

Editorial

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National & International News

The vote that matters

Voting in India is one of the largest public exercises to take place on this planet. At the interval of every 5 years, the biggest democracy of the world practices its voting right. Indian political circles are notoriously corrupt. Given that, to this day, nobody challenges the outcome of an election. Issues are just for propaganda purposes and it has been a tool for some aspirant candidate of the general assembly candidate to make him or her known to the people. Finally, when it comes to voting day it is the money that matters. However hard the ECI had formulated regulations, almost all candidates are left with no choice but to utilize it as per demand of the voters. Saying so it does not mean that all candidates are not sincere, some did follow the guidelines provided by the ECI and some comes out to change the system.

Well the first phase election for the 11th Manipur Legislative Assembly Election has been held today in 38 assembly constituency. Fates of 168 candidates are now locked in EVM Machine. 2nd phase election will be held on March 8. A total of 98 candidates are in the fray.

On March 11, people will know who will be the law makers of the state. Election is not a character certificate contest. It's politics. People use all means to convince voters. Least corrupt candidate may not always win the election. Because people vote to somebody who will work and solve their problems. That is why. One question that remains haunted to each and every citizens is that whether these election lawmakers are elected fairly or not.

Talks about money being distributed to voters by certain political parties are spreading like wild fire. Threats to voters by supporters of rival candidates are often reported but went unnoticed at many times.

Well the result of the Manipur Legislative Assembly Election 2017 will be declared on March 11. The majority political party will form government.

The issue of fake encounter, AFSPA, unemployment, corruption etc. which were a much talk during campaign days will be again thrown under the carpet. More importantly public outcry on the ILPS and Framework agreement will be put into silence. If not Manipur will be in flame once more.

Jammu and Kashmir: Operation called off after militants manage to flee

Srinagar, March 4: The overnight anti-militancy operation in south Kashmir's Shopian district was called off today as the militants managed to escape from the security forces' cordon.

Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Chillipora village of the district last night following information about the presence of militants there, a police official said.

He said a gunfight broke out between the two sides as the security forces were closing on the militants' positions. The exchange of fire between the two sides ended late last night but the security forces did not lift the cordon with the aim of stopping the militants from fleeing.

"House to house searches were launched at daybreak today but no arrests were made. The militants had apparently managed to escape last night itself," the official said.

There were no casualties reported in the encounter.

US to temporarily suspend premium processing of H-1B from Apr 3

Moneycontrol News

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will temporarily suspend premium processing for all H-1B petitions from April 3. The suspension may last up to 6 months. Premium processing was used by some companies to expedite visa processing by paying a fee. However, over a period this has led to a back log of petitions for regular H-1B visas. This temporary suspension, the USCIS said in a notification on the website, will help it reduce overall H-1B processing times. By temporarily suspending premium processing, the department will be able to process long-pending petitions, which have currently remained unprocessed due to the high volume of incoming petitions, and the significant surge in premium processing requests over the past few years; and prioritize adjudication of H-1B extension of status cases that are nearing the 240-day mark, the notice said. It has, however, listed out certain criteria which, if met, can be used to request for expedition. "It is the petitioner's responsibility to demonstrate that they meet at least one of the expedite criteria, and we encourage petitioners to submit documentary evidence to support their expedite request," the notice said.

Rape case: Airports on alert for Gayatri Prajapati; victim's kin alleges death threat

New Delhi, March 4: Airports across the country have been alerted about the possibility of UP Minister Gayatri Prajapati, accused of rape, trying to flee the country. A Letter of Cancellation (LC) will soon be opened against him and all airports have been alerted to prevent the 49-year-old Prajapati from fleeing the country, official sources said.

A letter of cancellation is a technical term used for alerting immigration authorities about any possible move by a suspect to leave the country. Whenever passport of the suspect comes for immigration clearance at any exit point of the country, the computer screen warns the official to not let the person leave.

The Sashtara Seema Bal (SSB), guarding Uttar Pradesh's border with Nepal, has also been alerted about the possibility of such a move by Prajapati.

The UP Police has registered an FIR against the ruling Samajwadi Party politician, who continues to elude them, for allegedly gang-raping a woman and molesting her daughter with his aides. The FIR was filed recently following a directive of the Supreme Court after the alleged victim woman approached it.

A relative of the woman has alleged that a UP Police officer, who had come to AIIMS to record the victim's statement, threatened to kill them in a fake encounter.

In a complaint filed at Hauz Khas police station, one of their kin has alleged that a DSP-rank officer of the UP Police yesterday barged into a ward at AIIMS, where the victim's 16-year-old daughter is admitted, threatened them and snatched their mobile phones.

The victim's daughter, who was also

allegedly sexually assaulted by the minister, is undergoing treatment in a restricted ward of AIIMS. "The lady officer pushed the girl who is undergoing treatment and pestered the mother to record the statement." "When we objected to it, the officer threatened to get us killed in a fake encounter," alleged the complainant, who claimed to be a cousin of the victim.

Delhi Police sources said that policemen had gone to AIIMS yesterday upon receiving a PCR call from the victim's family. However, they found nothing that substantiated their allegations about their phones being snatched and they being threatened by the UP Police.

"We have received a complaint from them and it is being examined. In case something comes out in the investigation, we will register an FIR," said a senior Delhi Police officer.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Amita Singh had yesterday recorded the statement of the victim and her daughter amid opposition by their family members at AIIMS. The statement was videographed as per the rules under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, they added.

The statement of the victim was recorded before a chief metropolitan magistrate in Lucknow last week. "The complainant has requested for protection from the UP Police and necessary action against the police personnel."

"An inquiry into the complaint revealed that the UP Police official had got the nod from AIIMS authorities to examine the minor," a senior Delhi Police officer said.

The victim, who had some doubts about Singh recording the statement, called lawyer Mahmood Pracha, who is representing the minor in the Supreme Court.

Pracha arrived at AIIMS and the remaining statement was recorded in his presence.

The girl, who was earlier staying with her mother at a hotel in Nabi Karim in central Delhi, had gone missing on February 11 before her medical examination at AIIMS.

Her mother had then lodged a complaint, following which an FIR under section 363 (punishment for kidnapping) of IPC was registered at Nabi Karim police station, police said.

The victim, however, had returned after a few days and said she was fine, Delhi Police said.

BJP accused Akhilesh Yadav of hiding Prajapati at his residence and said the chief minister had become a "patron" of criminals in the state.

"The chief minister has hidden Gayatri Prajapati in his residence and the police is enacting the drama of carrying out raids to arrest him," state unit president of the BJP Keshav Prasad Maurya claimed.

"Can Akhilesh take a pledge in the name of the mother Ganga that Gayatri has not been kept at the CM's residence...if the Chief Minister really wants, Prajapati can be caught in ten minutes," he said.

The BJP leader alleged that Akhilesh had become a patron of big criminals in the state, adding that CM house should not be allowed to become a "haven for criminals".

Senior BJP leader Vijay Bahadur Pathak also charged the chief minister with campaigning for the gangrape accused and describing

him as a capable leader before people. Besides, another minister Azam Khan had described the rape case as a conspiracy, he said.

"...such an attitude encourages people with criminal mentality. They show scant regard for women's safety and blatantly indulge in heinous crimes," Pathak said.

Acting on the Supreme Court's orders, police said they have been making efforts to nab him and they might even apply for cancellation of his passport so that the minister cannot escape from the country.

Interestingly though, the minister was seen moving freely from one place to other in his constituency seeking votes. The last time Prajapati was seen in public was on February 27, when he spoke to the media saying he will win with a huge margin and will work under Akhilesh once again.

Meanwhile, Akhilesh Yadav today promised full cooperation with regard to the case. "The matter is in the Supreme Court...The government will fully cooperate and go by its order," Yadav said in response to a question at a hurriedly-convened press conference.

When his attention was drawn to the tweet by state BJP president Keshav Prasad Maurya that Prajapati has been hiding in the Chief Minister's house, Akhilesh asked the mediapersons to follow him with their cameras to check for themselves.

Akhilesh has been facing severe attack from the BJP over the Prajapati episode, especially since he is contesting as a Samajwadi Party candidate from Amethi and the Chief Minister had campaigned in that constituency.

'Media cheated my brother,' says brother of Army Sahayak who killed himself

New Delhi, March 4: After his brother's death, John Mathew, brother of Lance Naik's Mathew claimed that Media betrayed his brother. Lance Naik was found hanging from the ceiling of a barrack in Deolali Army Cantonment. He had talked to his wife, Finny on 25th of February, revealed John Mathew. According to an Indian Express report, John Mathew talked to his wife about being worried because of the sting video uploaded by The Quint. He revealed that Naik was weeping and had told his wife that he has been called by the officials. The video The Quint had uploaded

was reportedly recorded without the Jawan's consent. He had no knowledge that they were shooting while he spoke. The Jawan had talked about "Sahayak" or "buddy" system in the Indian Army. However, the video was removed from the website, police sources said.

Mathew talked about doing officers' personal chores. Jawan's brother revealed that his phone remained switched off after the conversation and there was no news about him. The family was informed about Jawan's death only after his family sent a petition to the Army Chief MP Suresh

Kodaikunil asking for a probe into the matter.

An accidental death report under Section 174 of the CrPC was registered by Nashik police. Police sources suspect that Naik committed suicide some days ago as the body was found in a decomposed state.

DCP Shrikant Divare said that they have recovered a diary (in Malayalam) which the department is translating to get a clearer picture of the cause of death. The police also said that they are also investigating if it was the video which led to the death of the Jawan.

The Army however, took a different

stand on the issue and issued a press release saying that the possible reason for the death of the Jawan could be his "guilt". The press release said that they the guilt factor of "letting down his superiors or conveying false impression" could have driven the Jawan to death.

Much distressed family of Mathew said that the Army should have probed the matter instead of just marking him absent. Finny, Mathew's wife is unemployed while his father earns his living through a small shop and his mother works in a private cashew factory.

Mexico launches nationwide effort in US to help migrants

Miami, Mar 4: Not only is the Mexican government not building a wall; it's spending USD 50 million to beef up its legal aid to migrants who fear deportation, a response to President Donald Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration.

All 50 Mexican consulates in the US yesterday launched legal assistance centers to form partnerships with nonprofit groups and tap lawyers to help those fearing Trump's policies. The diplomatic effort comes as the two countries are in a rift over Trump's plans for a border wall.

While Trump says Mexico will pay for it one way or another, Mexico says it won't. It was also unveiled less than two weeks after new guidelines came out aimed at aggressively detaining and deporting immigrants by increasing the number of federal agents and strengthening cooperation with local law enforcement.

Miami's Mexican consul general, Jose Antonio Zabalgotta, said Friday that these centers would become "authentic advocates of the rights of Mexican migrants."

"What changes today is that we are prioritizing legal matters over everything. Previously, we didn't have the need to seek so much legal support for our people," he said.

"But now, we need to protect them against an eventual deportation."

Mexican consulates are forming partnerships with law schools, immigration clinics and nonprofit groups that litigate on behalf of immigrants.

The centers are staffed with Mexican lawyers who can refer cases to organizations or clinics. They are also reaching out to private law firms interested in taking on pro-bono work.

Consulates from Mexico and other Central American nations have been juggling numerous inquiries in recent months from migrants concerned about their fate and that of their US-born children. Zabalgotta said the increase in requests for documents and help is "enormous," as he pointed to a waiting room with dozens of people carrying folders of documents in need of birth certificates, Mexican passports and other identifications.

Curfew relaxed for 12 hours in Lakhimpur

PTI Lakhimpur Kheri, March 4: Curfew was today relaxed for 12 hours in Lakhimpur city where tension had prevailed following clashes over an objectionable video.

"Curfew has been relaxed from 6 AM to 6 PM today. Banks and offices will be allowed to open. However, schools and colleges will remain closed," District Magistrate Akashdeep told reporters.

He said security will remain in place in sensitive areas.

There were reports from some areas of burning of makeshift shops by miscreants.

The authorities yesterday held a peace committee meeting and took out a peace march in which people from different communities participated in large numbers.

Shops and markets are open and normal movement was witnessed on roads.

However, heavy police security arrangements remain in place on roads. Mobile police vans have been deployed at all crossings and sensitive localities.

IG (Lucknow Zone) A Satish Ganesh and DIG Pravin Kumar are camping in the city.

District Magistrate Kheri said the situation would be reviewed later and appropriate decision would be taken.

Tension had prevailed in the city after the video, which allegedly hurt religious sentiments, went viral on social media.

It was allegedly circulated by two students who were arrested. The police later produced them before the court which remanded them to judicial custody.

Despite the prompt action by the police, the protests started on roads and markets were closed in panic. Curfew was imposed on the night of March 2 and was relaxed for three hours yesterday.

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