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Threat of XBB looms large

Joyce Rodrigues

Bengaluru: As we are in a gala of festive celebration, Omicron, yet again has cropped up this time albeit in a new avatar- in the form of the XBB variant. As per Times of India, eight states have so far reported cases of the XBB Variant with Tamil Nadu recording the highest with 52 cases, followed by Odisha and West Bengal with 35 and 17, respectively.

The XBB variant, also known as B.A.2.10 is a combination of BJ.1 and B.A.2.75. The virus was first detected in Singapore in August 2022. Dr C Nagaraj, a Member of the State Covid Expert Committee, said that the virus is not yet detected in Karnataka. However, the symptoms are very mild, like dry cough, fever, body aches, and weakness. The virus can affect the elderly the most and people with comorbidity; no case of the XBB variant is recorded in a child, so far.

"The mutation occurs as the virus gets transmitted to humans; there are more variants to come, but the severity will be low," said Dr Nagaraj. He also said that people should take the booster dose since it is a festive season when you are bound to go to crowded places, and winter has also started, so the chances of catching the infections are more. People should follow the old COVID-19 norms like using sanitisers, wearing masks and keeping a distance. There should be no restrictions in their outgoing activities, but they should follow the norms accordingly.

Kharge gets to work soon after becoming pres.

Abhirami Nair

Mallikarjun Kharge formally succeeded Sonia Gandhi to become the first non-Gandhi Indian Congress president in the last 24 years. Soon after resuming his role, he constituted a 47-member steering committee which will replace the Congress Working Committee (CWC). The committee includes former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, former congress presidents Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and other prominent party figures.

Kharge took oath as the 98th president of congress at the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters in Delhi on Wednesday in the presence of Congress Working Committee members, MPs, Pradesh Congress Committee presidents, Congress Legislative Party leaders, former chief ministers,



Kharge delivering his first address as the Congress president

PTI

state presidents, and other AICC office bearers. He is also the second Dalit president of Congress in five decades after Jagjivan Ram became Congress' chief in 1970. He won by defeating his contender Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor by a huge

margin in the Congress presidential election, which was held on Oct 17.

"I have risen from being just a local Congress worker. I thank all of you for making me, the son of a labourer, the president," Kharge said, adding, "Congress is the only party that has internal

democracy, and my election proves that," reported NDTV. Kharge was overwhelmed with emotions during his speech.

He expressed his faith in his party and its power to change the current political scenario, The Mint reported. "Now when democracy is

in danger and Constitution is being attacked, and every institution is being broken, Congress has presented an example of strengthening the country's democracy by conducting organisational elections at the national level. I thank everyone connected with the election," he said. Congress is expected to resolve the Rajasthan Congress crisis soon after Kharge assumes his position, news agency PTI reported.

The 80-year-old took up the mantle and assured to implement the key decisions of the Udaipur Declaration, and try to address the problems of youth, farmers, women and small traders. It has put forth the idea that 50% of the seats should be given to candidates below 50 years of age. This step is to ensure the participation of youth in reviving the country's essence.

'Pompous schemes will not change the reality'

Kavya S

A shortage of teachers, lack of funds and infrastructure in government schools fall flat on the government's face even as it claims to reform Indian education by doling out pompous schemes and policies. Does the government really intends to provide quality education to kids, question the educationists on the Centre's latest proposal to introduce creative learning among pre-primary students.

Union Education Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan recently launched the National Curriculum Framework (NCF)

for the foundational stage under National Educational Policy (NEP). The key feature of NCF is that education will be based on toys, lived experiences and stories instead of textbooks for the age group 3-6.

"The government may bring toys, and attractive videos to students, but where are the teachers to teach them? 20 lakhs teachers' post is vacant in schools under the central government and as per the scheme of one teacher for every class, the Karnataka government has to fill 2 lakhs teachers' post. When there are no teachers, whatever



Launch of NCF

policy the government frames, who will teach them? Will the government bring toys to teach students," questioned Raja Shekar a prominent educationist and the president of the All India Save Education Committee.

The Government is collecting 100 rupees as

a donation from each government school student because they don't have the money to run the schools. Students die in class due to crumbling infrastructure. If this is the case how we can expect the government to provide creative education to children, he questioned.

"First of all, education is being curtailed. The government is shutting down the schools in the name of school clusters and for those who go to schools, the government is saying don't give them knowledge, textbooks, teachers, and proper infrastructure. It is a mockery of education that is going on."

Producing enough, but feeding less

Aasline Dsouza

Today there is a need to strengthen national solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition, and poverty and promote food production, said, Dr Tshilidzi Madzivhandila, CEO of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) on Tuesday, at the World Food Day Conference 2022.

The United Nations Food, Agriculture Organisation (FAO), FANRPAN, South Africa Broadcasting Corporation Education, and Vikela Earth organised the conference with the theme Absorbing the Shocks: Climate Change and Food Security to celebrate World Food Day 2022.

Agriculture plays a crucial role in food security, supplying the basic products that keep millions of people fed daily. "Malnutrition and undernutrition are increasing, we are producing enough food, but we are not feeding everyone who is residing on this planet," Madzivhandila said.

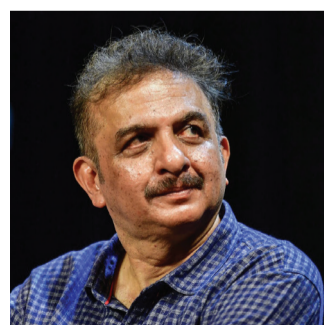
Dr Mercy Chikoko, FAO representative said, "Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries are not only affected by climate change but also contribute to it through the emission of greenhouse gases."

Removing grills of the window of life

Parnika Sirurmth

Bengaluru: Art and non-art films are the means to understand life and these categories are meant for the purpose of study, opined Jayanth Kaikini, a prominent lyricist and poet.

Speaking to The Beacon, he compared the art and commercial films opining that they are no different from one another. Any film that earns a profit is a commercial film, regardless of its content. "We give names for context and reference but it doesn't



Jayanth Kaikini

dictate the content and expression."

Understanding life is like a window, and the categories like art and commercial films shape the grills of it. When one steps out of this

perspective, they come out of these divisions. "The main purpose of this is to understand life," he opined.

Just as science and art can't be differentiated, so also categorisation in the cinema field should be shunned, he said. "Science is art, and art is science. It is not easy making a film. Each thing has to be pursued. It is to be disciplined into shots and it gets energy from various other factors like music, performance and everything."

e-Shram is a non-starter

Meghana S

Bengaluru: Long after the e-Shram card was introduced for the benefit of unorganised workers, it has proven to be a non-starter thanks to the cumbersome registration process.

An e-Shram card is meant for unorganised workers with benefits like scholarships for children and housing loans. Besides, Rs 300 will be provided to avail the outpatient facility at a hospital, and a higher amount in case of surgery and Rs 2 lakhs in the event of death.

When Bhat asked the

Central Labour Secretary about the benefits of the e-Shram card, he was told it was just introduced and slowly they shall add more benefits. "If there is a meeting, people will come with laptops and ask workers to register themselves for e-Shram cards; some will and some will not," said Bhat.

"They should provide all data, and sometimes the server will be down. In that case, it'll be pending. All these technical problems are there, it's just a show-off," he added.