



Maximum : 27°C  
Minimum : 09°C  
Humidity : 37%

SUNSET  
Today 06:15 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 06:25 AM

# OBSERVER

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## News Digest

### No Let Down In Cross-LoC Shelling

Jammu: India and Pakistan troops continued to trade fire along the Line of Control (LoC) on Wednesday in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district. Pakistani troops violated the ceasefire and resorted to heavy firing and mortar shelling in forward areas along the LoC in Poonch district on Wednesday, officials said. The Indian Army retaliated befittingly, they said. "At about 1845 hours today, Pakistani army initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars along the... P-02

### BSF Officer Shoots Self Dead

Jammu: A sub-inspector of the Border Security Force (BSF) on Wednesday allegedly shot himself with his service rifle in a camp here, police said. Sub-Inspector Chakerpani Prasad Tiwari (56), posted with 12th Battalion, shot himself in the head at Garoda border outpost in Gajansu area on the outskirts of Jammu, a police official said. Tiwari, a resident of Madhya Pradesh, was rushed to sub-district hospital in Marh where he was declared brought dead by doctors. According to police, it is a case of death by suicide. Police have started inquest... P-02

### 2 Soldiers Among 3 Killed In Road Accidents

Jammu: Two Army men and another person were killed in separate road accidents in Udhampur and Doda districts of Jammu and Kashmir, police said on Wednesday. The deceased soldiers have been identified as havaldar Suresh Kumar and Naik V M Pawar of Jammu and Kashmir Rifles, they said. They died after their vehicle plunged into a 50-feet gorge in Udhampur district on Tuesday, a police official said, adding the bodies were handed over to their unit after completion of legal formalities. In... P-02

### Ladakh Reports 43 New Covid-19 Cases

Leh: Forty-three people have tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Ladakh, taking the infection tally in the union territory to 4,195, while 43 more patients recovered from the disease, officials said on Wednesday. The union territory did not report any death due to COVID-19 for the third day, the officials added. The number of active COVID-19 cases in Ladakh stood at 1,030 -- 637 in Leh district and 393 in Kargil district, they said. Among the fresh cases, 39... P-02

### 5 Gamblers Arrested In City: Police

Srinagar: Police on Wednesday claimed to have arrested five gamblers in a raid in this capital city. Acting on an input, team from Police Station Sadder raided a gambling site at Bulbul Bagh Bund here and arrested five gamblers from the spot, a police spokesperson said. He said an amount of Rs 48,310 besides playing cards were seized from the gamblers. "They have been shifted to PS Sadder where they remain in custody," the police spokesperson said. He said a case FIR No. 236/2020 under relevant sections of... P-02

# Court Acquits All Accused In Babri Demolition Case

## Advani, Joshi Cleared Of Conspiracy Charge

Press Trust Of India

LUCKNOW: Twenty-eight years after the Babri Masjid was razed, a court here acquitted all 32 people including BJP veterans L K Advani, M M Joshi and Uma Bharti accused of being involved in the demolition of the mosque they believed occupied the spot where Lord Ram was born.

In a judgment that ran to 2,300 pages with enclosures, the special CBI court on Wednesday said there was no conclusive evidence against the 32 accused of being involved in any conspiracy to bring down the disputed structure in Ayodhya.

Delivering the verdict on the day of his retirement, special Judge S K Yadav did not accept newspaper reports and video cassettes as evidence.

The court also observed that the late Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Ashok Singhal wanted to save the structure because Ram idols were inside.

The 16th century mosque was demolished on December 6, 1992, triggering riots that left



### Babri Demolition Case Timeline

- 1528: Babri Masjid built by Mir Baqi, commander of Mughal emperor Babur.
- 1885: Mahant Raghuraj Das files plea in Faizabad district court seeking permission to build a canopy outside the disputed structure. Court rejects the plea.
- 1949: Idols of Ram Lalla placed under central dome outside the disputed structure.
- 1950: Gopal Simla Visharad files suit in Faizabad district court for right to worship the idols of Ram Lalla.
- Paramahansa Ramachandra Das files suit for continuation of worship and keeping the idols.
- 1959: Nirmohi Akhara files suit seeking possession of the site.
- 1961: UP Sunni... P-02

### 'No One Demolished Babri Masjid': Oppn Slams Verdict

The opposition parties on Wednesday expressed outrage over the judgment of a CBI court in Lucknow acquitting all the 32 accused in the Babri mosque demolition case and termed the ruling as "travesty of justice". Calling the judgement "obnoxious", AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi claimed it contradicted the Supreme... P-02

hundreds dead in the country and widening rifts between the communities.

Twenty-six of the accused were present in the Lucknow court when the judge read out the op-

erative portion of the verdict. Former deputy prime minister L K Advani, the then Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh, former Union ministers Murlu Manohar Joshi... P-02

## J&K Sees 18 More Coronavirus Deaths, Toll 1184

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: As many as eighteen more people succumbed to coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, raising the number of fatalities due to the deadly infection in the Union Territory to 1184.

While Jammu reported twelve more Covid-19 deaths, the infection consumed six more lives in Kashmir Valley, officials said.

Among others who died in Jammu include a 79-year-old man from Poonch, a 65-year-old man from

### 28 Soldiers Among 975 New Cases

Jammu and Kashmir reported on Wednesday 975 new cases of coronavirus, including forty-two travelers and 28 soldiers, taking the number of people infected by the virus in Union Territory to 75070. P-02

### Covid-19 Claimed Nearly 500 Lives In September

The month of September has proved to be the deadliest month in terms of Covid-19 in J&K Union Territory as the month alone saw 37,000 positive cases. P-02

Nagrota, a 24-year-old from UP, at present Rajeev Nagar Jammu, a 30-year-old man from Sawan Chak Kathua, a 60-year-old from Deha Basti and an 82-year-old Talab Til-

lo, a 45-year-old man from Rajouri besides a 60-year-old man from Kishtwar who succumbed at SKIMS Soura, 11 days after admitted to the tertiary care hospital. P-02

## Govt Identifies Sites In Srinagar For Housing Projects

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration has identified seven sites in this capital city for developing vertical housing projects to make affordable houses available to residents.

According to an official spokesperson, Principal Secretary Housing & Urban Development Department, Deeraj Gupta Wednesday visited various areas of Srinagar to inspect the sites identified for developing vertical housing projects the government has approved to make affordable houses available to residents.

Gupta was flanked by Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Shahid Iqbal

Choudhary, Vice Chairman Srinagar Development Authority, Bashir Ahmad Lone and Chief Town Planner Kashmir Fayaz Ahmad. Senior officers from the Revenue Department and from the CPWD and the NBCC were also present on the occasion of the PS's visit.

Gupta, the official spokesperson said visited the sites located at Rakh-e-Gund Aksha, Khushipora, Shalteng, Palpora, Zoonimar, Harwan and Eidgah - which are spread across three Tehsils of Srinagar - and held a thorough assessment of their suitability for developing the housing projects.

"The Principal Secretary visited some half a dozen sites... P-02

## JKPCL To Liquidate Liabilities Of 1,000 Crore

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Wednesday said it would liquidate the liabilities, including interests in the power sector, by raising over Rs 11,000 crore under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

The decision was taken at the meeting of Jammu and Kashmir Power Corporation Ltd board of directors (JKPCL).

An official spokesman said Power Development and Information Departments Principal Secretary Rohit Kansal, who is also the managing... P-02

## LADAKH FACE-OFF Deadlock Continues Despite Another Round Of Diplomatic Talks

NEW DELHI: India and China on Wednesday held a fresh round of diplomatic talks with a focus on implementing the five-point agreement reached between the two countries to resolve the nearly five-month-long border standoff in eastern Ladakh.

The virtual talks were held under the framework of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on border affairs.

The focus of the talks was to



Image for representation

de-escalate tensions, people familiar with the developments said, as the two sides discussed ways to implement the five-point agreement reached... P-02

## NHPC Shuts 120 MW Plant In J&K Till March 2021

NEW DELHI: State-run hydro power giant NHPC on Wednesday said its 120 MW Sewa-II power station in Jammu and Kashmir has been shut till March 31, 2021 due to some damage in its head race tunnel (HRT).

The HRT carries water from intake to a power house for electricity generation.

"It is to inform that Sewa-II Power Station (120 MW) in UT of Jammu & Kashmir has been under complete shutdown w.e.f. 25.09.2020 to 31.03.2021 for damage of HRT," the company said in a BSE filing.

The shutdown will cause tentative loss of 157.4 MU (million units) in generation (design... P-02

## 315 J&K Students Cross Over To Pak To Resume Studies

SRINAGAR: The government of India allowed 315 students from Jammu and Kashmir enrolled at different colleges across Pakistan to cross over via Attari Wagah border in Amritsar on Wednesday.

In an official communication, the Government of India on request of Pakistan has allowed 315 students to cross over to Pakistan to resume studies.

The government of Pakistan had earlier communicated with the government of India to allow the travel of 315 Kashmiri... P-02

# In FOCUS Amid 6Th Schedule Row, Kashmiri Politician Lobbies For Leh In Kargil

Auqib Javed

As troops and tanks stare at a long winter haul in the strategically-significant hinterland of Ladakh, the heartland recently erupted with an "identity" protest.

Throwing their weight behind the 6th Schedule that guarantees land and job protection to natives, the Leh leaders decided to boycott the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) elections to press for their demands.

It took a curt call from the Ministry of Home Affairs to summon the dissidents—including members

of the BJP—to New Delhi for some quick damage control. The leaders returned "contented" and withdrew the protests.

But, many in Kargil argue, Leh can't decide the fate of whole of Ladakh housing nearly 60 percent of Muslim population—who, they say, weren't taken on board.

Unlike Leh, Kargil recently reiterated that the region's fight is beyond 6th Schedule, as they're yet to accept post-abrogation 'reality' of the region.

However, to tame the tempers in the Muslim-majority region, the BJP, it's said, recently deputed an emissary. Enter Imran Ansari

On September 25, Kashmiri Shia leader, Imran Raza Ansari reached out to the people of Kargil.

Ansari's visit, interestingly, came when various political and religious leaders from the Shia Muslim majority region had upped the ante against the government and refused to align with Leh leadership on the grant of 6th schedule and other demands. Leadership cutting across party lines in Kargil have refused to accept the post August 5 position and insist on staying as part of Kashmir.

"Imran Ansari came here and tried to know our views regarding the ongoing issue," Sheikh Nazir Mehdi, head of religious seminary,



Jamiat Ulema-e-Isna Asharia Kargil, told Kashmir Observer over phone. "We told him, categorically, that

Mehdi said people of Kargil have not accepted the Union Territory (UT) status yet, and there are no questions of demanding the 6th Schedule.

"We're neither in its favour, nor in its opposition," he said.

Aga Syed Ahmad, councillor from Sankoo Constituency of Kargil, said they informed Imran Ansari that the UT status has been forcibly imposed on the people of Kargil and that they want to be part of Kashmir.

"We made it clear to Imran saheb that neither 6th Schedule nor UT status is acceptable to us," Ahmad told Kashmir Observer.

According to Ahmad, Ansari told them "it's the golden chance for Kargil

to make the district more prosperous," but we told him: "Hum Aabad Tabi Hongay Jab Hum Kashmir Se Milein Gay (Kargil will be prosperous once merged back with Kashmir)."

These leaders, however, said they don't know on whose behalf Imran Ansari was in Kargil but confirmed that he did meet different religious and political leaders in the region.

"May be he [Ansari] wanted to take credit for resolving a long pending issue in the region," said Asgar Karbala senior Kargil leader and former minister.

That pending issue is to bring the two influential religious institutions of Kargil—Imam Khomeini... P-02

# From Front page...

## Court Acquits All Accused...

Advani and others of conspiracy.

- **May 2001:** Special CBI court drops proceedings against LK Advani, MM Joshi, Uma Bharti, Bal Thackeray and others.
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- **February 2011:** CBI moves Supreme Court against high court order in the mosque demolition case.
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- **April 2017:** Supreme Court favours time-bound completion of trial in the case and reserves order on CBI's plea.
- Supreme Court restores criminal conspiracy charge against leaders including Advani, Joshi and Uma Bharti and clubs the trials in the matters pending against VIPs and kar sevaks.

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- **August 2020:** PM Narendra Modi conducts bhoomi puja in Ayodhya, launches construction of Ram temple.
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As he pronounced them not guilty, some of the accused chanted "Jai Shri Ram" in the court. As did Advani, a key figure in the Ram temple movement, at his home.

"It is a very important decision and a matter of happiness for us. When we heard the news of the court's order, we welcomed it by chanting Jai Shri Ram," he said in a video message.

The verdict comes less than a year after the Supreme Court's historic judgment in the related Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute that paved the way for the construction of a temple at the Ayodhya site.

The apex court verdict had called the demolition an egregious violation of the rule of law.

But combined with the bhoomi puja for the Ram temple only last month, the verdict in the demolition case has come as a boost to the Bharatiya Janata Party. It also helps bring the temple issue centre stage just weeks before the party faces assembly polls in Bihar.

Iqbal Ansari, a prominent litigant in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit, welcomed the verdict.

"It is good that all have been acquitted. Whatever had to happen, happened on November 9 last year. This case should also have ended the same day, he said, referring to the Supreme Court judgment.

Zafaryab Jilani, senior lawyer and member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), said the verdict will be challenged in the high court.

In Lucknow, CBI counsel Lalit Singh said the agency will decide on filing an appeal against the special court verdict after consulting its legal department.

The verdict was delivered on the last day of the final deadline set by the Supreme Court, which had also extended the judge's retirement age.

The CBI produced 351 witnesses and 600 documents as evidence. Charges were framed against 48 people, but 16 have died during the course of the trial.

The Babri demolition trial goes back to the filing of two FIRs in Ayodhya one against unknown kar sevaks and the other naming the key saffron leaders who were present near the site, accusing them of making communal speeches.

The cases were later clubbed together.

At one stage, the criminal conspiracy charge was dropped against the key figures but the Supreme Court restored it in 2017. The apex court also ordered daily hearings in the demolition case.

The conspiracy charge was in addition to charges like promoting enmity on grounds of religion.

The CBI had argued that the accused conspired and instigated 'kar sevaks' to demolish the mosque.

The accused pleaded innocence, maintaining that there was no evidence to prove their guilt and they were victims of political vendetta by the then Congress government at the Centre.

## 'No One Demolished Babri...

Court's observations in its verdict on November 9 last year that the demolition of the Babri mosque was calculated act of destroying a public place of worship and a violation of rule of law.

...In the Supreme Court says that egregious violation of rule of law, was masjid sacrificed on December 6 (1992) by any magic ? Were the idols kept by magic in 1949? Were the locks opened when Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister by magic? That's why I say that today's judgement came in contradiction to what the Supreme Court said, he told reporters here.

Questioning how there was no conspiracy behind the pulling down of the structure; he asked who had called for the huge gathering of people and who facilitated it.

Isn't it true that the CBI charge-sheet said that then Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh said rok construction par hai, destruction par nahi hai' (curbs are on construction, not destruction), Owaisi said. Maintaining that all these were facts, he sought to know how all the accused have been exonerated.

As a "proud Indian Muslim", he had felt helpless and humiliated when the Babri mosque was demolished in 1992 and he felt the same today, Owaisi said, alleging justice had been denied on the matter since 1950.

Termining the CBI court's ruling as "obnoxious," Owaisi said the CBI must appeal against the judgement to protect its independence.

He would also urge the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIM-PLB) to challenge the 'strange' judgement which rewarded those who created the issue of Ram mandir.

"This judgement satisfies the collective consciousness of Hindutva and its followers and ideology, the AIMIM leader said.

Congress leader Ahmed Patel said, "The Babri verdict is shocking, it goes contrary to principles of natural justice and even the SC's observation."

Senior IUML Lok Sabha member P.K. Kunhalikutty told the media: "One wonders if justice has been delivered in this case."

"Even the apex court of the country had earlier said that it was an unlawful act what happened then."

Left parties too slammed the ruling terming it as "travesty of justice" that will "blemish the image of India as a secular-democratic country governed by the Constitution"

"The acquittals amount to a travesty of justice. It took 28 long years for this verdict but not justice to be delivered. All the top leaders of the BJP-VHP-RSS who were present at the scene guiding the criminal act have been found to be innocent of the charge of conspiracy to demolish the mosque," the CPI(M) politburo said in a statement.

"The Supreme Court, in its Ayodhya judgment on November 9 last year, had called the demolition an egregious violation of the law. Now, the Lucknow court has found the main perpetrators of this crime not guilty," it said.

The Left party said the verdict will "blemish the image of India as a secular-democratic country governed by the Constitution".

"The CBI must immediately appeal against this judgment," it added.

CPI general secretary D Raja in a separate statement said his party was shocked and dismayed by the verdict.

The Party feels that the verdict which is a travesty of justice is an assault on the functioning of an independent institution as the Supreme Court has earlier in a verdict termed the demolition as an illegal and criminal act.

It is a well-known fact that on intense campaign along with Ratha Yatra was carried out by RSS-BJP leaders for mobilising people against the Babri Masjid which finally resulted in its demolition, he said.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot also termed the decision of the special CBI court to acquit all the accused in the Babri Masjid demolition case as "surprising".

In his tweet, Gehlot said, "The decision of the Special Court to acquit all the accused in the Babri Masjid demolition case is surprising as an earlier Supreme Court verdict held that the demolition was a clear illegality and egregious violation of the rule of law."

"The Special Court now delivers a verdict which runs counter to the top court's decision & also goes against the principles enshrined in the constitution. The nation knows how the whole episode was an attempt by BJP-RSS to destroy communal harmony in the country," he said and tagged #BabriMasjidDemolitionCase in his tweet.

## Babri Demolition Case Timeline

Central Waqf Board files suit for possession of the site.

- **February 1986:** Local court orders the government to open the site to Hindu worshippers.
- **August 1989:** Allahabad HC orders status quo in respect of the disputed structure.
- **December 6, 1992:** Babri Masjid demolished.
- **December 1992:** Two FIRs filed in the case. One against unknown kar sevaks for demolition of the mosque. The other names BJP leaders LK Advani, MM Joshi and others for allegedly giving communal speeches before the demolition.
- **October 1993:** CBI files composite charge sheet accusing LK

Advani and others of conspiracy.

- **May 2001:** Special CBI court drops proceedings against LK Advani, MM Joshi, Uma Bharti, Bal Thackeray and others.
- **November 2004:** CBI challenges before the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court the dropping of proceedings against BJP leaders on technical grounds. Court issues notices.
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## Bodies Of 3 Youth To Be...

they had got a room at Ashimpura in Shopian.

Three boys, Mohammad Imtiyaz and Ibrar Ahmed, both residents of Kathuni mohalla of Dharsakri village of Rajouri, and Mohammad Ibrar, a resident of Tarkassi village of Rajouri, left their homes to work as labourers in Kashmir's Shopian and went out of contact with their families after July 17 late evening.

A day later, the Army claimed three militants were killed in Amshipura village in the higher reaches of south Kashmir's Shopian. It initiated an inquiry after social media reports indicated that the three men were from Rajouri and had gone missing in Amshipura. The Army completed a probe on September 18 and said it has found "prima facie" evidence that its troops "exceeded" powers under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act during the encounter and has initiated disciplinary proceedings.

The police also launched its investigations and collected the DNA samples of the families to match with those killed.

Last week, the police said the samples have matched with the families from Rajouri and further investigation in the case was going on.

## Barring Two Districts, 4G Ban...

Shaleen Kabra, Principal Secretary Home Department said in an order. "During the last fortnight, there have been a number of (militant) incidents and recovery of huge cache of arms/ammunition, and, apprehending disruption to public order, with the larger aim of causing disaffection and discontent against the State, the mobile data services had to be completely suspended, though for limited durations, in some areas of the Kashmir Valley."

He said that keeping in view, the situation requires close monitoring including in the districts of Ganderbal and Udhampur. Considering the position and reports of the law enforcement agencies, inter-alia bringing out the necessity of speed related restrictions on mobile data services to prevent its misuse, the Pricipal secretary ordered that directions issued on September 08 shall continue to remain in force till October 21 October unless modified.

The ISGP, Kashmir and Jammu have called to ensure "communication of these directions to the service providers forthwith and their implementation in letter and spirit," the order added. (GNS)

## J&K Sees 18 More Coronavirus...

"He was diagnosed with bilateral Community Acquired Pneumonia, and died due to cardiopulmonary arrest," a doctor at SKIMS said. Among the six deaths from the valley included a 60-year-old man from Gulab Bagh, who died six days after admission to SKIMS Soura, a 57-year-old man from Hajin Bandipora, a 64-year-old woman from Ahmed Nagar and a 65-year-old from Rainawari here.

With these deaths, officials said, 1183 people have succumbed to the virus in Jammu and Kashmir so far—841 from the Valley and 342 from Jammu division.

Srinagar district with 292 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (184), Baramulla (124), Budgam (82), Pulwama (69), Kupwara (67), Anantnag (65), Kulgam (43), Bandipora(37), Shopian (32), Rajouri (32), Ganderbal (28), Doda (27), Kathua (21), Samba (20), Udhampur (18), Poonch (12), Ramban (10), Kishtwar(7) and Reasi (5). (With GNS inputs)

## 28 Soldiers Among 975...

In Jammu division, 568 fresh cases of Covid-19 were reported on Wednesday, while the remaining 407 were confirmed by the officials in the Kashmir valley.

Giving district-wise details, officials said, Srinagar reported 173, Budgam 48, Baramulla 53, Pulwama 33, Anantnag 16, Bandipora 15, Kupwara 38, Ganderbal 23, Kulgam 6, Shopian 2, Jammu 353, Rajouri 27, Udhampur 41, Kathua 12, Doda 18, Samba 24, Poonch 27, Ramban 12, Reasi 19 and Kishtwar 35.

A number of these cases were confirmed at diagnostic laboratory of CD hospital including 28 from army's BB Cantt Srinagar, three minors and two from police department.

Moreover, they said, 1355 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals 790 from Jammu Division and 565 from Kashmir Valley.

## Covid-19 Claimed Nearly 500...

and around 500 deaths.

As per the data available, among 37,373 positive cases reported in J&K, 16,882 are from Kashmir division while as 20,490 are from Jammu division.

Moreover, the data reveals that 478 deaths were reported in September month alone which includes 202 from Kashmir division and 276 from Jammu division.

Notably, September is the first month since Covid-19 pandemic outbreak Jammu division has reported more positive cases and deaths than Kashmir division.

Pertinently, as per the data, 17,339 positive cases and 326 deaths were reported in J&K in the month of August.

As per the official data available, in the first 115 days (from March 08-June 30) 101 Covid-19 related deaths were witnessed in Jammu and Kashmir including 89 from Kashmir division and 12 from Jammu division.

While from 1st July to 31st of July 276 deaths related to Covid-19 were witnessed in J&K which is around 73.20 percent of the total deaths and till 31st July 20,359 positive cases including 15,915 from Kashmir division and 4,444 from Jammu division were reported.

Notably, the first case of the COVID-19 pandemic in India was reported on 30 January 2020, originating from China.

Slowly, the pandemic spread to various states and union territories including the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

02 suspected cases with high virus load were detected and isolated on 4 March in Government Medical College, Jammu. One of them became the first confirmed positive case on 9 March 2020. Both individuals had a travel history. (KNO)

## Deadlock Continues Despite...

between their foreign ministers in Moscow on September 10.

In Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing that China and India are holding the 19th meeting of the WMCC on China-India Border Affairs.

The main topics discussed are how to implement the five-point con-

sensus reached in Moscow by the two foreign ministers to resolve outstanding issues on the ground and to ease the situation along the border, he said.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi had held a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation(SCO) meet in the backdrop of a deteriorating situation in eastern Ladakh triggered by a fresh confrontation between the armies of the two countries.

At the meeting, the two sides reached a five-point agreement that included measures like quick disengagement of troops, avoiding action that could escalate tensions, adherence to all agreements and protocols on border management and steps to restore peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The Wednesday talks took place amid a war of words between the two sides on perception of the LAC, the de-facto Sino-India border spanning a length of nearly 3,500 km.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson recently insisted that China abides by the LAC as proposed by then Premier Zhou Enlai to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter dated November 7, 1959.

In a sharp reaction, India on Tuesday categorically rejected China's "so-called unilaterally defined" LAC of 1959, and asked the neighbouring country to refrain from advancing an "untenable" interpretation of the de-facto border.

The Indian government also reminded China that its insistence there is only "one LAC" is contrary to the solemn commitments made by Beijing in previous bilateral agreements, and expected it will "sincerely" abide by them in their entirety.

On the basis of the understanding reached between Jaishankar and Wang, the two sides held a nearly 14-hour-long Corps commander-level talks on September 21 following which they announced a slew of decisions to de-escalate the situation.

The decisions included to stop sending more troops to the frontline, refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground and avoid taking any actions that may further complicate matters.

It was for the first time that the two armies announced specific measures to ease tensions in eastern Ladakh where the face-off began in early May.

## NHPC Shuts 120 MW Plant...

energy) and 35.61 per cent in NAPAF (Normative Annual Plant Availability Factor), it added.

The Sewa-II power station (3 X 40 MW) is a run-of-the-river project with a small pondage to harness the hydro power potential of river Sewa.

It is located in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir.

The surface power house with installed capacity of 120 MW houses three units of 40 MW capacity each designed to generate 533.53 million units in a 90 per cent dependable year with 95 per cent machine availability.

All the three generating units of the power station were commissioned in June and July, 2010.

The beneficiary states/UTs of this power station are Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Haryana, J&K, Punjab, Rajasthan and Chandigarh.

## 315 J&K Students Cross Over ...

students to Pakistan on 30th September having Indian passports.

Pakistan had requested that the students be allowed to cross over to Pakistan via Wagah border-Attari on 30th September.

In reply, the Government of India allowed the travel of 315 Kashmiri students to Pakistan on 30th September.

It said, "It is requested that the above mentioned 315 Indian nationalists may be allowed to enter into Pakistan (Subject 5o valid passport) through Wagah border on 30th September, 2020 following necessary health security protocol/screening."

Pertinently, a huge number of students from different parts of Kashmir are enrolled at various Medical Colleges in Pakistan.

It may be recalled that the government of India earlier during the COVID lockdown period made special arrangements for the Kashmiri students for their safe arrival.

## Ensure No Violation, HC...

on October 15, The directions followed submissions by Senior Counsel and Amicus Curiae R. A. Jan that the authorities was not complying with the orders passed by the Court to disclose the action taken by them regarding the illegal structures constructed.

"The SMC shall ensure that there is no illegal conversion of residential properties into commercial properties and take steps for complete compliance of Master Plan provisions," the court said, adding, "All Government authorities shall stand interdicted from issuance of any licences or permissions to properties which are being illegally used for commercial purposes in contravention of Master Plan or the sanctioned building plan."

It also directed that the copy of the order be sent to Secretary Law for circulation to JMC, SMC and all other concerned departments and licensing authorities who shall ensure compliances.

The PIL was filed by advocate Mubeen Andrabi in 2013, seeking among other directions to clear Srinagar city of illegal constructions.

After high court directions calling for razing the illegal structures, the then government passed a legislation, providing moratorium on sealing of illegal constructions till December 2015. Later then PDP-BJP government also followed the suit. Later some policy was decision purportedly taken. (GNS)

## JKPCL To Liquidate Liabilities...

director of JKPCL, on Wednesday chaired the 4th board meeting of the Corporation at Civil Secretariat here.

The board held a detailed discussion on infusing the liquidity into power distribution companies (discoms) besides other impediments faced by the Corporation for effective service delivery to the public, the spokesman said.

He said the board also discussed in detail the plan for utilising the component of funds received under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, besides road map for implementing various features enumerated for the power sector in this self-reliant India campaign.

The board decided to raise over Rs 11,000 crore for liquidating the power liabilities accrued till June 2020 under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, he said.

This measure is going to relieve the department of the liabilities and interest accruing from it and infuse new lease of life into its subsidiary companies constituted after disbanding of the power department, he said.

The spokesman said the board also approved for engagement of a company secretary for managing activities and other financial affairs of the Corporation for a period of six months initially for managing the affairs of the Corporation professionally.

The board also approved the appointment of new members into the board as directors.

In another move, the spokesman said, the department also requested the central government for enhancing the allocation of power supply for winter months, as the region faces a deficit of 1,200-1,400 megawatts (MWs) during that period.

The department asked for an additional 1,500 MWs for meeting the demand of extra power supply from thermal and gas power plants, he said.

The department has enhanced its handling capacity to a greater extent, as a network of grid stations has been inaugurated during the current year, the spokesman said.

## Govt Identifies Sites In Srinagar...

holding a thorough assessment of their suitability for developing vertical housing projects in Srinagar which are aimed at addressing the housing concerns of residents of the district," the official spokesperson said.

He said that speaking on the occasion, Gupta said the government understands the concerns and issues surrounding housing in the capital district of Srinagar and is keen on resolving these at the earliest.

"He said the vertical housing projects approved for development at these different places is a step in that direction," the official spokesperson said.

He said that the DC Srinagar while giving the details said the project envisions housing for all and is aimed at enabling all residents of Srinagar to have their own homes and acquire them at affordable prices. "Giving further details he said each vertical housing building will

have and offer different kinds of housing options ranging from one to two to three BHK flats and apartments," he added.

The official spokesperson further said that the housing project is being expedited on the instructions of the Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha who issued specific directions in this regard during his review of the developmental scenario of Srinagar district held last month.

"The Principal Secretary's visit today was aimed at finalising the sites identified jointly by the Srinagar district administration and the Srinagar Development Authority," the official spokesperson said.

"On the occasion of the visit Gupta directed the district administration to identify more locations for development of more housing projects so that the housing concerns and demands of locals can be redressed and answered as much as possible," he added.

## Amid 6Th Schedule Row,...

Memorial trust (IKMT) and Islamia School Kargil (ISK)—on the same page.

"By playing his part," Karbalai said, "Ansari may want to project himself as the leader of Ladakhi, apart from Kashmiri Shias."

"Had Gone to Attend Friend's Wedding"

However, Ansari said that he was in Kargil in his "personal capacity."

"I was there to attend my friend's wedding," Imran Ansari told Kashmir Observer. "Many people came and met me but we didn't discuss anything related to politics."

The former PDP minister said that during his recent Kargil visit, he also met his friends who studied with him in Iran.

"I didn't discuss anything related to ongoing issues in Kargil," he said.

Kargil's Shelved Concerns

However, between the row over the 6th Schedule and Imran's sudden arrival in the region, Sheikh Mohammad Sadiq Rajai, head of Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust, said the voice of Kargil is not being heard.

"Since last year, we've witnessed that the UT status was not beneficial for the people of Kargil and we don't expect that something good will happen," Rajai said.

Notably, ever since the revocation of the special status on August 5 last year and subsequent bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two union territories—Jammu Kashmir, and Ladakh—Kargil has shown a strong resentment against the split from Kashmir.

"Since the UT status was granted to Ladakh, Kargil has passed through an unending period of indifference," Sheikh Nazir Mehdi continued. Lieutenant Governor sits in Leh, with all its administrative men and machinery, he said.

"We're being ignored because of our Muslim identity," Mehdi, the head of the influential institution of Kargil, alleged.

A Hoodwink

Asgar Ali Karbalai said that the group of Leh leaders that recently met Amit Shah returned empty handed.

"New Delhi is not going to give Ladakh anything," Karbalai told Kashmir Observer. "It's just a hoodwink."

Whatever was with them before 5 August had been snatched and nothing was provided instead, he said.

"We had financial powers, land allotment powers, administrative powers, divisional office, and many other things that were snatched," he said.

"Even if the 6th Schedule is granted, the final powers will remain with the LG, who can do anything."

**No Let Down In Cross-LoC ...**

Line of Control (LoC) in Mankote sector," a defence spokesman said. Pakistan has been targeting Mankote sector and its hamlets for the past three days, resulting in injuries to several animals on Tuesday. The Pakistani army violated the ceasefire 46 times this month. A soldier was killed and two others, including an officer, were injured on September 5 in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri district. On September 2, a JCO was killed in Keri sector of Rajouri.

**BSF Officer Shoots Self Dead**

proceedings into the incident, the official said, adding that the motive behind his taking such an extreme step was not known immediately.

## 2 Soldiers Among 3 Killed...

another accident, a car rolled down into a deep gorge in Gandoh area of Doda district resulting in the death of a 50-year-old person on Wednesday.

Pawan Kumar (34) and his wife Pooja Devi (30) were injured in the incident and shifted to hospital, police added.

## Ladakh Reports 43 New...

were in Leh and four in Kargil, the officials said.

Among the recoveries, 23 patients were in Leh and 20 in Kargil. The total number of recoveries reached 3,107, which is 74 per cent of the confirmed cases.

Ladakh has recorded 58 deaths since the outbreak of the pandemic in March. While 34 patients died in Kargil, the rest 24 succumbed to the infection in Leh district.



KASHMIR  
OBSERVER

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K O V I E W

Quake alert

**D**uring the past week, J&K and Ladakh have witnessed earthquakes that have left people bewildered. The tremors have only been felt in specific areas. First it was a big tremor felt in Srinagar, then there was a quake in Gulmarg followed by one in Ladakh. The one in Srinagar left people shaken. The tremor was more like a bang that momentarily shook the houses. Many people have wondered if it was even the quake. Be that as it may, Srinagar quake was followed by two more localized tremors that only heightened the suspicions. But it is also true that the quakes have been authenticated by the international agencies.

This means J&K witnessed three successive quakes in a span of one week. And this should be a cause of deep concern for us. It is a well-known fact that J&K lies in seismic zone. In a written reply in 2017, the then Minister for Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, Syed Basharat Ahmed Bukhari told the then J&K Assembly that almost all districts of Kashmir valley and erstwhile Doda district fall in Seismic Zone-V and the rest of the districts fall in Seismic Zone-IV. So, there is always an apprehension of threat to life and property.

In 2005 a big temblor that was 7.6 on Richter scale led to the loss of around 80,000 lives. Pakistan Administered Kashmir was worst affected with a predominant number of the people killed hailing from there. On this side of the state, the quake caused devastation along the villages bordering Line of Control, particularly Uri and parts of Kupwara district leaving around 1300 people dead. If anything, the recent quakes should warn us as to a possible repetition of this natural disaster in the region.

Already, a study by a prominent US seismologist Roger Bilham has warned that Kashmir Valley is likely to be hit by an earthquake of largest ever magnitude. But the study has not specified any particular time-frame. In what can be an apocalyptic scenario, Bilham said the quake could trigger landslides that would dam the river Jhelum. He also urged India and Pakistan to develop a cooperative plan to deal with the aftermath of a mega-quake in the union territory. But ever since the 2005 earthquake which initially alerted the government and the people to build stronger, reasonably quake resistant structures, the complacency seems to have again set in. The recent quakes have thus come as an important reminder to us to become more mindful of our vulnerability to the natural disasters – flood being the other – and take pro-active measures to lessen the damage should, God forbid, we experience another disaster. It is incumbent on the government not only to get its act together but also create a public awareness to help people to better prepare for a possible future calamity.

OTHER OPINION

India must keep its guard up

**C**hina has resurrected its untenable 1959 Line of Actual Control (LAC) claim even as the two armies dig in for the winter. In invoking the 1959 LAC proposed by the then Chinese premier, Zhou Enlai, Beijing is putting up a straw man. The original proposal was rejected by Jawaharlal Nehru and with reason: LAC then was just a number of scattered points which could be connected in many different ways. Invoking this gives China maximum flexibility in terms of its territorial claims. What it shows is that Beijing will negotiate with tenacity, pushing the envelope as far as it can. Delhi must recognise this does not rule out the use of further military actions.

The Chinese claim came after two meetings, one between Indian and Chinese foreign ministers and another between the armies' senior commanders. After each, the two sides issued joint statements committing themselves to disengagement. A sensible interpretation of the happenings would be to recognise them as a sign that Beijing and Delhi are moving into negotiation mode. Given that previous border standoffs have taken months, if not years, to come to a final agreement, the real sentiment these developments should arouse is one of patience.

This is not to say there has not been progress. The foreign ministers' meeting laid down five principles to go forward. The two militaries have agreed not to deploy any more forces. The two governments remain committed to disengagement. A new equilibrium is likely to emerge. LAC is likely to be different from what existed before the Galwan Valley and its latest avatar will have the threat of violence, deep distrust and harsh language as its backdrop.

Hindustan Times

Will Architects of Gupkar Declaration Walk the Talk?

GOWHAR GEELANI



**‘In the eyes of the common people, the unionist camp is essentially responsible for Kashmir’s many ills. They are seen by many as “collaborators” and “enablers” of the Kashmir policy as far as the current dispensation in Delhi is concerned.**

**M**any in the Kashmir Valley, Kargil, Pir Panjal, and the valley of Chenab are deliberating upon the pros and cons of the Gupkar Declaration (GD) 2.0.

To make any impact on Kashmir’s slippery political landscape, the political document agreed upon between the various ideological shades in the restive region’s unionist camp has to move beyond the act of issuing the craftily-worded statements alone.

It is still unclear what plan B is. As far as the unionist camp is concerned, there is no clarity on the path ahead. There is also ambiguity how the six parties that forged a partnership of sorts, which some of them refer to as “Mahagathbandan”, will fight for the collective political and human rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir in the absence of a robust roadmap and a visible structure to their political resilience.

That said, some political scientists and Kashmir watchers are of the view that keeping in view the deafening silence since August 5 last year and silencing of the politicians, people and the pulpit, the mere coming together of six political outfits is a small progress. They feel that at least the politicians have started talking politics. They have moved beyond the act of talking at each other and have chosen to talk to each other. Their declaration is indeed a baby step, but a progress nevertheless.

The important component of the much talked about Gupkar Declaration signed by six political parties from the unionist camp is their ‘pledge’ that their political activities will remain “subservient to the sacred goal of reverting to the status of J&K (Jammu and Kashmir) as it existed on 4th August, 2019.” Another significant phrase in the joint-resolution is: “nothing about us without us”.

“We want to assure the people that all our political activities will be subservient to the sacred goal of reverting to the status of J&K as it existed on 4th August 2019,” the GD 2.0 said.

There are two ways of looking at the GD.

One, that the position taken by the six parties is a huge climb-down from their earlier Kashmir stances. For instance, the region’s oldest political formation, National Conference (NC), strives for regional autonomy within the ambit of Indian Constitution and seeks to reverse the clock backwards to pre-1953 status. The People’s Democratic Party (PDP) demands Self-Rule and joint mechanism in both parts of Kashmir divided between India and Pakistan by a Line of Control (LoC) since the last seven decades.

Two, what is the mandate of the unionist camp and how far they can go while believing in electoral politics? Can they cross a red line drawn for them in New Delhi?

In a hotly contested territory the contents of the Gupkar Declaration can be hailed or severely criticized, depending upon which sides of the ideological fence one belongs to. In the eyes of the common people, the unionist camp is essentially responsible for Kashmir’s many ills. They are seen by many as “collaborators” and “enablers” of the Kashmir policy as far as the current dispensation in Delhi is concerned.

Therefore, the peoples’ anger is directed at both the National Conference (NC) and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). The latter is accused of entering into an “unholy alliance” with the saffron party and of committing a “political suicide” twice within a period of less than two years; first in early 2015 and then again in early 2016 after the demise of former Chief Minister and PDP patron, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

Besides the perceived assaults on the very identity, dignity and existence of the people of Kashmir, there are deep anxieties in the region with regards to the demographic character as well. People

ist) on August 22 joined hands together in Srinagar to unanimously reject the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)’s “unilateral and unconstitutional” decision that resulted in abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A of Indian Constitution and downgrading of the restive region into two federally-administered territories.

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) took a surprising decision to revoke J&K’s autonomy and statehood on August 5 last year.

Top leaders of NC, PDP, J&K People’s Conference (PC), J&K Awami National Conference (ANC), JK-PCC and CPI (M) unanimously described the events of August 5, 2019 as “unfortunate” and said these, “have unrecognizably changed the relationship between Jammu & Kashmir and New Delhi.”

Invoking the Gupkar Declaration 1.0 of August 4, 2019, the signatories reiterated that “we are bound, wholly, by the contents of the GUPKAR DECLARATION and will unwaveringly adhere to it. We are committed to strive for the restoration of Articles 370 and 35A, the Constitution of J&K and the

**‘When the architect of the assault identifies you by your “clothes” and “faith”, you can’t act as a flightless bird, an Ostrich, bury your head in sand, and claim that the assault is ‘secular’ in nature.**

also fear that apart from altering the demographic character of J&K there is an attempt being made to shift the political centre from the Kashmir Valley to Jammu.

In such a grim scenario, the unionist camp has to move beyond rhetoric and politics designed to reap electoral benefits. It has to cross the red line and start talking about issues which need to be spoken about without political correctness and ambiguity of any sort. The assault is on Kashmir and therefore the political assertion should reflect Kashmir and safeguard Kashmir’s interests.

When the architect of the assault identifies you by your “clothes” and “faith”, you can’t act as a flightless bird, an Ostrich, bury your head in sand, and claim that the assault is ‘secular’ in nature. Expecting different results by following the same old technique would be stupidity of the highest order. Assertion of Kashmiri Muslim identity is not being radical. It is being pragmatic.

For their own relevance, all the unionist parties have to rise above their petty electoral interest and stand united in their resolve to protect and defend the identity and existence of the people against all attacks and onslaughts.

It is true that, in a first, the four unionist parties in Jammu and Kashmir along with Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) and Communist Party of India (Marx-

restoration of the State and any division of the State is unacceptable to us. We unanimously reiterate that there can be nothing about us without us.”

The joint statement was signed by the two former Chief Ministers Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, and other unionists like Sajad Lone, Muzaffar Shah, Gulam Ahmad Mir and Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami.

One of the biggest factors that led to this rare show of unity among the unionists is the anger of the dispossessed (Kashmiris). Unionists realise that they are at the precipice of complete irrelevance if they reconcile with the August 5 decision. Many former legislators candidly acknowledge that the new generation of Kashmir is politically conscious, educated, articulate, aspirational and believe in concrete action, not political rhetoric, verbal gymnastics or political posturing.

Unionists will tick another box if they move beyond the act of issuing statements to give the Gupkar Declaration a definite shape and structure, walk the talk and be unambiguous about the path ahead even if it means choosing the path of suffering and sacrifice!

.....  
The author is a journalist-author who served Deutsche Welle as editor. He is author of Kashmir: Rage and Reason

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Hathras Rape Case is Caste Based Violence

**A**bout two weeks ago, a 20 year old woman was found abandoned, naked and bleeding in Hathras, a district in western Uttar Pradesh. She was gang raped by men living in the same area. She succumbed to her injuries and passed away on the 29th of this month.

Her death has invited some uproar and rightly so. However, the outrage in itself is emblematic of one of the main causes of her fate — caste based violence.

She belonged to the Dalit Valmiki caste and the prime accused are from

the upper caste Takhar community. Throughout the ordeal that she and her family were put through, there were severe lapses committed by the police and rape was only registered after political pressure built up and after the formal statement by the woman. The family was allegedly even denied the right to have the body of the victim and the police went ahead and burned her body without the consent from her family.

The uproar and the rage that the case has generated is limited and uncritical in that it refuses to take into account the factor of caste. While it is true that rape is a crime against wom-

en, it must also be kept in mind that it is essentially a power based violence.

In this schema, it is insensitive to ignore the angle of caste; a system of hierarchy and discrimination that still plagues the Indian society. Dalits still face systemic caste based violence in India. How then can we conveniently ignore the intersection of caste and gender in this case?

It is about time that progressive liberals stop this deleterious denial of the existence of caste system in India. Upper caste feminists need to re-evaluate essentialist categories like “women” and take into account the matrix of

identities of women from marginalised groups. Women in conflict zones like Kashmir, or women from Muslim, Dalit, Adivasi communities are not merely victims of gender based violence. In our case, the perils of power come together, enable violence of a colossal degree and unleash this confluence on our bodies. Denying this confluence, is denying the existence of this marginalisation and ultimately sides with the perpetrator’s persuasions rather than the victim’s.

.....  
Tooba Toufiq  
toobatt@gmail.com

# What December 6, 1992 Meant to a Generation

This article from August 2020 is being reproduced on the event of all 32 accused in the Babri Demolition case being acquitted by the Supreme court on the 30th of September, 2020

FAHEEM GUNDRUO

**The events that unfolded in Ayodhya — on a day when sun shone weakly over that ancient city, carry so much ponderosity that its flames still pretty much define the political contours of 21st century India**

**W**HEN history is unfolding, you scarcely realize its consequences. The importance of the event doesn't dawn upon you.

In December 1992, our school was closing for winter break. Like any other schoolboy, I was brimming with happiness. For me the reasons were more than one. Pakistan the newly crowned world champions were playing a triangular series in Australia. They had started well. Defeating West Indies in the first game, and managing a tie in the next game with Australia- Asif Mujtaba hitting a six of the last ball.

Little had I, or millions like me any idea that the dawn of 6th December 1992 was to change destinies forever and charter a new political order in India. In the hindsight I don't believe even VHP and BJP leaders imagined the impact (the recent 5th August 2019 episode in Kashmir is directly connected to the larger designs of that Hindutva plan).

The events that unfolded in Ayodhya — on a day when sun shone weakly over that ancient city, carry so much ponderosity that its flames still pretty much define the political contours of 21st century India. If there is one event after 15th August 1947 that reshaped India, it was the Babri Masjid demolition. It changed India. Forever.

Some 43 years ago, on 22nd December 1949 Haji Abdul Gaffar- the Imam of Babri Masjid locked the doors of the mosque after Isha prayers. Nothing unusual about it. Haji Gaffar's family had been the head imams of Babri Masjid from last 8 generations. Ayodhya had always largely been non-communal- the Hindus and Muslims living in harmony. The Ram-Rahim bonhomie meant both sects freely mingled with each other, celebrating festivals and even eating together.

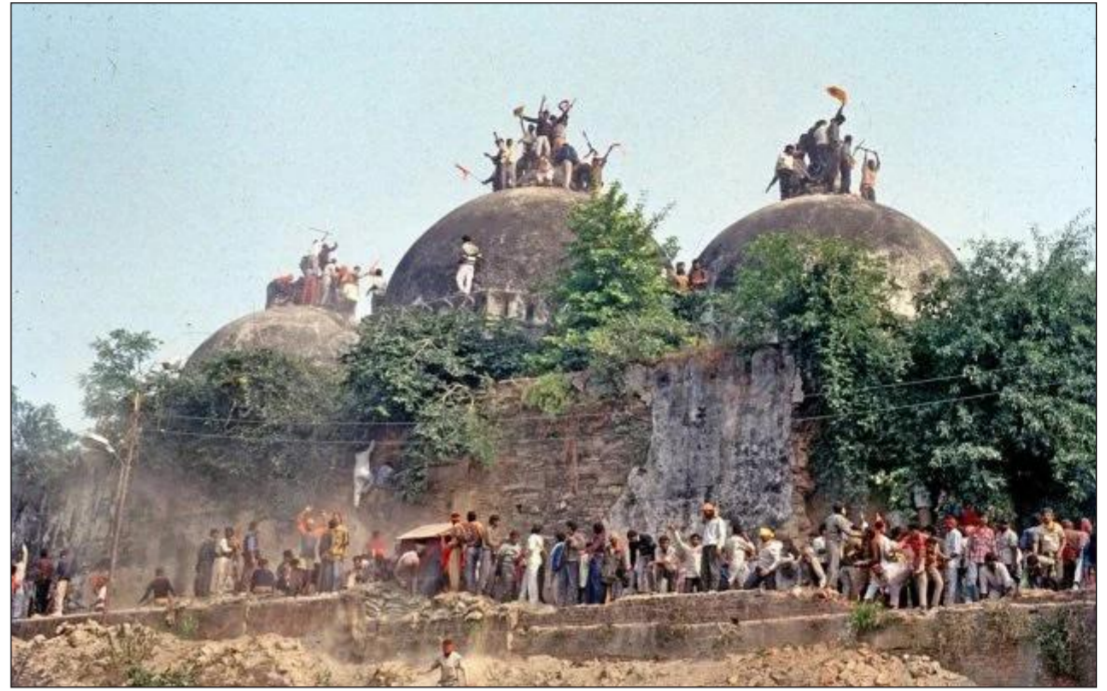
However, morning of 23rd December 1949 was to change everything that Ayodhya stood for. Haji Gaffar still had no premonition about what was to unfold. The Imam woke up early morning for Fajr prayers. After performing ablution he walked towards the mosque and unlocked its door. Inside the mosque, miraculously an idol of Ram had appeared.

After 1857 war, the British empire formally ruled over entire India. It is astonishing that in India at no given point of time were there more than 1 lakh Britishers; ruling over a population of more than 400 Million. The play was simple and clear. Disunity.

The British to quell Hindu-Muslim unity in the Hindu heartland of India, gave air to a rumor that Babar constructed a mosque on a temple site. Numerous archaeological surveys have denied any presence of a temple at the site.

Though the Britishers sow the seed of discord, under a mutual agreement Hindus worshipped Ram outside the compound, while Muslims prayed within the mosque itself.

This agreement ended when some Hindus in the ensuing night of 22nd December 1949 exported Ram idols inside into the mosque. District Collector K K Nayar, who later joined Jan Sangh, refused to remove the idols citing law and order reasons. The plan was well oiled.



The Hindus attributed this to the miraculous appearance of Ram Lalla inside the mosque. Mahant Ramsevak Das Shastri claimed that Ram appeared in his dream.

One of the head priests of Ram Janambhoomi trust — Pujari Laldas blamed VHP activists for the controversy. As per him, according to Hindu traditions temple is any structure where an idol is kept. Hence there is no question of destroying a structure and planting idols there. The Hindu scriptures have no references to such devilments. Pujari Laldas was murdered by unknown men in 1993.

The India of late 1980s was changing. If on one hand Rajiv Gandhi, its young dynamic Prime Minister had a vision about global India in technological sphere, yet its internal politics was decaying. Thrown hurriedly into politics after the assassination of his mother in Oct 1984, Rajiv Gandhi's term as PM was disastrous. He relied far too much on his cousin Arun Nehru and rest of coterie. The reverberations of some of his hasty decisions transformed Indian politics and the destiny of his party. It is plain hypocrisy on part of Congress to shift the blame of Babri Masjid on PV Narsimha Rao; distancing and absolving Nehru-Gandhi family from it. While the fact was that Rajiv Gandhi played the Hindutva card and ordered the opening of Mandir gates in Ayodhya in 1986. The short sightedness of that decision continues to haunt Congress. In sense a Gandhi scion tragically gave impetus to a movement which LK Advani was to later start in 1989- The Rath Yatra.

Chanting slogans like 'Jo sapne dekhte Babar ke, armaan nikal kar mareng, hum mandir wahin banayenge' (Those who dream of Babar, we will wipe out their aspirations), Advani in a air-conditioned Toyota resembling a chariot, traveled across India, in his fiery speeches inferring that

pseudo secularism won't be tolerated in Hindu rashtra. It was ironic; Jawahar Lal Nehru had travelled the length and breadth of India in 1920s. An experience that was to change him and India's struggle for freedom. The abject poverty that he saw, sowed seeds of nationalism in him. It also led him to write his scholarly book Discovery of India.

The Advani chariot was however charting a map of a different India. The Rath Yatra ultimately culminated into a well orchestrated plan that spawned out on 6th December 1992. The Kar Sevaks brought down 500 year old Babri Masjid, using axes and pixels. The state police vanishing from the spot, giving a free hand to Kar Sevaks.

Back in the days, news didn't travel as fast. We saw the ghoulish images later in the evening on 9 o'clock DD news. Winter evenings tended to be long and bleak in Kashmir in the 90s. Grandfather was quiescent but calm. Having our dinner he nonchalantly spoke, 'Masjid can be rebuilt. It doesn't matter if they demolished it. God is everywhere.' Grandfather was from Nehruvian era — a true liberal who never imposed or preached religion to anyone. I, certainly had no clue, sitting on that dinner sheet putting morsels of food into my mouth, that grandfather's generation and their ideals under those grey cold teases of a December evening had begun to end.

*P.S: The foundation stone of Ram Temple where once Babri Masjid stood, was laid on 5th August 2020. Six month earlier, The Supreme Court of India ordered the disputed land (1.77 acres) to be handed over to a trust (to be created by Government of India) to build the Ram Janmabhoomi (revered as the birthplace of Hindu deity, Ram) temple. The court also ordered the government to give an alternate 5 acres of land in another place to the Sunni Waqf Board for the purpose of building a mosque.*

## COVID-19: Why we need small comforts in life

Universe is so much bigger than this fretful, feverish world, and it is still expanding

MARGARET RENKL

**T**he scent of sun-dried sheets fresh off the clothesline can completely change my state of mind. Like the sense of well-being that comes over me when a song from my youth is playing on the radio, the smell of line-dried sheets takes me home to Alabama, back to a time when all my beloved elders were still alive, still humming as they shook out a wad of damp bedsheets and pinned them to the line.

This summer I have repeatedly washed not just our sheets but also our 20-year-old matelasse coverlet, whose scalloped edges are now beginning to fray. I have washed the dust ruffle for possibly the first time in its entire existence. Once the linens are reassembled, I crawl between the sheets, breathe in, and feel the muscles across the top of my back begin to loosen. As my friend Serenity's mother is fond of saying, "There are very few problems in this world that putting clean sheets on the bed won't improve, even if just a little bit."

These days it's just a little bit, even when the clean sheets have been dried on a clothesline in the bright summer sun. Everyone I know is either suffering terribly or terribly worried about someone who is suffering. When will they ever find work? What if they get sick at work and can't afford to take time off? What if they bring the virus home to the people they love? How will they work and also homeschool their children? Will their parents die of the coronavirus? Will their parents die of loneliness before they can die of the coronavirus?



For months now, all my phone calls and texts and emails have begun, "How are you, really?" or "How is?" Sometimes I'm the one who's asking and sometimes I'm the one who's being asked, but every exchange begins the same way.

Without even thinking about why, I engage in useless compensation. Bringing a few swallowtail caterpillars inside to save them from the red wasps. Reporting eight years' worth of Mother's Day orchids. Buying mask after mask, as

though colour or style or pattern will somehow protect me and those I love. I am getting through these days primarily by way of magical thinking, and sheets billowing on a hot August wind are my talismans against fear and loss.

We have the power, even in this Age of Anxiety, to enfold ourselves in small comforts, in the joy of tiny pleasures.

In June, after 25 years in this house, my husband set to work on our 70-year-old kitchen cabinets, chiselling out layers of paint,

planing and sanding warped edges. When he was finished, the cabinet doors would close all the way, and stay closed, for the first time in decades. If you ask him why he went to all this trouble, he has no explanation beyond the obvious: For 25 years it needed to be done, and so he finally did it.

But I think it's more than that. I think he was worrying about his lonesome father, quarantined in an efficiency apartment, and that's why he fixed those cupboard doors. He was worrying about

our oldest son's pandemic wedding and our middle son's new job as an essential worker. He was worrying about whether our youngest son's university would make the inevitable decision to hold classes online before we had to sign a yearlong lease for an apartment our son might never set foot in. My husband can't control any of those things, much less cure Covid-19, but he can by God make the kitchen cabinets stop flying open and knocking us in the head while we cook.

My friends are giving themselves difficult and absorbing assignments: reading classic novels, learning a new language or a challenging song on the guitar, working complicated puzzles. "I am doing so many puzzles because it feels good to put something back together again," my friend Erica wrote.

They are putting in a garden, in the suburban backyard or on the city balcony. They are feeding the birds and sometimes the turtles, rescuing orphaned opossums, walking in the woods. They are sitting on the porch — just sitting there, listening. At night they are going outside to look at the stars.

We may be in the middle of a story we don't know how will end, or even whether it will end, but we are not helpless characters created and directed by an unseen novelist. We have the power, even in this Age of Anxiety, to enfold ourselves in small comforts, in the joy of tiny pleasures. We can walk out into the dark and look up at the sky. We can remind ourselves that the universe is so much bigger than this fretful, feverish world, and it is still expanding. And still filled with stars.

New York Times



# RESEARCHERS Get A Better Grip On Left And RIGHT HANDEDNESS

THE 41 GENETIC VARIANTS INFLUENCING left-handedness were different to the seven we identified for ambidexterity, and we saw very little correlation between the results for the two traits," Professor Medland said.

**Agencies**

In the largest study of its kind to date, researchers have identified 48 genetic variants that influence if a person is left-handed, right-handed, or ambidextrous.

The research led by QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute and The University of Queensland also confirmed that environment plays a far larger part than genes in which hand a person prefers to use. Co-senior author and head of

QIMR Berghofer's Psychiatric Genetics Group, Professor Sarah Medland said 41 of the identified genetic variants influenced a person's chances of being left-handed. Seven were associated with ambidexterity, which describes when a person is equally

proficient with each hand.

"The 41 genetic variants influencing left-handedness were different to the seven we identified for ambidexterity, and we saw very little correlation between the results for the two traits," Professor Medland said.

Joint-senior author from The University of Queensland Diamantina Institute, Professor David Evans said the large data set also confirmed that the influence of genetics on handedness was relatively modest.

"The results from our analyses suggested that genetic factors could

only account for a small amount of the variation in handedness, whereas environmental factors were likely to play a much more important role," Professor Evans said.

"This percentage was similar for ambidexterity, meaning factors such as injuring a hand or

training by playing sport or musical instruments are likely to have a strong role in a person's ability to use both hands equally well," Professor Evans added.

The study findings have been published today in the journal Nature Human Behaviour.

## Childhood Sexual Abuse: Mental And Physical After-Effects Closely Linked

**Agencies**

A new Canadian study reveals that the psychological and physical effects of childhood sexual abuse are closely tied. The finding could help healthcare professionals develop more effective interventions and ultimately improve mental and physical health outcomes for survivors of abuse in childhood. Authored by Pascale Vezina-Gagnon, a PhD candidate at Université de Montréal's Department of Psychology, under the supervision of Professor Isabelle Daigneault, the study is published today in Health Psychology.

**"Twice as many diagnoses"**  
The long-term consequences of childhood sexual abuse on survivors' health have only been recognized recently. An initial study of 1,764 children and adolescents, published in 2018, showed that girls who survived substantiated cases of sexual abuse received 2.1 times as many diagnoses of urinary health issues and 1.4 times as many diagnoses of genital health issues than girls in the general population. This finding prompted a subsequent study to determine why and how sexual-abuse survivors suffered from genitourinary problems more often than their peers in the general population. Specifically, the second study aimed to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon by testing the theory that increased psychological distress is partly responsible for the higher incidence of genitourinary issues - such as urinary tract infections, vaginitis and pain during sex or menstruation - among childhood sexual abuse survivors.

**"A combined approach to treatment"**  
"The key takeaway from this study is that one-sided treatment - one that addresses just the psychological after-effects or just the physical trauma - is inadequate," said Vezina-Gagnon. "We need to follow a combined approach to treatment that doesn't view these issues as separate." She added: "Interdisciplinary care is increasingly becoming the



standard, and that's the message we hope our research sends to general practitioners, pediatricians, urologists, gynecologists, psychologists and psychiatrists so that they can help children recover as much as possible." This is the first study to look at the relationship between genitourinary and psychological issues over such a long period of time - more than a decade - in such a large sample of child survivors of substantiated sexual abuse versus a comparison group.

**"1,322 girls studied"**  
The researchers used medical data provided by Quebec's public health insurance agency, the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec, and the Québec Ministry of Health and Social Services. The study involved 661 girls between the ages of 1 and 17 who survived one or more instances of substantiated sexual abuse and a comparison group of 661 girls from the general population. The researchers had access to anonymized data on genitourinary and mental health diagnoses received following medical consultations or hospital stays the girls went through between 1996 and 2013. Several variables were taken into account, such as socioeconomic status, the number of years of access to medical data, and individual predispositions to genitourinary health problems before the sexual abuse occurred. Childhood sexual abuse includes fondling and

petting, oral sex, actual or attempted penetration, voyeurism, indecent exposure, inducement to engage in sexual activity and sexual exploitation (prostitution).

**"A wider range of psychiatric issues"**  
"The results show that girls who were sexually abused were more likely to see a health professional for a wider range of psychiatric issues - anxiety, mood disorders, schizophrenia or substance abuse - than girls in the comparison group," said Vezina-Gagnon. "These consultations were also associated with more frequent medical appointments or hospitalizations for genital and urinary issues in the years after the sexual abuse was reported."

The researchers also found that the more girls consulted their doctors or were hospitalized for multiple psychiatric issues (so-called comorbid psychiatric disorders) after experiencing abuse, the more importantly this explained subsequent genital health issues (62% and urinary health issues (23%). This difference observed between genital and urinary health (62% vs. 23%) may be explained by factors not included in this study, said Vezina-Gagnon. "Additional studies are needed to investigate this difference and determine whether other important variables - ones that we didn't have information on, such as the severity, length and frequency of the abuse - could be associated with more se-

vere genitourinary health outcomes," she said.

**"Two hypotheses offered"**  
"On an emotional and behavioural level, two hypotheses can be formulated to explain these findings," said Vezina-Gagnon. The first is that the association is due to a hyper-vigilant response. Survivors of sexual abuse who are affected by several mental health issues - such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder - may become hyper-vigilant or more likely to notice symptoms related to their genital or urinary health, which would lead them to see their doctor more frequently. "In contrast," she continued, "the second hypothesis is that the association is caused by avoidant behaviour. Survivors may put off or avoid asking for help or seeing a doctor for genitourinary issues, thereby increasing the risk that such problems deteriorate or become chronic conditions. Gynecological care may trigger memories of past abuse (due to the imbalance of power between patients and doctors, the removal of clothing, feelings of vulnerability and physical pain) and it may therefore be especially difficult for these girls."

**"Toward a holistic approach"**  
The study's findings align with the scientific literature on health psychology and abuse, and once again highlight how important it is to consider the relationship between physical and mental health," said Vezina-Gagnon. A holistic approach (body-mind approach) is therefore needed to help girls recover from sexual trauma, she maintains. "In light of these findings, healthcare practitioners should assess the level of psychological distress experienced by survivors of childhood sexual abuse and direct them to the right mental health resources" Vezina-Gagnon said. "The researchers behind this study believe that early and targeted intervention to reduce psychological distress among survivors may be helpful in preventing genitourinary issues from deteriorating or turning into chronic conditions."

## Scientists Develop Ultra-Low-Cost Device For Age-Related Hearing Loss

**Press Trust Of India**

Scientists, including one of Indian-origin, have designed an ultra-low-cost hearing aid that could be built with cheaply available open-source parts, an innovation that can help hundreds of millions of older people worldwide who can't afford existing forms of the sound amplifying device.

"The challenge we set for ourselves was to build a minimalist hearing aid, determine how good it would be and ask how useful it would be to the millions of people who could use it," said study co-author M. Saad Bhamla, an assistant professor in the School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology in the US.

The prototype, known as LoCHAid and described in the journal PLOS ONE, is expected to meet most of the targets set by the World Health Organization (WHO) for hearing aids aimed at mild-to-moderate age-related hearing loss, the researchers said. According to the scientists, modern hearing aids use digital signal processors to adjust sound, and are relatively expen-



sive and power hungry. So they decided to build their device using less expensive electronic filters to shape the frequency response.

The researchers said this approach was standard on hearing aids before the processors became widely available.

"Taking a standard such as linear gain response and shaping it using filters dramatically reduces the cost and the effort required for programming," said Soham Sinha, another co-author of the study, who was born in semi-rural India and is a long-term user of hearing aid technology.

"I was born with hearing loss and didn't get hearing aids until I was in high school," said Sinha, who worked on the project while at Georgia Institute of Technology, and at Stanford University in the US.

"This project represented for me an opportunity to learn what I could do to help others who may be in the same situation as me but not have the resources to obtain hearing aids," he added.

According to Bhamla, the electronic components of the LoCHAid cost less than one USD if purchased in bulk, but that doesn't include assembly or distribution costs.

The scientists said its relatively large size allows for low-tech assembly and even do-it-yourself production and repair.

Bhamla said the prototype uses a 3D-printed case and is powered by common AA or lithium ion coin-cell batteries designed to keep costs as low as possible.

He said the device could be sold online or over-the-counter with focus on older adults.

"When we talk about hearing aids, even the lowest of technology is quite high in price for people in many parts of the world," said Vinaya Manchaiah, another co-author of the study.

"We may not need to have the best technology or the best device in order to provide value and a good experience in hearing," he added.

## Cooked Carrots Known To Trigger Allergic Reactions

**Agencies**

A new study suggests that contrary to the belief that raw carrots trigger allergic reactions, cooked carrots can also have this effect.

The study was conducted by a research team of the University of Bayreuth.

The carrot's allergen, Dau c 1, assumes a structure that is harmless to allergy sufferers when highly heated.

However, as soon as the temperature drops, it largely regains its natural structure. The researchers present their study in the journal 'Molecular Nutrition & Food Research.'

"The results of our research clearly suggest that sufferers who are sensitive to the carrot allergen should generally avoid eating carrots. Heating carrots does not destroy or only incompletely destroys the protein structures that can cause allergic reactions," said Prof. Dr. Birgitta Wohrl from the Biochemistry IV research group at the University of Bayreuth.

"The risk of allergy patients



developing an allergic reaction arises not only when eating freshly cooked carrots or canned carrots. It also arises when carrot extract is added to food," added Thessa Jacob M.Sc., first author of the study and PhD student at the Biochemistry IV research group.

The natural carrot allergen Dau c 1 is actually a mixture of several, structurally very similar proteins. These so-called isoallergens were produced individually in the laboratory in bacteria.

Both the protein mixture of the natural Dau c 1 and the individual isoallergens were examined at temperatures up to 95 degrees Celsius to see how their structures change upon increasing and

decreasing the temperature.

This analysis showed that the natural mixture and almost all isoallergens are still capable of causing allergies after cooling down to 25 degrees Celsius. Despite the previous heating, antibodies present in the organism of allergy patients will still trigger allergic reactions. Although in some cases this effect is less pronounced than before heating, it is generally maintained.

"This is the first time that the Dau c 1 isoallergens have been subjected to such an extensive series of tests. The separate examination of the structurally similar molecules was particularly important to us in order to determine which of the isoallergens trigger immune reactions under the tested conditions," said Thessa Jacob M.Sc.

The tests clearly showed that the structural stability of the carrot allergen does not depend on temperature alone. Acidity, as expressed by the pH value, is also important. Of particular interest is pH value 3, which typically prevails in the stomach after food intake.

## 'Moderna Covid Vaccine Appears Safe, Shows Signs Of Working In Older Adults'

Agencies

Chicago: Results from an early safety study of Moderna Inc's coronavirus vaccine candidate in older adults showed that it produced virus-neutralizing antibodies at levels similar to those seen in younger adults, with side effects roughly on par with high-dose flu shots, researchers said on Tuesday.

The study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, offers a more complete picture of the vaccine's safety in older adults, a group at increased risk of severe complications from COVID-19.

The findings are reassuring because immunity tends to weaken with age. Dr. Evan Anderson, one of the study's lead researchers from Emory University in Atlanta, said in a phone interview.

The study was an extension of Moderna's Phase I safety trial, first conducted in individuals aged 18-55. It tested two doses of Moderna's vaccine - 25 micrograms and 100 micrograms - in 40 adults aged 66 to 70 and 71 and older.

Overall, the team found that in older adults who received two injections of the 100 microgram dose 28 days apart, the vaccine produced immune responses roughly in line with those seen in younger adults.

Moderna is already testing the higher dose in a large Phase III trial, the final stage before seeking emergency authorization or approval.

Side effects, which included headache, fatigue, body aches, chills and injection site pain, were deemed mainly mild to moderate.

In at least two cases, however, volunteers had severe reactions.

One developed a grade three fever, which is classified as 102.2 degrees Fahrenheit (39°C) or above, after receiving the lower vaccine dose. Another developed fatigue so severe it temporarily prevented daily activities, Anderson said.

Typically, side effects occurred soon after receiving the vaccine and resolved quickly, he said.

"This is similar to what a lot of older adults are going to experience with the high dose influenza vaccine," Anderson said. "They might feel off or have a fever."

Norman Hulme, a 65-year-old senior multimedia developer at Emory who took the lower dose of the vaccine, said he felt compelled to take part in the trial after watching first responders in New York and Washington State fight the virus.

"I really had no side effects at all," said Hulme, who grew up in the New York area.

## Pak opens all Edu institutions, six months after closure due to COVID-19

Press Trust Of India

Islamabad: Pakistan on Wednesday opened all the educational institutions which remained shut for nearly six months due to the coronavirus pandemic that has infected over 3 lakh people in the country.

Both private and public

was detected in educational institutions after the authorities performed 171,436 coronavirus tests in the education sector since the institutions reopened on September 15 under the phase 1 of the reopening of the institutions," Mahmood said on Tuesday while interacting with the media.



schools were opened under strict restriction and were told by the authorities to follow the standard operating procedures to contain the spread of the contagious coronavirus.

Federal Education Minister Shafiqat Mahmood said that the maximum number of students was enrolled in the primary schools and they suffered most due to the closure of the institutions. He said a decision was taken to open all the educational institutions after analysing the coronavirus situation comprehensively.

"Only 1 per cent infection

"Keeping in view this data, it has been decided to resume primary level classes," he added.

Meanwhile, the total number of coronavirus in Pakistan reached 3,12,263 after 747 new cases emerged in the last 24 hours, the Ministry of National Health Services said. Another five patients died, taking the number of deaths to 6,479 while some 467 patients were in critical conditions. The data showed that 296,881 people fully recovered.

The authorities performed another 32,031 tests in the last 24 hours, taking the total tests done so far to 3,514,237.



## 'Will you shut up, man? This is so un-presidential' Chaos reigns in first Trump-Biden debate

Agencies

Washington: Republican US President Donald Trump and Democratic rival Joe Biden battled fiercely over Trump's leadership on the coronavirus pandemic, the economy and the integrity of November's election in a chaotic first debate on Tuesday marked by personal insults, name calling and Trump's repeated interruptions.

Moderator Chris Wallace never established control of the debate. The two White House contenders talked over each other and lobbed insults in a breathtaking political brawl that made it hard for either to make a point.

"Will you shut up, man? This is so un-presidential," said an exasperated Biden after Trump's repeated interruptions during the first segment of the debate on the Supreme Court.

Biden later called Trump a "clown," a "racist," and "Putin's puppy" in reference to Russian President Vladimir Putin and told Trump: "You're the worst president America has ever had."

Trump for his part said: "There's nothing smart about

you, Joe."

Late in the debate, Wallace himself urged the president to stop his interruptions.

Wallace said: "I think that the country would be better served if we allowed both people to speak with fewer interruptions. I'm appealing to you sir to do that."

Trump replied: "Well, and him too."

Wallace: "Well, frankly, you've been doing more interrupting."

Trump: "But he does plenty." Biden, 77, has held a consistent lead over Trump, 74, in national opinion polls, although surveys in the battleground states that will decide the election show a closer contest. It was hard to determine whether the debate would move the needle.

Biden questioned Trump's leadership on the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 200,000 Americans, saying Trump had panicked and failed to protect Americans because he was more concerned about the economy.

"He panicked or he looked at the stock market," Biden said of Trump, who has pushed

for states to reopen their economies and played down the threat of the pandemic.

"A lot of people died and a lot more are going to die unless he gets a lot smarter, a lot quicker," Biden said.

Trump objected to Biden using the word "smart."

"You graduated either the lowest or almost the lowest in your class. Don't ever use the word smart with me. Don't ever use that word," Trump said.

He defended his approach on the pandemic and said "we have done great job."

"But I tell you, Joe, you could never have done the job we've done. You don't have it in your blood," he said.

With more than a million Americans already casting early ballots and time running out to change minds or influence the small sliver of undecided voters, the stakes were enormous as the two White House candidates took the stage five weeks before the Nov. 3 Election Day.

The two contenders did not shake hands as they entered the debate, adhering to protocols on social distancing because of the coronavirus.

## Human rights abuses in Yemen amount to 'war crimes': UN report

Agencies

United Nations: The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has detailed serious violations of the international human rights law that could constitute 'war crimes' in Yemen.

In an annual and third report presented to the Human Rights Council on Tuesday, the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen raised the alarm about the situation of human rights in the war-ravaged country, and revealed scores of violations and abuses of international law and humanitarian regulations since September 2014.

The violations included

tarian operations.

"Last year, we referred to the situation in Yemen as having reached a 'surreal and absurd' dimension. The situation has not improved. The continuation of violations this year, underlines the complete lack of respect for international law being displayed by parties to the conflict. For too many people in Yemen, there is simply no safe place to escape the ravages of the war," said Kamel Jendoubi, the chairperson of the Group of Experts.

"Our investigations this year have confirmed rampant levels of serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, many of which may



airstrikes that failed to abide by principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, along with indiscriminate attacks using mortar shelling, recruitment and use of child soldiers, and unlawful killings at checkpoints.

Other abuses included the use of torture, including sexual violence in detention, denial of fair trial rights, the targeting of marginalized communities and the impeding of humani-

amount to war crimes," Jendoubi added in his remarks to the Council.

Journalists examine traces of "war crime" at the scene of a recent massacre of nine civilians, including six children, by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

The Group also denounced in the report on Tuesday the impunity for those violators of international law as well as the lack of accountability that fueled more abuses.

## Sonic boom from military jet, say police after powerful explosion rattles Paris



The sonic boom of a fighter jet breaking the sound barrier reverberated through the French capital Paris and nearby suburbs on Wednesday, the Paris police prefecture said on Twitter.

The shockwave rattled windows, made birds fly up and was heard in every part of the city, leading to a surge in phone calls to police.

It was not immediately clear why a fighter plane was flying over Paris. A defence ministry spokesman confirmed it was a sonic boom but did not immediately offer further comment.

The police urged people not to call emergency services. Paris has been tense since a knife attack outside the former offices of satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo on Friday.

## Azerbaijan and Armenia reject peace talks as Karabakh conflict zone widens

Agencies

Baku/Yerevan: Armenia and Azerbaijan accused one another on Tuesday of firing directly into each other's territory and rejected pressure to hold peace talks as their conflict over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh threatened to spill over into all-out war.

Both reported firing from the other side across their shared border, well to the west of the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region over which fierce fighting broke out between Azeri and ethnic Armenian forces on Sunday.

The incidents signalled a further escalation of the conflict despite urgent appeals from Russia, the United States

and others to halt it.

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, speaking to Russian state TV, flatly ruled out any possibility of talks.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told the same channel that talks could not take place while fighting continued.

Further fuelling tensions between the two former Soviet republics, Armenia said an F-16 fighter jet belonging to Azerbaijan's close ally Turkey had shot down one of its warplanes over Armenian airspace, killing the pilot.

It provided no evidence of the incident. Turkey and Azerbaijan called the claim "absolutely untrue".

Dozens of people have

been reported killed and hundreds wounded since clashes between Azerbaijan and its ethnic Armenian mountain enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh broke out on Sunday.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a breakaway region that is inside Azerbaijan but is run by ethnic Armenians and is supported by Armenia. It broke away from Azerbaijan in a war in the 1990s, but is not recognised by any country as an independent republic.

A descent into all-out war could drag in regional powers Russia and Turkey. Moscow has a defence alliance with Armenia, which is the enclave's lifeline to the outside world, while Ankara backs its own ethnic Turkic kin in Azerbaijan.

### NEWSMAKERS

## Kuwait has new ruling emir: 83-year-old Sheikh Nawaf

Dubai: Kuwait's Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah was sworn in Wednesday as the ruling emir of the tiny oil-rich country, propelled to power by the death of his half-brother after a long career in the security services.

At age 83, Sheikh Nawaf is not expected to deviate from the diplomatic path charted by his predecessor, the late Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah. But his accession touched off speculation about who will become the next crown prince in the country known for its lively elected parliament and relative independence in the neighborhood of Gulf Arab monarchies.

The late Sheikh Sabah was set to make his final journey to Kuwait later on Wednesday, his coffin flying back from Rochester, Minnesota, home of the flagship campus of the Mayo Clinic where he had been receiving medical treatment after surgery.

Although his funeral would typically draw tens of thousands of mourning Kuwaitis and scores of foreign leaders and dignitaries, because of the coronavirus pan-



dem the burial will be a private service restricted to relatives, said Kuwait's state-run news agency, KUNA. The breadth and depth of emotion over the loss of Sheikh Sabah, known for his deft diplomacy and peacemaking, was reflected in condolence messages that streamed in from countries on opposite ends of regional bitter disputes, from Saudi Arabia to Iran. Kuwait entered a solemn 40-day period of mourning on Wednesday to commemorate the leader's life and death.

Sheikh Nawaf took office as the new ruler of Kuwait in the

Parliament building before rows of applauding lawmakers, clad in their traditional white robes and surgical masks because of the pandemic. He bowed slightly, touching his hands to his head in a sign of respect. With a low voice, he delivered a short address offering tribute to his late half-brother and promising to "preserve the security of Kuwait."

"Kuwait throughout its history has seen serious and tough challenges, which we have succeeded in overcoming through cooperating together," said Sheikh Nawaf, reading from prepared remarks. "Today, our dear country also faces risks and challenges that there is no way to bypass except through unity."

After the ceremony, Sheikh Nawaf, in his flowing robe, strode into a black Mercedes as groups of soldiers delivered a crisp salute.

Sheikh Nawaf's ascent to the throne bookended a political career that spanned from interior minister to defence minister, dating back to 1991 when US troops and their allies invaded Kuwait.

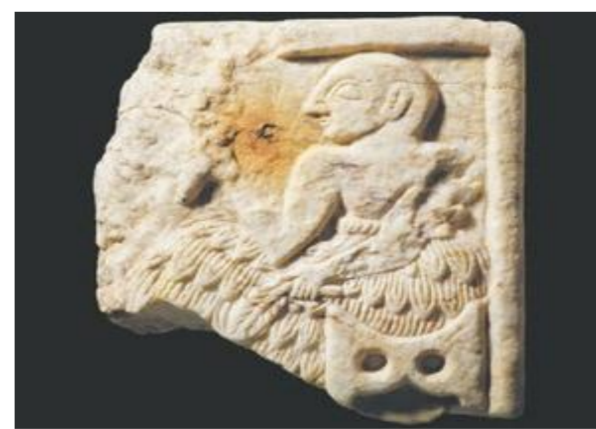
## Britain to return looted 4,000-year-old plaque to Iraq

LONDON: Britain will hand back a 4,000-year-old sculpture to Iraq after an investigation found that it had been looted, the British Museum said on Monday.

Museum experts were called by a specialist London police unit after an online sales platform offered the artefact for sale in May last year with only limited details of its provenance.

Despite the online listing describing it as "a Western Asiatic Akkadian tablet", the experts determined the limestone wall plaque came from an ancient Sumerian temple dating to around 2,400 BC.

The temple had been excavated and looted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, looted again in the 1990s during the Gulf War and most recently in 2003 during the Iraq War, the museum said, with-



out specifying when the plaque was taken.

"This important piece was illegally removed from Iraq and discovered by authorities in the UK," the British Museum said in a statement.

"Temple plaques such as this are rare and there are only around 50 examples known in existence." The London-based

institution said the Iraqi government had "generously permitted it to go on display" at the museum before it is repatriated.

"The British Museum is absolutely committed to the fight against illicit trade and damage to cultural heritage," its director Hartwig Fischer said.

Jim Wingrave, of the Metropolitan Police,

urged antiquities' buyers to "conduct a thorough due diligence process before every purchase", especially when dealing with items from recent war zones like Iraq.

The British Museum said in July 2019 that it was working to appraise and return various looted ancient artefacts from Iraq and Afghanistan that had been seized in Britain.

Among the articles it had scheduled for return to Iraq were 154 Mesopotamian texts written on clay in cuneiform script — one of the earliest systems of writing — and seized on entry in 2011.

However, the museum has faced criticism for failing to return some disputed items to origin countries, most notably the Parthenon Marbles, also known as the Elgin Marbles, which Greece has long claimed.

## Hathras Gangrape And Murder: Family Accuses UP Police Of Forcefully Cremating Victim



**Hathras (UP):** The body of the 19-year-old Dalit woman, who died in a Delhi hospital a fortnight after she was gangraped in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras, was cremated here in the early hours of Wednesday, with her family alleging the local police forced them to conduct the last rites in the dead of the night.

Local police officers, however, told PTI that the cremation was carried out "as per the wishes of the family".

The woman was raped in a village in Hathras by four men on September 14. After her condition deteriorated, she was referred to Delhi's Safdarjung hospital where she breathed her last on Tuesday.

As news of her death spread, protests broke out in Delhi as well as in Hathras with all sections of society, including politicians, sports and cine stars and activists, expressing their anguish and demanding justice for her.

The family left Safdarjung hospital in Delhi on Tuesday night amid heavy police deployment. The body was taken by the Uttar Pradesh police, which reached Hathras earlier than the family members, claimed a kin of the victim.

"The cremation was done around 2.30 am - 3 am," the father of the deceased woman told PTI on Wednesday morning.

In the moments preceding the cremation, a brother of the woman told PTI: "Police have forcibly taken the body, and my father along with them for cremation. When my father reached Hathras, he was immediately taken (to the cre-

matorium) by the police."

Another kin said the woman's father was accompanied by 30 to 40 people, mainly relatives and others from their neighbourhood, to the crematorium near Bool Garhi village, under Chandpa police station limits, in the district of western Uttar Pradesh.

Senior police and administration officials were also present at the crematorium in the middle of the night, an official said. According to purported visuals from the site that surfaced on social media some of the policemen were in anti-riot gears donning body vests and helmets.

"We are unable to understand, what they want... what kind of politics is this, they are giving random statements like the woman has not been raped! We don't know what they want," said the relative who was at home with the grieving family. "They are doing all this to hush up the case."

When contacted, Hathras Superintendent of Police Vikrant Vir told PTI in a text message: "All procedures as per wish of family (sic)."

**SIT to probe case** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday constituted a three-member SIT to probe the Hathras gang-rape incident which has sparked outrage.

A senior government official said the chief minister has also asked for conducting the trial of the case in a fast track court.

The official said Secretary home, Bhagwan Swarup, will lead the SIT and DIG, Chandraprakash, and commandant PAC Agra, Poonam, will be its members.

The SIT has been asked to submit its report in seven days time, the official said.



**FOOD PATH:** An elderly Kashmiri man selling fresh vegetables on the banks of iconic Dal Lake at the Foreshore Road in Srinagar on Friday. KO Photo Abid Bhat

## Centre Gets Notice Over Amnesty Closing Operations Alleging "Witch-Hunt"

**NEW DELHI:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notice to the Union Home Secretary over rights organisation Amnesty International winding up its operations in the country after alleging "witch-hunt" by the government, officials said on Wednesday.



According to media reports, after the complete freezing of its bank accounts in India the Amnesty International has reportedly halted all the work in the country, the NHRC said in a statement.

"The National Human Rights

legations levelled by the Amnesty International as mentioned in the news report," it said.

In a statement earlier, the international NGO had stated that "it has been compelled to let go of staff in India and pause all its ongoing campaign and research work," the NHRC said.

"It is alleged that this is the latest in the incessant witch-hunt of human rights organisations by the government of India over unfounded and motivated allegations," the rights panel said.

## RSS Welcomes Babri Verdict, Calls For Unity To Face National Challenges

The RSS on Wednesday welcomed the special CBI court's verdict acquitting all accused in the Babri masjid demolition case and called for harmony in society to face challenges before the country.

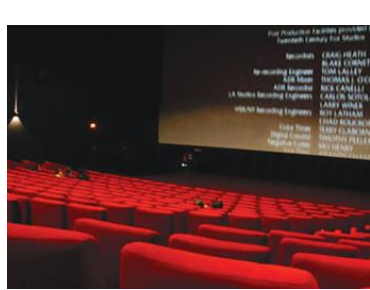


"Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh welcomes the special CBI court's decision to acquit all the accused in the demolition of the controversial structure. After this decision, all sections of society should come together in unity and harmony and work successfully to face the challenges before the country, and work towards the progress of this country," RSS general secretary Suresh 'Bhaiyaji' Joshi tweeted.

The special CBI court in Lucknow has acquitted all the 32 accused in the case, including BJP veterans L K Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi, saying there was no conclusive proof against them.

## Unlock 5: Centre Permits Schools, Colleges, Cinemas To Reopen From October 15

On Wednesday the central government announced the fifth stage of lifting of restrictions, that were initially imposed when the country went into total lockdown in March this year. The government has lifted curbs on entertainment parks, cinema halls and business exhibitions as part of the new guidelines issued under Unlock 5.



Cinemas, theatres, multiplexes

will be permitted to resume functioning from October 15 with 50% seating. Business to Business (B2B) exhibitions will also be permitted to open from Oct 15, for which an SOP will be issued by the Department of Commerce soon.

The centre has also given the green signal for schools and colleges to reopen from October 15. However, the Centre has left it to the various state governments and institutions to take a final call on the issue.

## CINEMAS, THEATRES, MULTIPLEXES WILL BE PERMITTED TO RESUME FUNCTIONING FROM OCTOBER 15 WITH 50% SEATING. BUSINESS TO BUSINESS (B2B) EXHIBITIONS WILL ALSO BE PERMITTED TO OPEN FROM OCT 15, FOR WHICH AN SOP WILL BE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE SOON.

## New Debit Card, Credit Card Rules From Today: 10 Things To Know

In an apparent attempt to make digital payments using debit cards and credit cards more secure, several new guidelines have been issued by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) that will come into effect from October 1, 2020.



The RBI had directed all banks to not unnecessarily give international facilities to customers' cards, unless the customer himself demands it. The move is aimed to stop increasing fraud transactions using debit and credit cards.

Let's take a look at what all changes when RBI's new guidelines are effective from October 1.

As per new guidelines, customers will get the option to register for preferences such as opt-in or opt-out services, spend limits and other services for online transactions, international transactions and contactless transactions.

The debit and credit card services will only be enabled for transactions at ATMs (domestic) and Point of Sale terminals.

Both debit and credit holders will now be allowed to set up transaction limit.

The card holders will have option to allow or not to allow a particular service on their credit-debit cards such as ATM,

POS, E-Commerce or NFC.

RBI has asked all banks, card issuing companies to disable online payment for all debit, credit cards that have never been used for online or for contactless transactions in India or abroad.

Card holders will also get the option to enable or disable the NFC feature also.

Here's how to manage debit card-credit card services:

1. First of all, you have to log in to your bank account through mobile or netbanking.
2. Then go to the Cards section and select 'manage cards'
3. You will see two options: domestic and international
4. Choose the option in which you want to make changes
5. If you want to close any particular transaction then turn it off, if you want to start then turn it on
6. If you want to limit the limit of the transaction, you can also do it according to your need.

## Selection In Army Not Defined By Father's Ambition: Delhi High Court



**NEW DELHI:** A father's ambition does not define the standards for selection as a commissioned officer in the Indian Army, the Delhi High Court has held while refusing to direct Indian Military Academy (IMA) to take back a candidate who was not suited to a military lifestyle.

The candidate, son of a Lieutenant Colonel and a fourth generation from the family, had joined the IMA in July 2017 for his pre-commissioning training to join the Indian Army as a commissioned officer. However, he was ordered to be withdrawn from the academy in November 2019.

A bench of Justices Rajiv Sahai Endlaw and Asha Menon noted that the candidate's father, a serving senior Army officer, had made a fervent plea to consider the case of his son leniently, as the commissioning of his son as an officer of the Indian Army meant a lot to him as it would be the fourth generation from his family to join the force.

"While it may be possible for us to sympathise with the Lieutenant Colonel, but it is not a father's ambition that defines the standards for selection as a Commissioned Officer in the Indian Army," the bench said.

The high court noted the records revealed that the candidate was finding it difficult to settle into the regimented and highly disciplined lifestyle at the IMA.

He used to absent himself from training and special

and critical events by malingering or reporting sickness and it was this absenteeism and lying about the reasons for such actions that led to imposition of several punishments and constitution of the Honour Code Committee against him, it said.

The bench said it was amply clear that the petitioner is not suited to a military lifestyle and possibly the desires of his father pushed him into this direction and added that he struggled to meet his father's expectations.

"The father would be well advised to allow his son the freedom to choose his life path and allow him to blossom forth in whatever he so chooses, which is certainly not the Indian Army."

"The petitioner and his father would do well to accept the decision of the IMA gracefully and utilise all the learning in the two years spent by the petitioner at the IMA to work towards a bright future in any other chosen field. There is no merit in the present petition which is accordingly dismissed," the bench said in its judgement.

According to the petition, the candidate said he should have passed out after completing his course as a commissioned officer in a year and a half, by the end of 2018.

He said he was subjected to ragging and punishments for various infractions right from the beginning of the first term and a week before the second term came to an end in May 2018, he was served with a show cause notice as to why he should not be relegated for having accumulated 60 restrictions in two terms. He had to repeat the second term in the next two sessions.

### NEWS MAKERS

## Court Rejects Bail Plea Of Journalist Arrested Under Official Secrets Act



**NEW DELHI:** A Delhi court has dismissed the bail of freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma arrested in an espionage case under the Official Secrets Act, saying if released on bail, he may attempt to hamper the

investigation.

Delhi Police Special Cell had alleged that Rajeev Sharma, arrested on September 14, was "found to be in possession of some defence-related classified documents".

It said that the other two accused -- a Chinese woman and a Nepalese man -- were allegedly paying Sharma large amounts of money routed through shell companies.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Pawan Singh Rajawat, who passed the order on Monday, observed "If a journalist who is an important brick in the Fourth pillar of democracy decides to act with the intention to destabilise and negatively impact the sustainability and survival of democracy, that would be a darkest day in the Free Press Movement."

## US Secretary Of State Calls For Pope To Show "Courage" Over China

**ROME:** US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo revived a spat with the Vatican Wednesday during a visit to Rome, a month ahead of the US elections and hot on the heels of a diplomatic breach that experts see as an effort to win conservative Catholic votes.

Pompeo is not meeting Pope Francis because the pontiff avoids such audiences in campaign periods, a Vatican source said.

Analysts say the pope has been angered by Pompeo's public calls for a historic Vatican-China accord to be scrapped.

Instead, Pompeo spoke at a symposium organised by the Holy See's US embassy, where he renewed an appeal for the Vatican to take a stand against China, pushing a religious freedom theme used in Donald Trump's re-election campaign.

"Nowhere is religious freedom under assault more than in China," said Pompeo, an evangelical Christian.

"I call on every faith leader to find the courage to confront religious persecution," he said, insisting that for the Catholic Church "earthly considerations shouldn't discourage principled stances".

Pompeo had gone on the offensive earlier this month, calling a Sino-Vatican 2018 agreement on appointing bishops, which is up for renewal, a risk to the church's "moral authority" given Beijing's human rights record.

Francis has been working hard to repair ties with China and the Vatican has not appreciated Pompeo's public interference.

**'Anti-Francis' network** Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Holy See's secretary for relations



with states, told journalists at the symposium that Pompeo's statement this month had been "received critically".

"Normally when you are preparing these visits between high level officials, you negotiate the agenda of what you are going to talk about privately, confidentially. It's one of the rules of diplomacy," he said.

Pompeo will meet the Vatican's Secretary of State Cardinal

Pietro Parolin on Thursday.

Powerful cardinal Oscar Maradiaga said the US intervention was unwelcome, and clearly linked to the election campaign.

"They're looking for Donald Trump to get elected, and everything is based on that logic. In this sense, I don't think they're acting in the interests of Americans," he said in an interview with the Repubblica daily on the eve of Pompeo's visit.

Francis's opening towards China

had particularly angered the "anti-Francis" network close to the US president, he said, led by Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, the Vatican's former envoy to the US, and Steve Bannon, Trump's former advisor.

**'Propaganda'** Massimo Faggioli, a theologian at the Villanova Catholic University in the US, said there was a concerted effort under way to "turn a certain anti-Francis and anti-Vatican sentiment, which has become more visible in recent years, into votes for Trump".

"Vatican diplomacy is being used for propaganda," he said. According to the Pew Research Centre, around half of Catholic registered voters describe themselves as Republicans or lean toward the Republican Party, while roughly the same identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party.