

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pope, in Iraq, urges all to shun violence

Pope Francis, beginning the first trip by a pontiff to Iraq, made an impassioned call yesterday for an end to the militant violence and religious strife that has plagued the country for decades, saying peacemakers should finally be given a chance. "May the clash of arms be silenced... may there be an end to acts of violence and extremism," he said, addressing Iraqi President Barham Salih, politicians and diplomats at the presidential palace. Francis arrived at Baghdad airport under tight security, after telling reporters on his plane that he felt duty-bound to make the "emblematic" trip because the country "has been martyred for so many years".

Study: AstraZeneca vaccine effective against Brazil variant

Preliminary data from a study conducted at the University of Oxford indicates that the Covid-19 vaccine developed by AstraZeneca PLC is effective against the P1, or Brazilian, variant, a source with knowledge of the study told Reuters yesterday. The data indicates that the vaccine will not need to be modified in order to protect against the variant, which is believed to have originated in the Amazonian city of Manaus, said the source. The source did not provide the exact efficacy of the vaccine against the variant. They said the full results of the study should be released soon, possibly in March. Early results indicated the AstraZeneca vaccine was less effective against the South African variant, which is similar to P1. South Africa subsequently paused the use of the vaccine in the country.

UN still waiting for proof Dubai's Sheikh Latifa alive

The UN yesterday said it was yet to see evidence from the United Arab Emirates that Dubai's Sheikh Latifa was still alive, a fortnight after seeking proof. The United Nations Human Rights Office had asked for evidence about the daughter of Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum after the BBC broadcast a video shot by Latifa saying she was being held captive and feared for her life. His 35-year-old daughter has not been seen in public since a foiled attempt to escape from the emirate in March 2018. The BBC said the clips it broadcast were filmed roughly a year after Latifa was captured and returned to Dubai.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

China moves to eliminate Hong Kong opposition

Grants itself veto powers over lawmakers' selection

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday moved to grant itself veto powers over selecting Hong Kong's lawmakers, part of a campaign to eliminate dissent and ensure a "patriotic" government in the city following huge democracy rallies in 2019.

Legislation to allow China's communist rulers to vet all election candidates in Hong Kong was tabled at the opening of the nation's rubber-stamp parliament in Beijing.

It came a day after dozens of democracy campaigners in the financial hub -- including former lawmakers -- were jailed under a security law that was passed during last year's parliamentary session.

The new legislation includes a "qualification vetting system" that will promote "orderly political participation", parliamentary spokesman Wang Chen told reporters.

China had committed to giving Hong Kong a degree of autonomy when it reverted from British colonial rule in 1997. But it began moving quickly to dismantle the financial hub's democratic pillars in response to huge and sometimes violent democracy rallies that paralysed the city throughout 2019.

The introduction of the vetting legislation -- expected to be approved next week -- was quickly interpreted as one of the final nails in the coffin of Hong Kong's democracy movement.

The European Union yesterday warned against the proposed reforms.

"The EU stands ready to take additional steps in response to any further serious deterioration of political freedoms and human rights in Hong Kong, which would be against China's domestic and international obligations," the EU said in a statement.

The Chinese congress session opened with an annual address by Premier Li Keqiang, who made

EU warns against reforms to Hong Kong's electoral system

Beijing vows to deter Taiwan's independence drive

China defence spending to rise 6.8 percent



PHOTO: REUTERS

A pro-democracy activist embraces his wife as he leaves a court on bail in Hong Kong, yesterday.

no mention of Hong Kong besides Communist Party boilerplate about the city continuing to enjoy a "high degree of autonomy."

However, Li said Beijing stands by the "one China" principle, which states that Taiwan is part of China.

"We will remain highly vigilant against and resolutely deter any separatist activity seeking Taiwan independence," Li added.

The annual week-long gathering of roughly 3,000 delegates, held in the cavernous Great Hall of the People in Beijing, is China's biggest political event of the year.

The highly choreographed display is held to drive home the unquestioned domestic power of the Communist Party while updating China and the world on its economic, political, environment and foreign policy priorities.

The event takes place with China outpacing other major economies after bringing the coronavirus pandemic, which first emerged on its soil, under control through draconian lockdowns and mass testing.

Li said the government was aiming for 2021 growth in the world's second-biggest economy of "above 6 percent".

China's finance ministry, meanwhile, revealed that the nation's military budget -- the world's second largest after the United States -- would increase 6.8 percent in 2021 to 1.36 trillion yuan (\$210 billion).

But China's official budget number is widely believed to be lower than true spending.

'National shame' for armed forces

Singapore FM slams Myanmar for using weapons against own people

REUTERS, Singapore

Singapore's foreign minister yesterday said it was a "national shame" for the armed forces of a country to use weapons against their own people as he called on Myanmar's military rulers to seek a peaceful solution to the unrest in the country.

"It is the height of national shame for the armed forces of any country to turn its arms against its own people," said Vivian Balakrishnan, repeating that Singapore was appalled by the violence against civilians in the country.

The United Nations has said at least 54 people have been killed since the Feb. 1 coup. More than 1,700 people had been arrested, including 29 journalists.

Balakrishnan and his counterparts in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) had held talks with a representative of the junta earlier this week.

Singapore along with a number of other Asean foreign ministers have called for the release of political detainees including civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Balakrishnan said on Friday the



foreign ministers were in daily contact with each another over Myanmar.

However, he said that while Asean should play a constructive role in facilitating a return to normalcy and stability, there would be a limited impact from any external pressure on the situation in Myanmar. "If you look over the past 70 years, the military authorities in Myanmar, frankly, do not respond to economic sanctions, do

not respond to moral opprobrium," the Singapore minister said.

He said that while references to the Asean charter and human rights declaration were essential, they were not sufficient to change the junta's behaviour.

"The keys ultimately lie within Myanmar. And there's a limit to how far external pressure will be brought to bear," Balakrishnan said.

MIGRANT TRAGEDY
20 killed after thrown into sea off Djibouti

AFP, Nairobi

At least 20 people drowned after smugglers threw dozens of migrants overboard during a crossing between Djibouti and Yemen, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said Thursday.

Survivors told the IOM that at least 200 migrants, including children, were packed aboard the vessel when it left Oulebi in Djibouti in the early hours of Wednesday for Yemen across the Gulf of Aden.

About thirty minutes into the voyage, the smugglers panicked about the number of people onboard and threw 80 into the sea before turning the vessel back toward land, said Yvonne Ndege, IOM regional spokesperson for the East and Horn of Africa.

There are fears the death toll could rise with survivors unable to locate family they say were aboard, Ndege said.

It is the third such incident in the Gulf of Aden in less than six months. The nationalities of those aboard the vessel are not yet known, the IOM said.

'Easiest' polls for TMC!

Says Mamata, releases Trinamool's list for state polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee yesterday termed the coming high-stakes assembly elections in the state as the "easiest" election her party has ever faced and announced she would contest from Nandigram constituency.

Trinamool Congress was thus off the block first by announcing the entire list of 291 candidates in one go ahead of political rivals Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress-Left alliance.

The elections in West Bengal would be held in eight phases over 33 days beginning on March 27. The results will be out on May 2.

Mamata, who is the chief minister for a decade since toppling the 34-year-old Left rule in Bengal, told a media conference in Kolkata that she would not contest this time from Bhowanipore constituency in south Kolkata, from where she was elected five years back.

Nandigram is the bastion of Suwendu Adhikari, one of the top Trinamool Congress leaders who quit the ruling party and joined BJP ahead of the election.

Mamata said her party would contest 291 out of West Bengal's total of 294 assembly seats. Three hill constituencies of Darjeeling, Kurseon and Kalimpong have been left for "friendly parties".

Trinamool Congress has fielded 50 women, 42 Muslim candidates, 79 Scheduled Caste candidates and 17 Scheduled Tribe candidates in the election. Announcing that no candidate above the

age of 80 would contest from Trinamool Congress, Mamata said 23-24 existing Trinamool Congress legislators have been dropped due to age and other reasons.

Announcing the list of candidates, Mamata said "this time we have stressed on more youths and women candidates."

Women constitute 49 per cent of West Bengal's electorate.

Exuding confidence of returning to power for the third consecutive time, Mamata termed it as the "easiest" election her party has ever faced.

Mamata dared Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah to deploy as much federal force as it wants and said Trinamool Congress would still emerge victorious.

BJP PICKS NAMES FOR ASSAM POLLS
Meanwhile, the BJP yesterday released a list of 70 candidates for two phases of the three-phase Assam election.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal will contest the assembly election from Majauli seat, while Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, widely known as a key BJP strategist for the north-east, will contest from Jalukbari, a seat that he currently holds.

Of the 126 seats in Assam's legislative assembly, 47 will go to the polls on March 27 in the first phase, voting on 39 will be held on April 1 in the second phase and 40 seats will go to the polls in the third and final phase on April 6.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Memo No. 45.02.0000.341.07.004.20-215

Invitation for e-Tender
Limited Tendering Method (LTM)

e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following packages:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of works	Document price (BDT)	Tender security (BDT)	Last selling date & time	Closing date & time
1.	553549	WP-9149/SDP-4(GOB)-HED	Repair, Maintenance and remodeling works of delivery room (i/c supply and installation of Air-cooler) of Building No-03 at Barishal General Hospital in Barishal District.	1000.00	29000.00	16/03/2021 17.00hrs	
2.	553550	WP-9150/SDP-4(GOB)-HED	Repair, Maintenance and remodeling works of Superintendent room (i/c supply and installation of Air-cooler) of Building No-01 at Barishal General Hospital in Barishal District.	1000.00	17000.00	16/03/2021 17.00hrs	18/03/2021 13.00hrs
3.	553553	WP-9153/SDP-4(GOB)-HED	Repair and Maintenance works of sanitary and electrical works of OPD building at Banaripara Upazila Health Complex in Barishal District.	1000.00	14000.00	16/03/2021 17.00hrs	
4.	553554	WP-9154/SDP-4(GOB)-HED	Repair and Maintenance works of sanitary and electrical works of OPD building at Bakergonj Upazila Health Complex in Barishal District.	1000.00	14000.00	16/03/2021 17.00hrs	
5.	553555	WP-9155/SDP-4(GOB)-HED	Repair and Maintenance works of sanitary and electrical work of OPD building at Mehendigonj Upazila Health Complex in Barishal District.	1000.00	17000.00	16/03/2021 17.00hrs	
6.	553556	WP-9156/SDP-4(GOB)-HED	Repair and Maintenance works of sanitary and electrical work of old hospital building at Ujirpur Upazila Health Complex in Barishal District.	1000.00	14000.00	16/03/2021 17.00hrs	
7.	553557	WP-9157/SDP-4(GOB)-HED	Repair and Maintenance works of Civil work (i/c replacement of Collapsible gate) of old hospital building (Ground Floor) at Ujirpur Upazila Health Complex in Barishal District.	1000.00	20000.00	16/03/2021 17.00hrs	
8.	553559	WP-9159/SDP-4(GOB)-HED	R.C Pad on Roof after Dismantling and Removal of Lime Concrete at Existing Hospital Building (Front Wings) in Borhanuddin UzHC under Bhola District.	1000.00	31000.00	16/03/2021 17.00hrs	
9.	553560	WP-9160/SDP-4(GOB)-HED	R.C Pad on Roof after Dismantling and Removal of Lime Concrete at OPD Building in Borhanuddin UzHC under Bhola District.	1000.00	20000.00	16/03/2021 17.00hrs	
10.	553561	WP-9161/SDP-4(GOB)-HED	Re-construction of Penthouse Slab of OPD Building at Borhanuddin Upazila under Bhola District.	1000.00	7500.00	16/03/2021 17.00hrs	

These are online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the abovementioned Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited on online through any registered bank's branches up to time specified in online notice. Supplementary information with guidelines are available in the National e-GP System and from the e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). The procuring entity reserves the right to accept any or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

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