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Bengal BJP brushes aside internal discontent

Megha Bhattacharjee

BENGALURU: The BJP has downplayed the dissent among those who were denied tickets in the upcoming Assembly elections in West Bengal.

The BJP on Sunday, March 14, released the names of 63 candidates for the third and fourth phases of Assembly polls in the state, triggering protests and resignations from those denied tickets.

BJP spokesperson Keya Ghosh, referring to this issue as a "family matter," told the Beacon on Wednesday, March 17, "This is not at all a big issue. This is an internal and a very minor issue that the authorities of the party will take care of."

She added, "Our party is our family and small tiffs like these are common in a family. At the end of the day our supporters are going to vote for the BJP. There's no doubt about that. This small tiff will not have any effect on the party. It is nothing."

Senior BJP leader Shamik Bhattacharjee said: "The protests will be pacified within a day or two. We are confident of that. All protesters will be paid heed to, but the decision will not change. As it is a regimented, disciplined party, every worker has to abide by the party's decision."

UN warns against looser Covid-19 norms

Vandana Nampoothiri

The UN World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) on Thursday, March 18, warned in a report that governments should not use climate conditions and air quality factors as a reason to relax measures to control the transmission of Covid-19.

"We saw waves of infection rise in warm seasons and warm regions in the first year of the pandemic, and there is no evidence that this couldn't happen again in the coming year," said Ben Zaitchik from the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Johns Hopkins University.

Zaitchik is the co-chair of an interdisciplinary and international WMO Task



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Team that produced the report.

"At this stage, evidence does not support the use of meteorological and air quality factors as a basis for

governments to relax their interventions aimed at reducing transmission," he said.

"Some preliminary evidence" shows poor air

quality may increase Covid-19 cases but does not directly impact airborne transmission of the coronavirus.

The report highlighted that Covid-19 transmission

dynamics last year appear to have been controlled primarily by government interventions rather than meteorological factors.

Other drivers include changes in human behaviour and demographics of affected populations, and more recently virus mutations.

The coronavirus, as a respiratory viral infection, shows seasonality, said the report, adding that this has led to speculation that if it persists for many years, it could be a strongly seasonal disease. "A combination of direct impacts on virus survival, impacts on human resistance to infection, and indirect influence of weather and season via changes in human behaviour may be at work," the WMO has said.

'Students should protest dress codes'

Arakkal Shada Amina

BENGALURU: Experts are of the opinion that dress codes implemented by colleges across India make it clear that the focus is not on uniformity, but rather about covering up women.

Advocate Avani Chokshi, who is also a member of the All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA), said, "Dress codes perpetuate the idea that women should modulate their behaviour to prevent men from sexually harassing or



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assaulting them. For this reason, dressing policies in colleges are not only sexist but aid in reinforcing existing societal discrimination against women."

She added, "Lack of student unionisation in Karnataka is

one of the reasons students do not conduct protests on issues such as discriminatory dress codes."

Since the ban on student union elections in Karnataka colleges and universities in 1997, there has been a lack of

student collectivisation and political activities within campuses, she said. "It's important for students, and for all people, to take a stand against arbitrary dress codes."

Chokshi went on to add that the biases and discrimination prevalent in colleges are a reflection of society.

"Dress codes are not unique to colleges. They are practised and normalised in families and workplaces. Appropriate clothing cannot be subjective, and definitely not gendered," she said.

Musicians returning slowly to city stages

Alwin Benjamin Soji

BENGALURU: Musicians and music bands say they are slowly getting back into the groove of performing gigs as various lockdown restrictions are being lifted.

City-based band Goatsmoke's bass-guitarist Niharika Shantharaj said, "Getting gigs has always been tough since the ban on live gigs, which led to a shutdown of venues as well. It's still an ongoing crisis that only allows licensed venues to organise gigs. Hence, venues are limited. They have always been so, even before the pandemic."

City-based band Fabian and The Astra's lead vocalist and guitarist Mark Brandon Vernum said, "The venues are slowly opening up for gigs, so we don't perform gigs on a regular basis now."

He added: "The last gig we performed was in February. When the lockdown was in place, the band members either started making music or they shifted to teaching music."

He explained: "I have been teaching music for seven years, so I had a backup plan if we couldn't get a gig."

This Holi, make natural colours

Priyansha

BENGALURU: With Holi less than a fortnight away, environmentalists have a few tips for people who want to play a skin-friendly and eco-friendly game of colours.

City-based environmentalist Nevina Kamath said, "There are different ways natural colours can be made at home. These colours are limited in range, unlike synthetic colours, but give beautiful, mild and earthy shades."

She added: "Synthetic colours are laden with chemicals like aluminum, chromium, mercury, copper and lead, which harm the



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skin and the environment."

She explained, "Natural colours can be made from plant extracts. You can pick flowers and leaves and dry them under the sun for five days, then grind and mix with cornflower, sandal powder or

chickpea flour to form a good base. Henna leaves can retain the colour green, Marigold can give good yellow to orange shades, and boiled beetroot extracts can be mixed with rice flour and ground to form a red colour."

Arun Prasad, another city-based environmentalist, said, "Colours laden with chemicals are not just harmful for the skin but also cause pollution in soil and water. Natural plant-based colours are biodegradable, non-toxic and a traditional way of making colours. It's high time people realise the consequences of using harmful colours in Holi."

After lockdown, sleeping patterns improved: Expert

Akshara DM

BENGALURU: On the eve of World Sleep Day on March 19, here's an interesting aspect of sleep that is coming to light: Psychologist Sneha Anna George told The Beacon that people are sleeping better since the lockdown ended, and that in turn is improving their physical and mental health.

"Sleep difficulties have decreased post-lockdown, and people are regaining their sleeping patterns with situations getting back to

normal," said George.

She added, "During the lockdown, people had to work from home and had no chance to go out. They felt isolated and depressed and the negative news of Covid-19 tensed them up, resulting in loss of sleep."

She also said, "The recovery process is slow. After the counselling process and helpful tips, people have started recovering, but a few are still facing difficulties. The arrival of vaccines and decreasing Covid-19 cases also had a positive impact on their sleep."