemes... this record has been achieved when the world was struggling with Covid-19. By making arrangements to handle it properly, the state turned this disaster into an opportunity,” it says. It claims the state’s GSDP has gone up in the last four years from Rs 10.9 lakh crore to Rs 21.73 lakh crore, establishing UP as the second biggest economy in the country and getting out of the list of ‘BIMARU’ states.

**(N.I.E.,19/03)**

**Covid resurgence: UP govt scraps annual exams, promotes 1.6 crore students to next level**

In the wake of the increasing number of Covid cases, the Yogi Adityanath government has promoted over 1.6 crore students of Class I to Class VIII in the state without making them appear for annual examinations. The state government scrapped annual examinations in about 1.3 lakh primary schools. The exams scheduled for March 25 and 26 were cancelled and schools were closed for the Holi holidays till March 31 owing to the surge of Covid cases in about 65 districts. Active Covid cases doubled in the state during the last six days with 55% of the cases surfacing in nine districts led by state capital Lucknow. During the last 24 hours, the state registered 836 fresh cases with four persons died of Covid. The state government had declared the closure of primary schools in March last year. They were reopened on February 10 (for Class V to VIII) and March 1 (for classes I to IV) after nearly a year. The Director General of Primary Education Vijay Kiran Anand said that the new session of Class 1 to VIII would begin from April 1. A decision on holding offline or online classes would be taken shortly after assessing the Covid situation.

**(N.I.E.,26/03)**

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## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### **All UK children to get free COVID-19 test kits**

Britain's government says families with children in school will be provided with free corona virus home test kits as part of plans for schools to reopen beginning on March 8. Free, twice-weekly tests will be provided to children's households regardless of whether anyone has symptoms, officials said Sunday. The tests will also be offered to adults working with schools, including bus drivers. Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said testing family members will provide "another layer of reassurance to parents and education staff that schools are as safe as possible." Schools in England have been closed except to children of key workers since January. Britain is also racing ahead with its vaccination program, with almost 20 million in the U.K. who have now had a first jab. Some 2 million people aged 60 to 63 in England will start getting invitations to book their shots beginning on Monday. The government aims to offer a first jab to all adults by the end of July. Britain has Europe's worst virus death toll at nearly 123,000 dead.

(N.I.E, 01/03)

### **US President Joe Biden team readies wider economic package after corona virus relief**

Looking beyond the USD 1.9 trillion COVID relief bill, President Joe Biden and lawmakers are laying the groundwork for another top legislative priority - a long-sought boost to the nation's roads, bridges and other infrastructure that could run into Republican resistance to a hefty price tag. Biden and his team have begun discussions on the possible outlines of an infrastructure package with members of Congress, particularly mindful that Texas' recent struggles with power outages and water shortages after a brutal winter storm present an opportunity for agreement on sustained spending on infrastructure. Gina McCarthy, Biden's national climate adviser, told *The Associated Press* that the deadly winter storm in Texas should be a "wake-up call" for the need for energy systems and other infrastructure that are more reliable and resilient. "The infrastructure is not built to withstand these extreme weather conditions," said Liz Sherwood-Randall, a homeland security aide to the president. "We know that we can't just react to extreme weather events. We need to plan for them and prepare for them." A White House proposal could come out in March.

(N.I.E, 01/03)

### **Indonesia's Sinabung Volcano spews high column of ash**

Indonesia's Mount Sinabung was erupting Tuesday, sending volcanic materials as high as 5,000 meters (16,400 feet) into the sky and depositing ash on nearby villages. Activity at the volcano in North Sumatra province increased over the past week, with authorities recording 13 times when it released ash clouds. There have been no fresh evacuations due to the activity and no reports of disruptions to flights in the region. The 2,600-metre (8,530-feet) Sinabung

was dormant for four centuries before erupting in 2010, killing two people. Another eruption in 2014 killed 17 people, while seven died in a 2016 eruption. The volcano, one of two currently erupting in Indonesia, has sporadically come to life since then. Some 30,000 people have been forced to leave homes around Sinabung in the past few years. Sinabung is among more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, which is located on the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Ocean.

(N.I.E, 02/03)

### **UK: Poorer nations should get 'gold-standard' COVAX vaccines**

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said Monday that he understood the "conundrum" faced by developing countries as they wait for vital supplies of coronavirus vaccine. But Raab urged poorer nations to wait for the "gold standard" vaccines delivered by a U.N.-backed program rather than opt for shots from China and Russia. The COVAX initiative, formed to ensure fair access to vaccines by low- and middle-income countries, has been hampered by the severely limited global supply of doses and logistical problems. Speaking on the day that the first COVAX-supplied vaccine shots were given to people in Ivory Coast, Raab said "we understand the conundrum that they feel." However, he said countries should consider advice from scientists and the World Health Organization about which vaccines are safest. Raab said COVAX "is the gold standard of international support for the most vulnerable countries around the world. And I think they ought to be ambitious to have their people vaccinated according to that gold standard." Although it aims to deliver at least 2 billion shots this year, COVAX currently has legally binding agreements only for several hundred million doses, and far fewer than that have been delivered. So far, around 500,000 doses have been delivered to Ivory Coast and 600,000 to Ghana.

(N.I.E, 02/03)

### **Morocco freezes ties with German Embassy amid Sahara tension**

Morocco's Foreign Ministry has suspended ties with the German Embassy because of "deep misunderstandings," notably related to the disputed Western Sahara. The move this week comes amid diplomatic tension around Western Sahara since the US under Donald Trump took the unusual move in December of recognizing Morocco's sovereignty over the territory. A letter leaked online from Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita to the rest of the Moroccan government orders officials to suspend "all contact, interaction and cooperation" with the German Embassy and embassy-related activities. A senior Moroccan government official confirmed to The Associated Press on Tuesday that the letter was authentic, but said it was not meant to be made public. The official, who was not authorized to be publicly named, said the decision has to do with Germany's recent stance on the Sahara issue, especially in the aftermath of the US decision. The official also noted the appearance of a flag of the pro-independence Polisario Front outside the state assembly in the northern German city of Bremen. Germany's Foreign Ministry said it was aware of media reports about the letter, but had no further comment.

(P., 03/03)

**Biden admin 'undecided' on ending H-1B visa ban**

The Biden administration has indicated that it is still undecided on ending the Trump-era ban on issuing new H-1B visas, with the Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas asserting that the US government's top priority is the acute needs of individuals fleeing persecution. The H-1B visa, the most sought after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. In January, then-President Donald Trump had extended the ban on issuing new H-1B visas till March 31, arguing that the country is having a very high unemployment rate and the US cannot afford to have more foreign workers. "His successor President Joe Biden has revoked dozens of the executive orders of Trump including several of those related to immigration like the lifting the Muslim visa ban or those related to Green Card, the one that imposed ban on issuing H-1B has still not been lifted. It will expire on March 31, if Biden does not issue a fresh proclamation.

**(P., 03/03)**

**1 in 4 people in the world will have some degree of hearing loss by 2050: WHO**

The World Health Organization has warned that one in four people in the world - nearly 2.5 billion people - will be living with some degree of hearing impairment by 2050. "By 2050 nearly 2.5 billion people will be living with some degree of hearing loss, at least 700 million of whom will require rehabilitation services. Failure to act will be costly in terms of the health and well-being of those affected, and the financial losses arising from their exclusion from communication, education and employment," the WHO said, in its first 'World Report on Hearing' released on Wednesday. The report added that during the current times, when the world is faced with the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, investing efforts and resources to prevent and address hearing loss is warranted for several reasons. Many cases of hearing loss can be prevented through effective and available measures, with more than 1 billion young people at risk of avoidable hearing loss, and around 200 million suffering with preventable or treatable chronic ear infections. The report said innovative, cost-effective technological and clinical solutions can improve the lives of most individuals with hearing loss.

**(N.I.E., 04/03)**

**SpaceX rocket explodes on ground after seemingly successful flight**

Third time's a charm? Not so for SpaceX, whose unmanned rocket exploded on the ground Wednesday after carrying out what had seemed to be a successful flight and landing -- fresh on the heels of two fiery crashes. It was yet another flub involving a prototype of the Starship rocket, which SpaceX hopes one day to send to Mars. "A beautiful soft landing," a SpaceX commentator said on a live broadcast of the test flight, although flames were coming out at

the bottom and crews were trying to put them out. The rocket exploded a few minutes later, lurching into the air and crashing back to the ground. No explanation was immediately provided. "Starship SN10 landed in one piece!" Musk tweeted jokingly about an hour after the explosion. "SpaceX team is doing great work! One day, the true measure of success will be that Starship flights are commonplace," he said in a second tweet. The latest prototype, named SN10, for serial number 10, took off a little before 2320 GMT from Boca Chica, Texas. The rocket rose into the sky and progressively shut down its three engines as it reached a height of six miles (10 kilometers) and assumed a horizontal position before becoming vertical again and returning to Earth.

(N.I.E., 04/03)

### **China hikes defence budget to USD 209 billion, records 6.8 per cent increase**

China on Friday hiked its defence budget to USD 209 billion, maintaining a single-digit growth for the sixth consecutive year with a 6.8 per cent increase in 2021. The budget hike was announced by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang at the country's Parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC). Defending the increase, Zhang Yesui, spokesperson for the NPC, told the media here that China's efforts to strengthen the national defence do not target or threaten any country. Whether a country poses a threat to others depends on what kind of defence policy it pursues, he said, adding that China is committed to the path of peaceful development and adheres to a defence policy that is defensive in nature. Last year, China allocated 1.268 trillion yuan (about USD 196.44 billion), according to the state-run Global Times. China's annual defence budget maintains a single-digit growth for a sixth consecutive year, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. This year's planned defence spending will be about 1.35 trillion yuan (about USD 209 billion), it said.

(N.I.E., 05/03)

### **Pakistan PM Imran Khan to seek vote of confidence on Saturday after key Senate election defeat**

Under mounting pressure from the Opposition to resign, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday announced that he will seek a vote of confidence on Saturday, in a bid to restore the legitimacy of his government after an embarrassing defeat of the finance minister in the hotly-contested Senate elections. Khan made the announcement in a televised address to the nation during which he lashed out at the grand Opposition alliance for "making a mockery of democracy" and said that he will never let the corrupt politicians off the hook. Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) candidate and former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani defeated ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Abdul Hafeez Shaikh on Wednesday, giving a major blow to Prime Minister Khan who had personally campaigned for his Cabinet colleague. The PDM is an 11-party alliance set up in September last year to topple the government of Khan which it alleged came after rigging of elections in 2018.

(N.I.E., 05/03)

### **China to push for building 'Polar Silk Road' in Arctic Ocean**

As the ice-covered parts of the Arctic Ocean melt due to climate change, China has flagged its interest to take part in building "Polar Silk Road", raising prospects for the emergence of a new sea route. China will participate in the pragmatic cooperation on the Arctic and the building of a "Polar Silk Road," the state-run Xinhua news agency quoted the draft outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for national economic and social development and the long-range objectives to the year 2035. Both the plans were submitted to China's National People's Congress (NPC), the country's Parliament which began its annual session here on Friday. Connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the Transpolar Sea Route (TSR) will cut across the centre of the Arctic Ocean, passing close to the North Pole. While it could significantly reduce distances for global trade, it remains frozen over for most of the year, making it much harder to traverse than the two Arctic shipping routes currently available.

**(P., 06/03)**

### **Irish economy grew 3.4% in 2020 despite pandemic**

Ireland's economy rose by 3.4 per cent in 2020 despite the pandemic as the coronavirus fuelled a boom in pharmaceutical and IT exports, finance minister Paschal Donohoe said Friday. Ireland fared better than bigger eurozone economies such as Germany and France, which plunged into recessions last year as the pandemic shut down the global economy. Donohoe said the GDP growth was "remarkable" and "is entirely a result of the growth in exports" from the eurozone-member nation. Despite a slowdown in global demand, Irish exports grew by 6.25 per cent last year, according to figures from the country's finance ministry. "The pharma and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) sectors recorded extraordinary export growth, driven by blockbuster immunological drugs, Covid related products, and the shift to home-working," Donohoe said. Ireland's outsized multinational export sector has a warping effect on the headline GDP figure of the nation -- home to just five million. Modified domestic demand -- a figure that strips out the effects of multinationals -- registered a 5.4 per cent dip in 2020. Donohoe said it is "a figure much closer to the typical fall across advanced economies". The Irish finance ministry said there had been a "two-speed impact of the pandemic" on the economy as multinational corporations drove the highest level of exports on record.

**(N.I.E., 06/03)**

### **Swiss vote on proposal to ban face coverings in public**

Swiss voters decide Sunday on a proposal to ban face coverings, both the niqabs and burqas worn by a few Muslim women in the country and the ski masks and bandannas used by protesters. Polls are pointing to a close outcome. The measure would outlaw covering one's face in public places like restaurants, sports stadiums, public transport or simply walking in the street. There would be exceptions at religious sites and for security or health reasons, such as the face masks people are wearing now to protect against COVID-19, as well as for traditional Carnival celebrations. Authorities would have two years to draw up detailed

legislation. The Swiss government opposes the measure and says that people covering their faces is a “marginal” issue. It argues the measure could harm tourism — most Muslim women who wear such veils in Switzerland are visitors from well-heeled Persian Gulf states, who are often drawn to bucolic Swiss lakeside cities. And it says that it wouldn't help the women affected. It backs instead requiring people to show their faces if requested to do so by authorities. Supporters of the proposal, which is coming to a vote five years after it was launched and has come to be known colloquially as the “burqa ban,” argue that the full-face coverings symbolize the repression of women and say the measure is needed to uphold a basic principle that faces should be shown in a free society like Switzerland's.

**(N.I.E., 07/03)**

### **Chinese vaccines sweep much of the world, despite concerns**

China's vaccine diplomacy campaign has been a surprising success: It has pledged roughly half a billion doses of its vaccines to more than 45 countries, according to a country-by-country tally by The Associated Press. With just four of China's many vaccine makers claiming they are able to produce at least 2.6 billion doses this year, a large part of the world's population will end up inoculated not with the fancy Western vaccines boasting headline-grabbing efficacy rates, but with China's humble, traditionally made shots. Amid a dearth of public data on China's vaccines, hesitations over their efficacy and safety are still pervasive in the countries depending on them, along with concerns about what China might want in return for deliveries. Nonetheless, inoculations with Chinese vaccines already have begun in more than 25 countries, and the Chinese shots have been delivered to another 11, according to the AP tally, based on independent reporting in those countries along with government and company announcements. It's a potential face-saving coup for China, which has been determined to transform itself from an object of mistrust over its initial mishandling of the COVID-19 outbreak to a saviour.

**(N.I.E., 07/03)**

### **Nepal PM Sharma Oli takes India-made Covishield vaccine**

Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli took the India-made Covishield coronavirus vaccine on Sunday, as the Himalayan nation gears up to start the second phase of its immunisation drive. The 69-year-old Nepalese leader received the Covishield jab at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital here on Sunday morning. His wife Radhika Shakya was also vaccinated. The Covishield vaccine was developed in a collaboration between Oxford University and pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca. It is manufactured by the Pune-based Serum Institute of India. Oli's personal physician, Dr Dibya Singh Shah, said the new vaccine guidelines allow the COVID-19 shot to be administered three months after kidney transplantation. After evaluating the risks and benefits, it was decided that the prime minister should take the vaccine," Shah told The Kathmandu Post. In March last year, Oli had undergone a second kidney transplant surgery. After getting the vaccine, Oli asked all senior citizens in the country to get the vaccine jabs, saying they are safe with no side-effects. Finance Minister

Bishnu Poudel, Health Minister Hridayesh Tripathi and Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali also received the coronavirus jabs on Sunday.

(N.I.E., 08/03)

### **Activists call for solidarity against Beijing's atrocities on Uyghur women**

On the occasion of International Womens' Day, female activists around the world called on international women's institutions as well as feminist allies from across the world to speak out against Beijing's repression of the Uyghur women. According to a recent British media report, citing interviews, Uyghur women in China's Xinjiang region were subject to sexual assault, as the nation's continues to impose severe crackdowns against the community. In an open letter dated on Saturday, female Uyghur activists in the diaspora said that the women in the community are forced to marry Han Chinese men. Mothers are forcibly separated from their children, who are often placed in Chinese state-run orphanages, in spite of the fact that their parents are alive. The letter was jointly signed by; Kazakh camp survivor Mihrigul Tursun, Uyghur camp survivor Qelbinur Sidiq, Uzbek camp survivor Sayragul Sautbay, Kazakh camp survivor Tursunay Ziyawudun and several others. The letter also stated that recently, women from East Turkistan have come forward to share their horrific experiences of systematic sexual violence which they were subjected to inside the concentration camps in East Turkistan.

(N.I.E., 08/03)

### **Myanmar protesters defy curfew; media outlets ordered shut**

Demonstrators in Myanmar's biggest city came out Monday night for their first mass protests in defiance of an 8 p.m. curfew, seeking to show support for an estimated 200 students trapped by security forces in a small area of one neighborhood. The students and other civilians earlier took part in one of the many daily protests across the country against the military's seizure of power last month that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The military government also placed a major curb on media coverage of the crisis. It announced that the licenses of five local media outlets — Mizzima, DVB, Khit Thit Media, Myanmar Now and 7Day News — have been canceled. "These media companies are no longer allowed to broadcast or write or give information by using any kind of media platform or using any media technology," it said on state broadcaster MRTV. All five had been offering extensive coverage of the protests, often with livestreaming video online. The offices of Myanmar Now were raided by the authorities Monday before the measure was announced.

(N.I.E., 09/03)

### **Pakistan Democratic Movement nominates Gilani for Senate Chairman**

Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) on Monday formally nominated Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) as its candidate for the office of the Senate Chairman, reported Dawn. The Senate polls will be held on March 12. Gilani caused a major upset by defeating Finance Minister Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in the March 3 Senate poll on a general seat from Islamabad. Meanwhile, addressing a news conference after attending a nearly six-hour-long meeting of the heads of the PDM component parties, the opposition

leaders warned the country's "establishment and the intelligence agencies" against interference in the upcoming election and vowed "to bring all the facts before the nation if any such attempt is made", reported Dawn. Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N's) supreme leader Nawaz Sharif and PPP's Asif Zardari also participated in the meeting through video link. Later, PDM president Maulana Fazlur Rehman told reporters that to finalise the names for the remaining two Senate offices, the opposition parties had constituted an eight-member committee under the PML-N senior vice president Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

(N.I.E., 09/03)

### **UK publishes National Action Plan to protect journalists from threats, attacks**

The UK government on Tuesday published the country's first National Action Plan to protect journalists from abuse and harassment. The plan includes measures for further research into the problem of threats of violence and intimidation faced by journalists in the course of their work as well as training for police forces and journalists. It follows reports to the government from journalists who have suffered attacks while going about their work, including being punched, threatened with knives, forcibly detained and subjected to rape and death threats. "Freedom of speech and a free press are at the very core of our democracy, and journalists must be able to go about their work without being threatened," said UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. "The cowardly attacks and abuse directed at reporters for simply doing their job cannot continue. This action plan is just the start of our work to protect those keeping the public informed, and defend those holding the government to account," he said. A survey of members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) in November 2020 found more than half of respondents had experienced online abuse while nearly a quarter had been physically assaulted or attacked.

(N.I.E., 10/03)

### **Russia and China plan joint lunar space station**

Russia and China agreed Tuesday to build a lunar space station, as Moscow seeks to modernise its extraterrestrial might and catch up with the United States in the space race. Russia, which sent the first man into space during the Soviet Union, has been lagging behind Washington and Beijing in the exploration of the Moon and Mars. Russia's space agency Roscosmos said in a statement that a memorandum was signed by its head Dmitry Rogozin and Zhang Kejian of China's National Space Administration (CNSA). It said the lunar station will be designed as a "complex of experimental research facilities created on the surface and/or in the orbit of the Moon". It would be available for use by other interested countries and international partners, the statement said, without details about the completion date. Despite its former Soviet glory, Russia's space sector has suffered greatly in recent years from a lack of financing and corruption. Moscow and Washington are collaborating in the space sector -- one of the few areas of cooperation left between the Cold War rivals.

(N.I.E., 10/03)



**COVID-19 bill in US gives states pathway to reduce maternal deaths**

Labour and delivery are thought of as the riskiest times for new mothers, but many women die in the weeks and months after giving birth. Now a provision in the COVID-19 relief bill could help change that. The legislation gives states the option of extending Medicaid coverage to women with low to modest incomes for a full year after childbirth. States are currently required to provide 60 days of coverage, but medical experts point to research showing that women can die from pregnancy-related conditions up to a year after giving birth, and that 3 in 5 of all such deaths are preventable. The maternal health provisions would make it easier for states to cover new mothers for a full year by cutting the time and paperwork needed to obtain approval from Washington under Medicaid, as well as the Children's Health Insurance Program. Maternal health advisory groups in 19 states, from Texas to Massachusetts, and Washington to Tennessee, have recommended such an extension. Last year a bipartisan bill to do so cleared the House but failed to advance in the Senate. The legislation has been shepherded by Rep. Robin Kelly, D-Ill., who serves on the House committee that oversees Medicaid, the federal-state program covering about 1 in 5 Americans, from many newborns, to low-income adults and frail nursing home residents.

**(N.I.E., 11/03)**

**Cambodia reports first COVID-19 death, one year into pandemic**

Cambodia on Thursday confirmed its first death from COVID-19 since the pandemic began more than a year ago as it battles a new local outbreak that has infected hundreds of people. The 50-year-old man was confirmed infected last month while working as a driver for a Chinese company in coastal Sihanoukville and died at the Khmer-Soviet friendship hospital Thursday morning, the Health Ministry said in a statement. Cambodia has confirmed only 1,163 cases of infection with the coronavirus since the pandemic began, but it is battling a new local outbreak that has infected several hundred people. According to the Health Ministry, the new outbreak was traced to a foreign resident who broke quarantine in a hotel and went to a nightclub in early February. That caused a slew of infections and led the government on February 20 to announce a two-week closure of all public schools, cinemas, bars and entertainment areas in Phnom Penh. The government has since extended the closures for more two weeks for schools, gyms, concert halls, museums and other entertainment venues in Phnom Penh, nearby Kandal province and the coastal province of Sihanoukville.

**(N.I.E., 11/03)**

**Japan intends to limit number of arrivals to 2,000 per day amid COVID pandemic**

The Japanese government intends to introduce a daily limit on the number of people arriving in the country, including Japanese nationals and foreigners, to 2,000 to control the possible spread of new coronavirus strains and ensure the effectiveness of current related restrictions, Transport Minister Kazuyoshi Akaba said. "Currently, to implement reliable quarantine measures, a limit will be imposed on the number of people entering the country, including Japanese citizens and returning foreigners, in the amount of 2,000 people per day," Akaba

quoted. Besides, the minister noted that the government called on airlines to introduce a limit on the numbers of passengers on international flights arriving in Japan. The media outlet reported that several companies, including Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways, have already voiced their intention to comply with the authorities' request, by reducing the numbers of passengers on international flights to 3,400 people per week. Japan introduced a ban on issuing new visas to citizens of all countries in late December 2020 in an effort to prevent the spread of UK-linked coronavirus mutation. Besides, the government extended a state of emergency in several prefectures as a part of the strategy to contain COVID-19.

(N.I.E., 12/03)

### **China's parliament approves 14th five-year plan to build dam on Brahmaputra in Tibet**

China's Parliament on Thursday adopted the 14th Five-Year Plan, the mega blueprint containing billions of dollars worth of projects, including the controversial hydropower project on the Brahmaputra river in Tibet close to the Arunachal Pradesh border over which India has raised concerns. The National People's Congress (NPC), China's legislature with over 2,000 members mostly drawn from the ruling Communist Party, adopted the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for national economic and social development and the long-range objectives through the year 2035, on the last day of its six-day session on Thursday, official media reported. Attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang and other senior leaders, the NPC approved a development blueprint which contains 60 proposals for speeding up China's development. It was passed by the Communist Party of China (CPC) last year. The 14th Five-Year plan included building the dam on the lower reaches of the Brahmaputra river over which India and Bangladesh, the riparian states, have raised concerns. China has downplayed such anxieties saying it would keep their interests in mind.

(N.I.E., 12/03)

### **Uyghurs write to UK Parliament against Chinese human rights atrocities**

Campaign For Uyghurs (CFU), a US-based rights group on Friday (local time) wrote a letter to the United Kingdom (UK) Parliament calling attention to the most horrific human rights atrocities committed by China against the Uyghur people. The CFU said that they were encouraged by a discussion on the Indian farmers' protest in the UK Parliament and added that theirs was a much more serious issue. "Please open the doors, allow us to speak. Meaningful action is long overdue. If the UK fails to address this genocide with meaningful action, they will likewise fail their own conscience and the vow of "never again", Rahima Mahmut, human rights activist wrote in the letter on the behalf of CFU. "I was so impressed to see the moral tone of the conversation surrounding the farmer protests in India. We hope to see this momentum carried for in bold condemnation of the atrocities against the Uyghur people, carried out by the brutal Chinese Communist regime," she added. Giving details of Chinese atrocities on Uyghurs, she wrote, "My own sister, a retired medical doctor, was abducted by the Chinese regime as retaliation for my advocacy work against the herding of

millions of people into concentration camps." Further, Mahmut wrote, "If the regime can target family members of foreign citizens in this manner, what does this say about the treatment of Uyghurs in the camps? As brave victims have come forward to testify to horrific mental, physical, and sexual abuse, it becomes apparent that we can no longer continue to turn a blind eye."

(N.I.E., 13/03)

### **Sri Lanka brings in 'deradicalisation' detention, bans burqa**

Sri Lanka Saturday announced using a controversial anti-terror law to deal with religious extremism and gave itself sweeping powers to detain suspects for up to two years for "deradicalisation". Separately, the government also said it will soon outlaw the burqa, formalising a temporary ban imposed in April 2019 after deadly bomb attacks blamed on local jihadists. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa promulgated regulations allowing the detention of anyone suspected of causing "acts of violence or religious, racial or communal disharmony or feelings of ill will or hostility between different communities". The rules, effective Friday, have been set up under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), which both local and international rights groups have repeatedly asked Colombo to repeal. Sri Lanka's previous government, which was defeated by Rajapaksa at 2019 elections, had pledged to repeal the PTA after admitting it seriously undermined individual freedoms, but failed to do so. Rajapaksa, who came to power with a promise to battle Islamic extremism, announced the "deradicalisation from holding violent extremist religious ideology" measures in a gazette notification seen by AFP Saturday. Meanwhile, Public Security Minister Sarath Weerasekera announced Saturday that the burqa, a loose garment covering from head to toe and worn in public in many Islamic states, was a threat to Sri Lanka's national security.

(N.I.E., 13/03)

### **German election year opens with tough test for Merkel party**

Elections in two German states on Sunday pose a difficult test for Chancellor Angela Merkel's party, six months before a national vote that will determine who succeeds the country's longtime leader. Voters are choosing new regional legislatures in Baden-Wuerttemberg, an economic powerhouse region in southwestern Germany, and neighboring Rhineland-Palatinate. Those ballots kick off an electoral marathon this year, which features six state elections and culminates in the Sept.26 vote for a new national parliament. Polls point to weak results for Merkel's center-right Christian Democratic Union. Amid discontent over a sluggish start to Germany's vaccination drive, and with coronavirus restrictions easing only gradually, Merkel's Union bloc has been hit over the past two weeks by allegations that two lawmakers profited from deals to procure masks early in the coronavirus pandemic. The CDU already faced a challenging task against two popular state governors from rival parties. In Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany's only Green party governor, Winfried Kretschmann, has

become popular with centrist voters in 10 years running a region that is home to automakers Daimler and Porsche.

(N.I.E.,14/03)

### **Japan intends to limit number of arrivals to 2,000 per day amid COVID pandemic**

The Japanese government intends to introduce a daily limit on the number of people arriving in the country, including Japanese nationals and foreigners, to 2,000 to control the possible spread of new coronavirus strains and ensure the effectiveness of current related restrictions, Transport Minister Kazuyoshi Akaba said. "Currently, to implement reliable quarantine measures, a limit will be imposed on the number of people entering the country, including Japanese citizens and returning foreigners, in the amount of 2,000 people per day," Akaba quoted. Besides, the minister noted that the government called on airlines to introduce a limit on the numbers of passengers on international flights arriving in Japan. The media outlet reported that several companies, including Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways, have already voiced their intention to comply with the authorities' request, by reducing the numbers of passengers on international flights to 3,400 people per week. Japan introduced a ban on issuing new visas to citizens of all countries in late December 2020 in an effort to prevent the spread of UK-linked coronavirus mutation. Besides, the government extended a state of emergency in several prefectures as a part of the strategy to contain COVID-19.

(N.I.E.,14/03)

### **Paris may face new lockdown as ICUs fill up**

Officials say the Paris region may be headed toward a new lockdown as new variants of the virus fill up intensive care units and limited vaccine supplies drag down inoculation efforts. Special medical planes dispatched patients from the Paris area to less-saturated regions over the weekend. "If we have to lock down, we will do it," the head of the national health agency, Jerome Salomon, said on BFM television Sunday. "The situation is complex, tense and is worsening in the Paris region." Salomon acknowledges that a nationwide 6 p.m. curfew wasn't enough in some regions to prevent a spike in cases, notably of the variant first identified in Britain. The French government has been relying on curfews for months -- along with the long-term closures of restaurants and some other businesses -- to try to avoid a costly new lockdown. But localised outbreaks are raising questions about the government's virus-fighting strategy. Salomon says France has more people in intensive care for COVID-19 and other ailments -- about 6,300 -- than the overall number of ICU beds it had going into the pandemic. France has reported 90,315 virus-related deaths, among the world's highest death tolls.

(N.I.E., 15/03)

### **Ireland suspends AstraZeneca vaccine amid blood clot reports**

Irish health officials on Sunday recommended the temporary suspension of the AstraZeneca vaccine after reports of serious blood clotting after inoculations in Norway. Dr. Ronan Glynn,

Ireland's deputy chief medical officer, said the recommendation was made after Norway's medicines agency reported four cases of blood clotting in adults after receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine. He said that while there was no conclusive link between the vaccine and the cases, Irish health officials are recommending the suspension of the vaccine's rollout as a precaution. Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic authorities have taken similar precautionary steps. The World Health Organization and the European Union's medicines regulator said earlier in the week that there was no link between the jab and an increased risk of developing a clot. The U.K.'s medicines regulator, the MHRA, said Thursday that "reports of blood clots received so far are not greater than the number that would have occurred naturally in the vaccinated population" and that "available evidence does not confirm that the vaccine is the cause. It said people should still go and get their COVID-19 vaccine when asked to do so.

(N.I.E., 15/03)

### **India asks UNHRC to pay urgent attention to Pakistan's deplorable human rights records**

India said on Monday that it is high-time that Pakistan, a "failed state", is held accountable for its state-sponsored terrorism and urged the UN Human Rights Council to pay urgent attention to its deplorable human rights records and discriminatory treatment of its ethnic and religious minorities. Using its Right of Reply under the Agenda Item 4 at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council in response to a statement by Pakistan's representative, India also said that Pakistan must stop preaching and focus on its responsibility towards the millions suffering in the country. "This Council must pay urgent attention to Pakistan's deplorable human rights records and discriminatory treatment of its ethnic and religious minorities," said Pawankumar Badhe, First Secretary of India's Permanent Mission in Geneva. "It is high-time that Pakistan, which continues to export terrorism, is held accountable for its state-sponsored and supported grave violation of human rights of its people. It is high time that the failed state of Pakistan stops preaching and focuses on its responsibility towards the millions suffering in Pakistan, he said. Citing victim groups, Badhe said tens of thousands of persons have disappeared from Balochistan since the year 2000 and their families continue to struggle for their voices to be heard.

(N.I.E., 16/03)

### **South Korea set to expand COVID-19 immunization programme**

South Korea says it will start administering coronavirus vaccines to adults 75 years or older next month as it expands a mass immunization program that aims to deliver the first doses to 12 million people during the first half of the year. Jung Eun-kyeong, director of the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency, said Monday that school nurses, prison workers and people at facilities for the disabled and homeless will also be among groups that will receive their first shots in April. She said the country will use its next available doses of Pfizer vaccines to inoculate some 3.64 million people who are over 75 and live in communities. Separately, the country will use AstraZeneca shots to vaccinate some 377,000 people over 65

who live or work in long-term care settings later this month. People between the age of 65 and 74 who live in communities will receive their first AstraZeneca shots in May or July, she said. South Korea reported 382 new cases of the coronavirus on Monday, which brought its caseload to 96,017, including 1,675 deaths.

(N.I.E., 16/03)

### **China to permit Indians and people from 19 countries to return only if they take Chinese vaccines**

China has made it mandatory for people coming from India and 19 other nations to get Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccines if they want to travel to this country. "For the purpose of resuming people-to-people exchanges in an orderly manner, starting from 15 March, 2021, the Chinese Embassies and Consulates in India will provide the persons having taken Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccine and holding the Certificates of Vaccination," a notice posted on the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi said. The announcement makes little difference for thousands of Indian students besides professionals working in China and their family members who are stuck in India awaiting Beijing to permit their return as there are no Chinese vaccines available in India. The Chinese Embassy notice did not specify how Indians can access the Chinese-made vaccines in India as they are not available in the country. Over 23,000 Indian students, most of them medical students, besides hundreds of professionals working in China are stuck in India since last year due to coronavirus travel restrictions. Despite repeated representations from the Indian embassy and appeals by the students, China is yet to respond positively. State-run Global Times reported that such notices were put up by Chinese embassies in 20 countries.

(N.I.E., 17/03)

### **UK to shift foreign policy focus to Indo-Pacific in post-Brexit review**

The UK must do more to adapt to major changes in the world and therefore shift its foreign policy focus to the Indo-Pacific region, with countries such as India, Japan and Australia, a year-long of the country's post-Brexit "Global Britain" vision concluded on Tuesday. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who formally launched the "Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy" document in the House of Commons, underlined this so-called Indo-Pacific tilt by confirming his visit to India next month, an application for partner status of the Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN) economic union and the Royal Navy warship Queen Elizabeth Carrier deployment to the region. I am delighted to announce that I will visit India next month to strengthen our friendship with the world's biggest democracy," he said in his Commons statement. Britain will remain unswervingly committed to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation] and preserving peace and security in Europe, and from this secure basis, we will seek out friends and partners wherever they can be found, building a coalition for openness and innovation, and engaging more deeply in the Indo-Pacific, he said, highlighting an invitation to India, Australia and South Korea to attend the UK-hosted G7 Summit as part

of deeper engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

(N.I.E., 17/03)

### **China blasts US 'evil past of genocide' at UN rights body**

China on Wednesday blasted the United States' human rights record, citing what it called US failures against COVID-19 that cost hundreds of thousands of lives, as well as racial discrimination, police brutality, and an "evil past of genocide." Jiang Duan, a counsellor at the Chinese mission in Geneva, voiced the criticism at the end of an examination of the US rights record at the Human Rights Council, part of a regular review faced by all countries at the United Nations' top human rights body. The comments testified to growing outspokenness of Chinese diplomats, and the swelling rivalry between the world's top two economic powers. The US has repeatedly criticised China's rights record on issues like the rights of protesters in Hong Kong and the detention of Muslim Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region. In a brief but sharp statement, Jiang criticised US military interventions abroad that had resulted in tremendous deaths of civilians and faulted US forces for having slaughtered innocent civilians and conducted torture in other countries. The US neither apologises for its evil past of genocide nor provides reparation to the victims, he said, without elaborating. The US has failed to take effective measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives.

(N.I.E., 18/03)

### **China asks its state firms in Myanmar to evacuate non-essential staff: Report**

China has asked its state firms in Myanmar to evacuate non-essential staff following attacks on Chinese factories and businesses by anti-coup protesters who accused Beijing of backing the military junta that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi last month. China has told its state firms to evacuate non-essential staff from Myanmar after dozens of Chinese-run factories were attacked on Sunday, amid rising anti-China sentiment, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Wednesday. China's State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council (SASAC) in a notice ordered state-owned enterprises in Myanmar to evacuate staff involved in projects that had come to a halt. Other staff to be pulled out of the neighbouring country include those who have reached the end of their rotations, workers who have not yet been inoculated against the coronavirus, employees living on remote sites and those facing serious local situations, according to the notice. Asked about reports of evacuation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian during a media briefing here on Wednesday said that "China is following the situation in Myanmar closely and attach importance to the safety of our institutes and personnel in Myanmar. We hope the Myanmar side will take concrete measures and take more vigorous actions to ensure their safety," he said.

(N.I.E., 18/03)

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### **Japan court denies Tokai Daini nuclear power plant restart over evacuation plan**

A Japanese court on Thursday ruled that a nuclear power plant northeast of Tokyo should not restart because it lacks an adequate emergency plans to safely evacuate nearly 1 million people nearby in case of a Fukushima-class accident. The Mito District Court sided with 224 residents who had safety concerns about the Tokai Daini nuclear power plant just 110 kilometres northeast of the densely populated capital. The plaintiffs filed the lawsuit in 2012, saying the plant, operated by the Japan Atomic Power Co., lacked adequate earthquake and tsunami measures, as well as proper evacuation plans for the populated region. The Tokai Daini, or No.2, plant, launched in 1978, has been offline since the 2011 earthquake and tsunami off Japan's northeast coast that triggered the Fukushima plant's meltdowns. In 2018, the Tokai Daini plant reached a 40-year operational limit but obtained a 20-year extension from regulators. Though the ruling does not have an immediate impact on the plant, it is a setback for the operator as it pursues construction of seawalls and other measures under the post-Fukushima safety standards in hopes of a restart in coming years. Japan Atomic Power said it planned to appeal the ruling, saying the decision was regrettable and unacceptable.

(N.I.E., 19/03)

### **President Biden urged to rescind Trump-era ban on H-1B and other foreign work visas**

Five powerful Democratic senators on Thursday urged President Joe Biden to rescind his predecessor Donald Trump's ban on some non-immigrant visas, including the H-1B visa which is popular among Indian IT professionals, saying this creates uncertainties for US employers, their foreign-born professional workers and their families. In June 2020, Trump instituted Proclamation 10052, halting the processing of non-immigrant H-1B, L-1, H-2B, and J-1 visas, based on the alleged potential risk to the labour market. Although Proclamation 10052 is set to expire on March 31, 2021, businesses have indicated that inaction will further harm their businesses and economic recovery. The senators said that because the visas that Proclamation 10052 halted either target low-unemployment professions or require that the visa holder does not displace an American worker, businesses that rely on foreign workers have struggled to fill jobs despite increased unemployment. Reports have suggested that jobs in fields such as information technology -- which H-1B visa holders would have filled -- have remained open or were moved overseas, said senators Michael Bennet, Jeanne Shaheen, Angus King, Cory Booker, and Bob Menendez. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

(N.I.E., 19/03)

### **Happiness Report 2021: World shows resilience in face of Covid-19**

The corona virus brought a year of fear and anxiety, loneliness and lockdown, and illness and



death, but an annual report on happiness around the world released Friday suggests the pandemic has not crushed people's spirits. The editors of the 2021 World Happiness Report found that while emotions changed as the pandemic set in, longer-term satisfaction with life was less affected. What we have found is that when people take the long view, they've shown a lot of resilience in this past year, Columbia University economist Jeffrey Sachs, one of the report's co-author, said from New York. The annual report, produced by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, ranks 149 countries based on gross domestic product per person, healthy life expectancy and the opinions of residents. Surveys ask respondents to indicate on a 1-10 scale how much social support they feel they have if something goes wrong, their freedom to make their own life choices, their sense of how corrupt their society is and how generous they are. The results from both methods had European countries occupying nine of the top 10 spots on the list of the world's happiest places, with New Zealand rounding out the group. The top 10 countries are Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Austria. It was the fourth consecutive year that Finland came out on top. The United States, which was at No.13 five years ago, slipped from 18th to 19th place.

(N.I.E., 20/03)

### **Italy lifts AstraZeneca ban after 'safe and effective' ruling, will restart Covid-19 shots**

Italy's pharmaceutical agency has formally lifted its temporary ban on AstraZeneca vaccinations after the European Medicines Agency ruled the shots were safe and effective. It wasn't immediately clear when the first jabs would be administered, but officials said Friday the speed with which they were proceeding with the administrative restart of AstraZeneca shots was a sign of their confidence in the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. The head of prevention at the Health Ministry, Dr. Giovanni Rezza, told a press conference that Italy only reluctantly halted the campaign out of an abundance of caution. But he said Italy needed to ramp it back up quickly to make up for lost time now that EMA had ruled. He said Italy needed to more than double the 200,000 vaccinations per day the country had reached before the suspension to reach its goal of inoculating 80 per cent of the population by September.

(N.I.E., 20/03)

### **France passes security law allowing off-duty police to carry weapons**

Amid opposition from across the political spectrum, the French Senate on Thursday passed Article 25 of a security law that allows off-duty police officers to carry their firearms into public establishments such as theatres and shopping centers, and forbids the management of such places from preventing it, reported FRANCE24. Article 25 provides that local officers and gendarmes (national police) who carry their weapons while off-duty can no longer be refused access to places like museums, cinemas, shopping centers and schools, which France classifies as ERP - establishments open to the public. French senators passed Article 25 by a vote of 214 to 121 without any changes to the version already approved by the lower-house National Assembly; the article raised questions and provoked an outcry from senators of all

political persuasions. A series of amendments aimed at eliminating Article 25 was defended by lawmakers from the Socialist and Green parties, as well as senators from the communist-majority CRCE and European Democratic and Social Rally groups. Furthermore, more than 20 senators among the chamber's centrists, right-of-center Les Republicains and Independents also backed the amendments, reported FRANCE24.

(N.I.E., 21/03)

### **China urges unhurried public to get vaccinated against COVID**

In China, the problem doesn't seem to be a shortage of vaccine. Rather, with the COVID-19 outbreak largely under control at home, not enough people want to get the shot. Chinese health officials appealed to the public Sunday to get inoculated. They also said that with vaccination not a guarantee against infection they would still require anyone arriving in China to quarantine for 14 days, even if they have received a vaccine. "China will continue the current prevention control measures to prevent imported cases and rebound of domestic cases," Feng Zijian, the deputy director general of China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said at a news conference. Through Saturday, nearly 75 million vaccine doses have been given, the country's National Health Commission said. The number of people inoculated would be less, as some people have taken two shots. China, with 1.4 billion people, has a much lower rate of vaccination than many other countries. "Many people mistakenly think there is no practical meaning to be vaccinated because the epidemic situation is under effective control and the virus is far away from us," He Qinghua, a National Health Commission official, said at the same news conference. He warned that no one is immune to the disease, and that with the pandemic still ravaging other parts of the world, imported cases could trigger fresh outbreaks in China.

(N.I.E., 21/03)

### **Internet blackout as Congo votes, with Sassou Nguesso set to win**

The Republic of Congo voted Sunday in a presidential election boycotted by the main opposition and attacked by critics as tilted towards veteran leader Denis Sassou Nguesso. Access to the internet and social media was cut hours before polls opened at 7:00 am (0600 GMT), AFP correspondents said. The 77-year-old Sassou Nguesso is widely expected to win against six contenders, led by economist Guy-Brice Parfait Kolelas, who revealed Saturday that he is gravely ill with Covid-19. Sassou Nguesso, a former paratrooper, first rose to power in 1979 and has since accumulated 36 years in office, making him one of the world's longest-serving leaders. He is hoping for a first-round victory to secure a fourth term running the central African oil exporter. Meanwhile challenger Kolelas posted a video message from his sickbed, declaring he was "battling against death" after taking off a respiratory mask. "Rise up as one person... I'm fighting on my deathbed, you too fight for your change," he urged supporters, saying the election was "about the future of your children" before replacing his mask. Kolelas, 60, tested positive for Covid-19 on Friday, and is to be transferred to France on Sunday for treatment, his campaign manager Cyr Mayanda said.

(N.I.E., 22/03)

**Philippines spots hundreds of Chinese 'militia' boats near disputed reef**

More than 200 Chinese fishing vessels believed to be crewed by militia have been spotted near a disputed reef off the Philippines, a government agency said, expressing "concern" over their presence. The Philippine coast guard detected the boats "in line formation" at the boomerang-shaped Whitsun Reef around 320 kilometres (175 nautical miles) west of Palawan Island on March 7, a task force charged with monitoring the South China Sea said Saturday. It said "around 220 Chinese Maritime Militia Vessels" were in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone. "Despite clear weather at the time, the Chinese vessels massed at the reef showed no actual fishing activities," the task force said. The agency "notes this circumstance as a concern due to the possible overfishing and destruction of the marine environment, as well as risks to safety of navigation." Foreign Minister Teodoro Locsin said Sunday he was "waiting for the order to fire" from the country's national security adviser and defence chief before lodging a diplomatic protest. The Chinese embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The United States has previously accused China of using maritime militia to "intimidate, coerce and threaten other nations" over its claims to almost the entire South China Sea.

(N.I.E., 22/03)

**Republic of Congo Presidential candidate Kolelas dies of COVID-19**

Republic of Congo's top presidential opposition candidate Guy Brice Parfait Kolelas, who was hospitalised with COVID-19 complications on election day, has died, a spokesman said Monday. The 61-year-old politician was last seen in a video circulating Saturday on social media in which he told supporters he was "fighting death". Aides later said he was flown to France for further treatment. Spokesman Justin Nzouloufoua confirmed his death Monday to The Associated Press. Kolelas, who won 15 per cent of the vote in the 2016 election, was expected to finish second to President Denis Sassou N'Guesso, one of Africa's longest-serving leaders with more than 36 years in office.

(N.I.E., 23/03)

**Japan registers 1st possible case of mother-to-newborn COVID-19 transmission**

A newborn in Japan is believed to have contracted COVID-19 from the mother in what may be the first case of mother-to-baby corona virus transmission in the country, the NHK public broadcaster reported on Monday. According to the Japanese media outlet, researchers from the Japan Pediatric Society studied 1,124 medical facilities across the country that have pediatric departments. Per the survey results, 52 newborns at 31 facilities were born to corona virus-positive mothers last August, of whom one baby was said to be infected. The child reportedly did not have health problems. The broadcaster added, citing researchers, that there had been other similar cases reported from abroad on suspected mother-to-baby COVID-19 transmissions. According to Morioka Ichiro, a professor at the Nihon University School of Medicine, the chances of mothers passing the corona virus on to their babies is low and

infected babies may develop light symptoms. There have been reports coming from several other countries, including Singapore and Bulgaria, where women gave birth to babies with antibodies after having contracted COVID-19 during pregnancy.

(N.I.E., 23/03)

### **UK holidaymakers could face 5,000 pound fine under new COVID law**

A ban on non-compulsory overseas travel is to be extended until the end of June under reviewed corona virus legislation tabled in the UK Parliament this week, with breaches likely to face fines of up to 5,000 pound. As Britain marked the one-year mark of its first stay-at-home lockdown on Tuesday, details emerged of new laws to control the spread of infections to be voted on Thursday. Although the new laws won't expire until June 30, UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock has suggested foreign holidays could be allowed before that date. "The questions of whether people will be able to travel abroad this summer are going to be addressed by the Global Travel Taskforce, which is reporting around April 12," Hancock told 'Sky News'. "The roadmap sets out the earliest date by which we will allow for international travel - without one of the clear reasons you need now - is May 17. That has not changed," he said. "The way we're putting that into law is as part of these roadmap regulations that will be voted on Thursday. They come to an end as a whole at the end of June. But that doesn't change the timings for these questions on international travel," he added.

(N.I.E., 24/03)

### **Pakistan reaches out to China to ensure supply of COVID-19 vaccine**

Pakistan reached out to its all-weather ally China for ensuring the supply of the corona virus vaccine, as the country is grappling to contain the third wave of the pandemic that has also hit Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a telephone conversation with his Chinese counterpart and State Councilor Wang Yi, underscoring that Pakistan had devised an elaborate plan of vaccination across the country as part of its efforts to combat the pandemic, according to the Foreign Office (FO). "To reinforce Pakistan's capacity to effectively and expeditiously fight the pandemic, Foreign Minister Qureshi discussed with his Chinese counterpart the supply of COVID-19 vaccine from China to Pakistan during March-April 2021," the FO said. Foreign Minister Wang reassured that China will continue to firmly support Pakistan in its fight against the pandemic and accord highest priority to the requirements of its time-tested friend, according to FO. Qureshi also expressed gratitude to China for earlier gifting Pakistan 1.5 million doses of the Chinese vaccine, underlining that it had played a pivotal role in protecting precious human lives. China on Wednesday gifted another 500,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccine to Pakistan, the Dawn reported. He thanked Prime Minister Li Keqiang's message wishing Prime Minister Imran Khan speedy recovery from COVID-19. Wang also wished swift recovery to Pakistan premier Khan.

(N.I.E., 24/03)

### **Egypt races to free giant vessel blocking Suez Canal**

Tugboats and a specialized suction dredger worked Friday to dislodge a giant container ship that has been stuck sideways in Egypt's Suez Canal for the past three days, blocking a crucial waterway for global shipping. The Ever Given, a Panama-flagged ship that carries cargo between Asia and Europe, ran aground in the narrow canal that runs between Africa and the Sinai Peninsula. It got stuck in a single-lane stretch of the canal, about six kilometers (3.7 miles) north of the southern entrance, near the city of Suez. The ship, owned by the Japanese firm Shoei Kisen KK, has blocked traffic in the canal, causing headaches for global trade. Around 10% of world trade flows through the canal, which is particularly crucial for the transport of oil. The closure also could affect oil and gas shipments to Europe from the Mideast. At least 150 ships were waiting for the Ever Given to be cleared, including vessels near Port Said on the Mediterranean Sea, Port Suez on the Red Sea and those already stuck in the canal system on Egypt's Great Bitter Lake, said Leth Agencies, which provides services for the canal.

(N.I.E., 25/03)

### **Mexico tops 200,000 COVID-19 deaths, but real toll is higher**

As Mexico surpassed 200,000 test-confirmed deaths from COVID-19 Thursday, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador framed ramped-up vaccination efforts as a race against time. The president prepared to call out more military, state and local personnel to spur the vaccination effort as more doses arrive, including a shipment of 1.7 million AstraZeneca shots the United States has "loaned" Mexico. Mexico's total 200,211 confirmed COVID-19 deaths announced Thursday trail only the United States and Brazil, countries with larger populations. The real death toll is believed to be drawing closer to 300,000, due to the country's extremely low rate of testing. "I think it is more. I think, for example, that the numbers on the news are not correct, I think it is higher," funeral home worker Benigno Clemente Zarate said of the death toll. Zarate said he has tended to multiple deaths in a single household. "We have had some jobs where two or three people have died in the same household, in the same family," he said.

(N.I.E., 26/03)

### **Thailand plans quarantine-free entry for tourists vaccinated for COVID-19**

Thailand plans to allow vaccinated foreigners to visit the southern resort island of Phuket without quarantining on arrival in a step toward reviving the country's big but battered tourism industry. Starting in April, the country also is shortening the quarantine period for arrivals from abroad to 10 days from 14. Thailand's tourism industry dried up when scheduled passenger flights into the country were barred in April last year to curb the spread of the coronavirus. There has been a limited resumption of flights since then. The plan for Phuket is set to begin on July 1, and if judged successful, may include other popular destinations such as Samui Island, Krabi, Pattaya and Chiang Mai in October, said Yuthasak Supasor, head of the Tourism Authority of Thailand. The government's Center for Economic Situation

Administration, chaired by Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, approved the Phuket plan on Friday. It still needs final approval from Phuket's governor and the Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration.

(N.I.E., 27/03)

### **EU medicines regulator approves new vaccine production sites**

The European Union's medicines regulator on Friday said it has approved new manufacturing sites for coronavirus vaccines made by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca, in a move that could significantly boost Europe's supply of the shots and speed vaccination efforts across the continent. The European Medicines Agency said in a statement that it had approved sites in the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland for the COVID-19 vaccines made by the companies. BioNTech vaccine — which was cleared on the basis that it needed ultra-cold freezer temperatures for storage and delivery. That approval “is expected to facilitate the rapid roll-out and distribution of the vaccine in the EU by reducing the need for ultra-low temperature cold storage conditions throughout the supply chain,” the regulator said. All COVID-19 vaccines meant for use in the EU must have their manufacturing sites approved by the EMA after a regulatory evaluation

(N.I.E., 27/03)

### **Beleaguered Syria suffers also due to Suez Canal ship block**

Syria has begun rationing the distribution of fuel in the war-torn country amid concerns that shipments could be delayed because Egypt's Suez Canal is being blocked by a giant cargo ship that has run aground, the Oil Ministry said Saturday. The container ship remained stuck sideways in the Suez Canal over the weekend, as authorities prepared to make new attempts to free the vessel and reopen a crucial east-west waterway for global shipping. Even before the Ever Given ran aground, Syria had been suffering from fuel shortages mostly caused by Western sanctions. Syria has been struggling with deteriorating economic conditions, shortages of basic goods and medicine. Syrians have been forced to wait in long lines to buy subsidized bread and fuel. The Oil Ministry said that fuel is being rationed to allow the basic services in Syria can continue while the Suez Canal remains blocked. Such services include bakeries, hospitals, water services and telecommunications centers. Nearly 80% of Syrians live in poverty, and 60% are food insecure — the worst food security situation ever seen in Syria, according to the United Nations.

(N.I.E., 28/03)

### **Myanmar forces kill at least 91 people in one of deadliest days since military coup**

As Myanmar's military celebrated the annual Armed Forces Day holiday with a parade Saturday in the country's capital, soldiers and police elsewhere reportedly killed dozens of people as they suppressed protests in the deadliest bloodletting since last month's coup. A count issued by an independent researcher in Yangon who has been compiling near-real-time

death tolls put the total as darkness fell at 93, spread over more than two dozen cities and towns. The online news site Myanmar Now reported the death toll had reached 91. Both numbers are higher than all estimates for the previous high on March 14, which ranged in counts from 74 to 90. Figures collected by the researcher, who asked not to be named for his security, have generally tallied with the counts issued at the end of each day by the Assistance Association of Political Prisoners, which documents deaths and arrests and is widely seen as a definitive source.

(N.I.E., 28/03)

### **Hundreds evacuated from fire at Indonesian oil refinery**

At least 500 people were being evacuated from a nearby village after a massive fire broke out at the Pertamina Balongan Refinery in Indonesia's West Java province. Residents of Balongan village were moving to two evacuation centers on Monday. Authorities urged residents to stay calm and keep away from the fire. Four residents injured while passing through the area suffered burns and were being treated at the Indramayu regional hospital. Pertamina officials said the cause of the fire was not clear, but there was lightning and heavy rain at the time the massive fire broke out. Television reports showed explosions and thick plumes of black smoke and orange flames filling the sky. "We did a normal shutdown to control the flow of oil and stop the blaze from expanding," Ifki Sukarya, corporate secretary of Subholding Refining Petrochemical PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional, said in a press statement.

(N.I.E., 29/03)

### **Now vaccinated, USA's senior citizens emerge from COVID hibernation**

Isolated by the pandemic, older adults were hard hit by loneliness caused by restrictions intended to keep people safe. Many of them sat out summer reunions, cancelled vacation plans and missed family holiday gatherings in November and December. In states with older populations, like Maine, Arizona and Florida, health officials worried about the emotional and physical toll of loneliness, posing an additional health concern on top of the virus. But that's changing, and more older people are reappearing in public after they were among the first group to get vaccinated. Those who are fully vaccinated are ready to get out of Dodge without worrying they were endangering themselves amid a pandemic that has claimed more than 540,000 lives in the United States. "Now there's an extra level of confidence. I am feeling good about moving forward," said Ken Hughes, a 79-year-old Florida resident who is flying with his wife for a pandemic-delayed annual trip to Arizona in April. Plenty of older adults are eager to hop on a jet to travel. Others are looking forward to the simpler things like eating at a restaurant, going to a movie theater or playing bingo.

(N.I.E., 29/03)

### **Suez Canal reopens after nearly a week as stuck cargo ship is freed**

Salvage teams on Monday finally freed the colossal container ship stuck for nearly a week in the Suez Canal, ending a crisis that had clogged one of the world's most vital waterways and halted billions of dollars a day in maritime commerce. A flotilla of tugboats, helped by the

tides, wrenched the bulbous bow of the skyscraper-sized Ever Given from the canal's sandy bank, where it had been firmly lodged since March 23. The tugs blared their horns in jubilation as they guided the Ever Given through the water after days of futility that had captivated the world, drawing scrutiny and social media ridicule. "We pulled it off!" said Peter Berdowski, CEO of Boskalis, the salvage firm hired to extract the Ever Given. "I am excited to announce that our team of experts, working in close collaboration with the Suez Canal Authority, successfully refloated the Ever Given, thereby making free passage through the Suez Canal possible again." From the city of Suez, ships stacked with containers could be seen exiting the canal into the Red Sea. At least 113 of over 420 vessels that had waited for Ever Given to be freed are expected to cross the canal by Tuesday morning, Rabei added at a news conference. Analysts expect it could take at least another 10 days to clear the backlog on either end.

**(N.I.E., 30/03)**

### **Nepal shuts all schools, colleges for 4 days over pollution**

Nepal's Ministry of Education--during an emergency meeting on Monday--has decided to close all educational institutions till Friday owing to degrading air quality. The Emergency meeting chaired by Minister for Education, Science and Technology Krishna Gopal Shrestha, decided to close the educational institutions for this week, a release from the ministry informed. "As per the deliberation of meeting it has been decided to close all educational institutions be closed till Friday," the release stated. The release further states that universities and educational institutions which have been holding all sort of exams can continue their operation adopting appropriate security measures. The Ministry also has requested parents to ensure children are mostly staying indoors, limiting their exposure to hazardous haze, that has shrouded Nepali skies in recent days. Due to wildfire in more than 54 districts, the quality of air has deteriorated sharply for the past few days, with thick smog blanketing most of the country. Meteorologists say that it would take a few more days for the air to become clear and breathable.

**(N.I.E., 30/03)**

### **Suez Canal reopens after nearly a week as stuck cargo ship is freed**

China has sharply reduced the number of directly elected seats in Hong Kong's legislature in a setback for the territory's already beleaguered democracy movement. The changes were announced Tuesday after a two-day meeting of China's top legislature. In the new make-up, the legislature will be expanded to 90 seats, and only 20 will be elected by the public. Currently, half of the 70-seat legislature -- 35 seats -- are directly elected. The move is part of a two-phase effort to reign in political protest and opposition in Hong Kong, which is part of China but has had a more liberal political system as a former British colony. China imposed a national security law on Hong Kong last year and is following up this year with a revamp of the electoral process. The crackdown comes in the wake of months of pro-democracy protests in 2019 that brought hundreds of thousands to the streets and turned violent as the government resisted protester demands. China's



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top legislature, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, amended Hong Kong's constitution to pave the way for the changes.

(N.I.E., 31/03)

**US President Joe Biden to unveil once-in-a-century USD 2 trillion investment plan to transform America's infrastructure**

US President Joe Biden will announce a massive once-in-a-century USD 2 trillion plan on Wednesday to transform America's aging infrastructure, and position the country to out-compete China, according to officials. The American Jobs Plan, to be announced by Biden in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, will create millions of good-paying jobs and rebuild the US infrastructure. This is a once-in-a-century capital investment in America, according to officials. It will also position the United States to out-compete China, they said. "By investing about USD 2 trillion over the next eight years, we can transform our current and future infrastructure and fundamentally change life for Americans," officials said ahead of the presidential visit to Pittsburgh. "If passed alongside President Biden's Made in America corporate tax plan, the plan would be fully paid for within the next 15 years and reduce deficits in the years after." "This plan will bring public investment as a share of the economy back to where it was in the 1960s, the last time we made transformative investments in our nation's infrastructure," they said.

(N.I.E., 31/03)

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