



P4 THINK

TRYING SRI LANKAN MODEL IN KASHMIR

The ongoing District Development Council (DDC) elections in Jammu & Kashmir call to mind a similar exercise in Sri Lanka four decades ago, when that country's political leadership tried ...

P5 THINK

DILIP KUMAR AT 98

In 1934, Indian cinema's first diva, Devika Rani, and her husband, Himanshu Rai, set up Bombay Talkies, which produced several hit movies with Ashok Kumar ...



P8 OBSEVER OUTPOST

FARMERS INTENSIFY STIR, TAKE OVER TOLL PLAZAS

The Delhi Police on Saturday increased deployment of personnel and placed more concrete barriers at various border ...



Wisdom Quote!

"Wisdom is having things right in your life and knowing why."
—William Stafford

news DIGEST

Pak Violated Truce Along LoC: Army

JAMMU: The Pakistan army violated ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked firing with small arms and mortar shelling on forward posts and villages along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, a defence spokesperson said.

The firing from across the LoC in Balakote sector began around 6 pm, drawing a befitting retaliation from the Indian Army, he said.

The spokesperson said the exchange of fire between the two sides was still underway when the reports last came in.

So far, there have been no reports of any casualties on the Indian side, he said.

Teen Labourer Dies Of Electric Shock

SRINAGAR: A teenage labourer died of electrocution on Saturday in Dooru area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

Fazil Nabi (19) son of Ghulam Nabi Bhat, a resident of Wangund received an electric shock while working inside the tunnel in Ujroo area of Dooru on Sunday morning, an official said. The teen, he said, was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment. However, the doctors there, declared him brought dead on arrival. (KNO)

Soldier Falls Into Gorge, Dies

SRINAGAR: A soldier died on Saturday after accidentally falling into a deep gorge along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district of Jammu region, officials said.

Lance Naik Suresh Gurgey was part of a patrolling party in the Kalal area of Nowshera sector, they said, adding he slipped and fell into the gorge and sustained severe injuries. He was immediately taken to a hospital, where he died.

LAWDA Demolishes Illegal Constructions

SRINAGAR: The Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA) on Saturday demolished several illegal constructions in green belt areas of this capital city.

The enforcement wing of LAWDA on Saturday carried out a drive in Teilbal, Miskeen Bagh, Nowpora and Lal Bazar areas of the city during which several structures, including one single storey house, two plinth blocks and a second single storey were demolished, an official spokesperson said. All the structures, he said were raised illegally in the prohibited areas.

DDC Polls: 245 Candidates In Fray For Phase VI

Polling On 77 Sarpanch, 334 Panch Seats Too: SEC

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: As many as 245 candidates are in fray in the sixth round of District Development Council (DDC) elections being conducted in 31 constituencies across Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday.

Addressing a press conference here, State Election Commissioner (SEC), KK Sharma said that of the 31 DDC constituencies that will go to polls, 14 seats are from Kashmir Valley and 17 from Jammu division. Besides it, Sharma said, voting will also be held on 334 Panch and 77 Sarpanch seats tomorrow.

The SEC said that 124 candidates, including 47 females are in fray in the 14 DDC constituencies of Jammu division going to polls tomorrow.

"In Jammu division, there are

121 candidates in fray for the 17 DDC constituencies in this phase, including 53 females," he said.

He said a total of 748,301 electorates, including 3,57,869 women are eligible to vote in this phase, for which 2,071 polling stations with 1,208 in Kashmir division and 863 in Jammu province have been set up.

For sarpanch bypolls, Sharma said a total of 229 candidates, including 65 women, are contesting from 77 constituencies, out of total 127 seats in this phase, while a total of 740 candidates, including 180 women, are in fray for 334 vacant seats out of 1,548 vacant panch constituencies.

Sharma said all necessary arrangements have been made to ensure peaceful polling besides special emphasis have been made to keep the voters safe from COVID-19.

Cop Arrested For 'Threatening' Panch

SRINAGAR: Police on Saturday arrested a cop for allegedly threatening a Panchayat member from abstaining from voting in the ongoing District Development Council (DDC) elections in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. The cop identified as Irshad Ahmad, a resident of Kandi Baramulla was arrested by police after a female Panchayat member filed a complaint against him and two others for allegedly threatening her to abstain from voting in the ongoing DDC polls, news agency KNT reported. **➡ More On P2**

PAGD Violating Seat-Sharing Pact: Cong

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir unit of the Congress on Saturday accused the PAGD of violating their seat-sharing agreement by fielding National Conference candidates at a few District Development Council (DDC) seats in Rajouri district.

It is unfortunate that the National Conference fielded candidates (for DDC polls) where the seats were left for the Congress in Nowshera assembly constituency, senior Congress leader and former member of legislative council Ravinder Sharma said. **➡ More On P2**

116 Journalists Killed In India Since 1990

NEW DELHI: As the year 2020 draws to a close, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in a 'White Paper on Global Journalism' listed five countries, including India and Pakistan, as the 'Most Dangerous Countries for Practice of Journalism in the World'.

The white paper marks the 13th anniversary of the 'The List of Journalists Killed (1990-2020)', during which 2,658 journalists lost their lives in the line of duty. Iraq topped the list of most dangerous countries for practising journalism, as 340 journalists lost their lives there, followed by Mexico (178 journalists), the Philippines (178 journalists), Pakistan (138 journalists), and India (116 journalists).

This year the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) recorded the killing of 42 **➡ More On P2**

JK To Clear Power Dues Incurred Till June 2020



MoU Signed For Availing Second Tranche Of Rs 11024.47 Cr Loan

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Saturday signed another MoU for availing second tranche of Rs 11024.47 crore loan assistance approved under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan to clear the outstanding **➡ More On P2**

2 Civilians Injured In Sopore Grenade Blast

Soldier Dies Of Heart Attack During CASO

OBSERVER MONITORING DESK

SRINAGAR: At least two civilians on Saturday were injured in a grenade blast in Sopore town, while a soldier died of heart attack during a search operation in south Kashmir's Shopian district.

On Saturday evening, suspected militants lobbed a grenade on government forces near Sopore bus, officials said. However, the grenade, they said, missed the intended target and exploded on the roadside leaving two civilians injured.

The injured identified as Shabir Ahmad and Zaffar Ahmad were removed to the nearby hospital for treatment.

Soon after the attack, additional reinforcements of state

forces reached the spot and carried out a search operation to nab the attackers, reports said.

"Police has registered a case in this regard under relevant sections of law. Investigation is in progress and officers continue to work to establish the full circumstances of this crime," a police spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, a Territorial Army soldier identified as Abdul Majeed suffered a heart attack during a cordon and search operation (CASO) in Zainapora village of Shopian district, reports said Saturday.

Majeed, who was attached with army's counter-insurgency unit Rashtriya Rifles, was rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment. However, the doctors declared him dead on arrival.

BJP Vows To Retrieve 17,000 Hectares Of 'Grabbed' Land

— ROSHNI SCAM —

SRINAGAR: Union Minister Anurag Thakur on Saturday expressed confidence that Jammu and Kashmir will get back 17,000 hectares of land that was grabbed through the Roshni Scheme, and action will be taken against those involved in this corruption.

"Roshni Act has been struck down by High Court and (it) termed the act illegal and unconstitutional. It clearly defined why this act had been brought in... just to help a few big names whether in politics, business

or bureaucracy," Thakur, who is the BJP's election in-charge for Jammu and Kashmir, told reporters here.

Thakur said he was glad that the court had taken an initiative and there has been a fair inquiry into it.

"I am sure that 3.42 lakh kanal (17,000 hectares) of land will be returned to state of Jammu and Kashmir. There will be action against who were involved in the corrupt practice," he added.

The Jammu and Kashmir government has filed a review petition **➡ More On P2**

Article- 370 Allowed Rampant Corruption: Jitendra Singh

SAMBA: Union minister Jitendra Singh Saturday said the now-scrapped Article 370 had paved the way for rampant corruption in Jammu and Kashmir as successive state governments used it to make their own anti-graft laws, customised allegedly for convenience.

He said the setting up of the District Development Councils (DDC) will bring further accountability, transparency and outcome-oriented approach in the **➡ More On P2**

‘Why Am I Anxious’: Inside ‘Hope Sessions’ Of Kashmiri Troika-II

HAMEEDA SYED

The realm of mental health in Kashmir has been a personal choice to discover and understand. We have yet to uncover aspects of ourselves that are folded in the linens of society, and growing up, a personal responsibility of wanting clarity has consistently pricked me. Having had my own share of traumatic and core-shattering experiences in different phases meant wanting answers regarding questions that seemed too difficult for my loved ones to delve deep into.

For instance, what did it mean to

be a young Kashmiri? What were the problems that we were collectively facing? How did our personal conflicts cross with political trauma — and more importantly, how were we expected to get rid of this helplessness?

As heavy and uncomfortable as these topics are, the need of the hour, with Kashmir facing a raging pandemic and the stark political reality led me and another colleague, Zarqa Binti Zia to

kickstart "Mental Health through Lived Experience" sessions on Zoom.

The sessions were developed with one common goal in mind: Create awareness regarding mental health, and facilitate a friendly, kind and empathetic space for participants to share their issues and listen to others in return.

Zarqa and I were vehement in creating this space — we both passionately believed that the youth of Kashmir

“My experience has taught me so much, one of it being how desperately the youth of Kashmir need our help. And unconditional help...”



needed someone to hear them out without judgment.

The triple lockdown had left many vulnerable, isolated and in danger of participating in the ever dubious drug addiction activities. What was required was intervention, but not the technical kind.

And so we set out, with our lived experiences on understanding mental health and my Bachelors' degree in Psychology leading the way.

We started with addressing the elephant in the (virtual) room—Mental Health in the context of COVID-19. The platform of operations **➡ More On P6**

OK OPTICIANS

BIG DISCOUNT ON

CRIZAL LENCES
ESSILOR BLUE CUT
ALL HIGH NUMBERS
AVAILABLE

ALSO 50% DISCOUNT ON
GOGGLES SO COME AND
SEE THE DIFFERENCE

AT
GONIKHAN MARKET, SRINAGAR

CELL NO: 7006603055
9906538577

Snow Cycling, Ski Mountaineering Events Held at Gulmarg

Everester & Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award winner



GULMARG DEC 12: Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir on Saturday organized Snow Cycling and Ski Mountaineering events at Gulmarg here as part of the International Mountain Day-2020 celebrations.

Gulmarg having received fresh snowfall overnight presented a breathtaking view with a large number of Skiers and Cyclists in colorful gear along with hundreds of Tourists seen enjoying their time.

Everester and prestigious Tenzing Norgay Adventure Award winner, Smt Aparna Kumar (IPS), who was the Chief Guest on the occasion praised J&K Tourism for its efforts to mark the International Mountain Day-2020 with great fanfare. She

said it was overwhelming to see a large number of boys and girls participate in the Adventure activities being organized by the Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir to mark the occasion. "Youth of J&K have got huge potential and it was on full display during the last two days" Kumar observed.

Praising the beauty and Ski facilities of Gulmarg, Aparna Kumar implored the youth of the country to come and take best advantage of the skiing facilities available here. "Nobody in the country should miss such adventure and view" She said urging the countrymen to visit Kashmir and enjoy its beauty, splendid snow and hospitality.

Aparna Kumar also visited the Ski Shop of the Tourism Department at Gulmarg and was extremely pleased to see the variety of the Ski equipment available for Skiers and Tourists.

She thanked the Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir for inviting her to Kashmir and giving her an opportunity to be part of such wonderful International Mountain Day-2020 celebrations.

Director, Tourism Kashmir, Nisar Ahmad Wani, Joint Director Tourism, Tabassum Kamili, Deputy Director, Tourism (Recreation) Ideel Saleem, Deputy Director, Tourism (Registration), Ahsan-ul-haq Chishti, Assistant Director, Tourism Gulmarg, Dr Javid-ur-Rehman, Superintendent,

Indian Institute of Skiing & Mountaineering, Ali Mohammad Bhat, Tourist Officer, (Adventure) Mudassir Mushtaq, President, Adventure Tour Operators of Kashmir (ATOAK), Rauf Trambo and other Adventure lovers and Tourists were also present on the occasion.

Earlier, around 30 Skiers of the Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering, Gulmarg gave a demonstration of various Skiing types before the Chief Guest and the participants.

The 2-Day International Mountain Day-2020 celebrations concluded with the distribution of awards & certificates among winners and the participants here at the historic Gulmarg Golf Club.

IUST hosts Biodiversity Month celebrations

AWANTIPORA: To commemorate the completion of UN Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020), Mantaqi Centre for Science & Society (MCSS), Islamic University of Science & Technology (IUST) hosted Biodiversity Month celebrations here on Thursday.

The programme is part of the project objectives sponsored by the Department of Science & Technology (DST) under HICAB-Climate Change Programme, Government of India.

Vice Chancellor, IUST Prof. Mushtaq A. Siddiqi while formally inaugurating the event congratulated the MCSS, IUST for their efforts in organizing the event. Prof. Siddiqi opined that the need of the hour is to incorporate the vibrant students and faculty to play a vital role in preserving biodiversity through research in order to build institutional strength. He further said that universities need to gear up to transform from typical academic institutions to institutions of relevance in order to preserve the Biodiversity and Natural Resources around us. He emphasized that among others, student/scholar training/internships should be initiated between IUST and the Wildlife Protection Department.

In-charge Mantaqi Centre Prof.

Fozia S. Qazi who was also the convener of the programme, in her welcome address deliberated upon pragmatics approach for taking care of biodiversity and natural resources both at individual and institutional level. She appreciated and lauded the efforts and hard work of Dr. Aijaz for creating a platform and taking initiatives in the Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change aspects at IUST in particular and Kashmir Region in general.

On the occasion, Regional Wildlife Warden, Kashmir, Rashid Yahya Naqash (ICCA-USA Graduate) who

was the Resource Person during the programme, acknowledged the role of IUST in promoting the cause of biodiversity conservation in Kashmir. He deliberated on the scenario of wildlife conservation and management in J&K. The region is rich in habitats, wetlands, ecosystems, rivers, etc which add to the diversity of biodiversity and wildlife, however, due to various anthropogenic threats like habitat destruction, erosion of genetic resources, disruption of ecosystem processes, etc, the regions biodiversity and wildlife is at risk and needs attention, he added.

Research Officer, Mantaqi Centre Dr. Aijaz Ahmad Qureshi gave a brief presentation to highlight the modus operandi of the programme, including current and future activities of the Centre. He mentioned that the period of UN Biodiversity Decade is commemorating in the month of December 2020 and at global level initiatives are being taken for implementation of post-2020 global biodiversity framework agenda. He highlighted the relevance and mandate of IUST in organizing such types of events and gave an overview of various activities which includes Panel Discussion, Special Lectures, Exhibitions, Awareness, Collaborations and Webinars etc being organized throughout the month long event.

Dr. Aijaz who is also the Nodal Officer, IUST Biodiversity Park highlighted that university is taking all measures for making biodiversity rich and sustainable campus and presently MCSS, IUST is part of research projects focusing on areas like conservation biology, natural history, biosystematics, climate change, bio-ecology, conservation science, capacity building, etc sponsored/executed by many agencies like Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, International Union for Conservation

of Nature (IUCN), Switzerland, Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), India, European Union.

Dean School of Sciences, Prof. G.M. Rather while presenting the concluding remarks deliberated that celebrating biodiversity month to commemorate the UN Biodiversity Decade and deliberate on the strategies needed to be followed for next more than 10 years is a welcome step. There needs to be joint work between Wildlife Protection Department J&K and IUST and hoped that this platform will open new doors for collaborations and wished success for the programme, he added.

Registrar IUST, Prof. Naseer Iqbal, Dean, School of Engineering & Technology, Prof. A. H. Moon, Dean School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Prof. Ab. Salam Bhat, Finance Officer, Sameer Wazir, Dr. M. Amin Bhat, I/c Controller of Examinations, other officials, scholars, students/volunteers and other staff members of the varsity, representatives from various organizations particularly Wildlife Trust of India (Dr. Riyaz Ahamd), School Herbal Garden Scheme, Directorate of School Education (Manzoor Javeed, State Nodal Officer), and representatives of media were present on the occasion.

At the end Dr. Aijaz presented vote of thanks and acknowledged the support and encouragement from various quarters/agencies like IUST, DST, Gol, Directorate of IT&SS, Deans/Heads/faculty/Staff of IUST, Wildlife Trust of India, Inside Kashmir, School Herbal Garden Scheme, Wildlife Protection Department, Centre for Biodiversity & Taxonomy, University of Kashmir, ATREE Bangalore, BNHS, Mumbai, Southern Regional Centre, ZSI, Chennai, University of Montana, USA, media fraternity, colleagues and family members.

FROM FRONT PAGE

7 More Corona ...

total fatality count in the Valley has reached 1148 and 645 in the Jammu region. Srinagar district with 433 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (327), Baramulla (168), Budgam (105), Pulwama (87), Kupwara (88), Anantnag (82), Doda (58), Bandipora (56), Udhampur (53), Kulgam (52), Rajouri (53), Kathua (45), Ganderbal (40), Shopian (37), Samba (34), Poonch (22), Ramban (21), Kishtwar (20), and Reasi (11).

Meanwhile, the Union Territory witnessed 419 new cases of Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, officials said.

While Kashmir valley reported 211 new cases, the remaining 208 were confirmed by the officials from Jammu Division.

Giving district wise details, they said, Srinagar reported 89 cases, Baramulla 24, Budgam 35, Kupwara 14, Pulwama 10, Anantnag 5, Bandipora 9, Ganderbal 16, Kulgam 0, Shopian 9, Jammu 118, Udhampur 26, Rajouri 12, Doda 9, Kathua 13, Kishtwar 13, Samba 11, Poonch 2, Ramban 3 and Reasi 1.

Moreover, they said, 430 more patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals—226 from Jammu Division and 204 from Kashmir Valley. (With GNS inputs)

After Outrage ...

of the concerns of the students and the decision of the university regarding mode of conduct of examinations. The directions / guidelines from the UGC on the matter are sought and still awaited," reads the notification.

It adds that the university shall take its decision regarding the mode of conduct of examination in consonance with the directions / guidelines received from the UGC on the matter.

"Meanwhile the students are advised to relax and continue with their ongoing online classes and their preparation for examination. They may frequently visit the university examination website, www.jmicoe.in for any further update on the matter," the notification adds.

Pertinently, the announcement of JMI to conduct online examinations had evoked sharp reaction from Kashmiri students and several regional mainstream parties here on Friday. Two major mainstream parties National Conference (NC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) criticized Jami's decision to conduct on-line exams

"The announcement of the university to go for an on-line examination is incognizant of the ground realities in J&K, where 2G internet speed and frequent clampdowns on the internet service are common. The guidelines that students would be responsible for ensuring electricity and internet for the complete duration of the test and the students would be responsible for any lapses on that front, are elitist in nature defeating the inclusiveness that JMI stood for since

its inception," NC President Farooq Abdullah had said.

Echoing similar views, PDP Chief Mehbooba Mufti had said "Jamia University's decision to hold exams in proctored online mode which requires laptops & high speed data for 3 hours is deeply problematic for students hailing from J&K. Request them to look for alternatives so that these bright minds don't suffer."

116 Journalists ...

journalists and media staff so far in targeted attacks, bomb blasts and cross-fire incidents in 15 countries.

In its 2020 country-wise ranking, Mexico tops the list for a fourth time in five years with 13 killings, followed by Pakistan (five), India, Afghanistan, Iraq and Nigeria (three each), the Philippines, Somalia and Syria (two each) while one journalist was killed in each of the six countries Cameroon, Honduras, Paraguay, Russia, Sweden and Yemen.

In the Indian sub-continent, murders of journalists in Pakistan (138) and in India (116) have featured almost every year in the list since 1990, making 40 per cent of the total deaths of journalists in the Asia Pacific region. (Agencies)

Admin Assures ...

"The committee established to look into the issues of hoteliers here will be visiting Gulmarg again for two days on Wednesday and Thursday during which the committee members will meet all the 69 hoteliers. The hoteliers should meet the committee in two days," he said.

However, he said there will be no compromise on the illegal encroachments, adding that anyone found on encroached land in Gulmarg will have to face the law.

"If there would be errors in the documents, the committee is open to rectify the errors only if the authentic document will be available with the concerned hotelier and would produce the documents later before the High Court," he said.

Soon after the meeting culminated, hotelier and Chairperson of PHD Chamber of Commerce in Kashmir, Mushtaq Ahmad Chaya said that they are hopeful that the lease will be extended.

"I have been assured by the Government of India, Lt Governor, Chief Secretary and others that the lease of hotels will be extended," he said. He said that the hoteliers here too are against the illegal encroachments and "Those who have illegally encroached the hotels should face the law."

"We have got the land on lease, which has ended. The lease is beyond extended everywhere, so we are hopeful that our issues too will be resolved. Our meeting with the district administration was aimed to convey the authorities that there should be no harassment to the hoteliers," Chaya said.

"We have been assured that the

lease will be extended and thus are hopeful that the government will not take any decision which would be adverse to the hoteliers," Chaya said—With inputs from KNO

Cop Arrested For ...

The woman Panch member from Block Hudipora, as per the report has in her complaint before police post Delina stated that three persons, one of them brandishing a pistol, approached her last night asking her to abstain from DDC election voting. Besides the cop, she has named Manzoor Ahmad Dar, a civilian, and Iqbal Ahmad, a teacher for threatening her.

"We have taken cognizance of the complaint and registered a case. An FIR vide number 214/2020 under sections 506, 354 B, 452 has been registered in this regard, and investigation has been set into motion," the report quoted a police officer as saying.

Pertinently, mother of one of the accused is also contesting in these elections.

PAGD Violating ...

He said the Congress remained committed to the already reached agreement and did not field any candidate against the alliance in Nowshera.

Sharma, who is also the chief spokesperson of J&K Pradesh Congress Committee, said it was settled in the very beginning of talks for seat sharing with PAGD that PDP-NC together would contest the Nowshera seat while the Seri-Lamberi seat would go to Congress and on Sunderbani seat, the local leadership would jointly decide the candidate.

We did honour the agreement but it was unfortunate that NC fielded its candidate in Seri/Lamberi seat, the home seat of BJP president Ravinder Raina, on the last day and also fielded a candidate for Sunderbani segment, he said.

People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) is an amalgam of seven mainstream parties, including the NC and the PDP, that are contesting the ongoing DDC elections on their own party symbols.

Congress had not fielded any candidate on Nowshera seat, which went to polls in the earlier phase. It was conveyed by the top leadership of NC on the day of filing of papers too that NC shall not field its candidate on Seri-Lamberi seat but unfortunately they did, which was wrong, Sharma told reporters in Nowshera.

He said no cross candidates were fielded anywhere in line with the already reached agreement between the PAGD and the Congress though there are some other seats where they are fighting against each other after failing to reach an agreement.

The Congress leader appealed to the people to vote for his party candidates to defeat the BJP. People need to send a signal that they cannot be taken for granted by the BJP just on Hindutva, he said and

accused the BJP of pursuing anti-youth, anti-poor and anti-farmers policies.

On November 17, the Congress had said that it was not part of PAGD but had entered into an electoral understanding only for the DDC polls.

JK To Clear ...

payments of power purchases.

An MoU for availing the second tranche of the loan amounting Rs. 5444.47 crores was signed between JK Power Development Department, J&K Power Corporation Ltd. and Power Finance Corporation in the presence of the Principal Secretary Power Development Department, Rohit Kansal at Srinagar on Saturday, an official spokesperson said.

The MoU, he said, was signed by the Director Finance PDD, M. H Malik and Chief Engineer JKPC, Mohammad Yousuf Baba and Madhu Chakraborty GM, L&D PFC.

"The MDs of the DISCOMs, Chief engineers of PDD and other senior officers were present on the occasion. The ED of the PFC Manoj Sharma joined the ceremony through video conferencing. The agreement for availing of the first tranche of the loan for Rs 5580 crores had already been signed by the department with REC and PFC in October this year," the official spokesperson said.

With the signing of today's MoU, he said, J&K would be able to lift the full quantum of loan of Rs 11024.47 crores allotted to it enabling it to fully liquidate its power purchase liabilities as accumulated on June 30, 2020.

He further said that under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, the Government of India had announced a special package of Rs 90000 crore for liquidity infusion in DISCOMs for clearing of their power purchase liabilities to tide over financial crises owing to low power recoveries.

"In pursuance, Jammu and Kashmir immediately started fulfillment of pre-loan requisites and signed the MoU for the first tranche of the loan of Rs. 5580 crores through identified financial organizations i.e. Power Finance Corporation Ltd. (PFC) and Rural Electrification Corporation Ltd (REC) in October 2020," the official spokesperson said.

He said that J&K has an annual power purchase bill of Rs. 6000 to 6500 crores against which the power recoveries are just 2200 crore to 2300 crore making for an annual deficit of over Rs 4000 crores. "The power purchase liability of J&K towards various CPUs ending June 2020 had swollen to Rs. 11500 crores which were being charged at a late payment surcharge (interest rate) of 18% per annum (late payment surcharge). The loan assistance will enable savings of nearly Rs. 1000 crore to J&K on account of difference in rate of interest (late payment surcharge) that

was otherwise being charged by the creditors against these power purchase liabilities," the official spokesperson added.

BJP Vows To ...

in the high court seeking to distinguish between landless cultivators and wealthy land grabbers who had benefitted from the law which has been struck down. The petition will come up for hearing on December 16. Commenting on the ongoing District Development Council elections in Jammu and Kashmir, Thakur said the people will decide which part wins or loses.

"However, the response to the five phases of elections so far means that people have already ensured the victory of democracy. The important thing is that these polls have been free, fair and fear-free," he said.

The union minister said there were attempts the scare the people ahead of the elections "but they (voters) were not scared. "On abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A, Thakur said many people have benefited from it including Scheduled Tribe communities such as Gorkhas and Valmikis and West Pakistan refugees. "Even women of Jammu and Kashmir have got their rights now," he added. (PTI)

Article-370 ...

working of the administration in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Article 370 had paved the way for rampant corruption in Jammu and Kashmir because it gave the successive governments in the state the right to enact their own anti-graft laws which were inadequate and tailor-made for convenience," he told an election rally in support of BJP candidates in the DDC polls.

At the same time, Article 370 also gave the state rulers the prerogative not to allow the Centre's Prevention of Corruption Act to be implemented in Jammu and Kashmir like the rest of the country, he said.

Singh, the Union Minister for the Prime Minister's Office, said the Prevention of Corruption Act was implemented in Jammu and Kashmir only after the abrogation of Article 370 and the state having turned into a Union Territory.

The Article 370 was abrogated on August 5, 2019, and subsequently the erstwhile state was divided into two UTs—Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Singh, who hails from Jammu and Kashmir, said there was no effective curb on corruption in the past because the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir had its own anti-corruption law and probes into corruption cases carried on indefinitely, allowing the officials concerned to get superannuated, or making too late to bring them to book.

"As a result, corruption in Jammu and Kashmir, both in lower as well as in higher offices, became a norm rather than an exception and the

common impression was that anybody who was smart enough to get away with it, could also manage to go scot-free," he said.

With the implementation of the Prevention of Corruption Act in Jammu and Kashmir now, the minister said, now there are timelines fixed to dispose of corruption cases and at the same time, not only the bribe-taker but also the bribe-giver is held guilty.

Singh said that in the last one year, there is a visible change in governance and the good governance practices followed by the Centre are also being gradually implemented in Jammu and Kashmir, one after the other.

"This has also led to a conspicuous change in the work culture

in the government setup which was grossly lacking in the past," he said. The minister said the setting up of DDCs will bring further accountability, transparency and outcome-oriented approach in the working of the government.

"When the District Councillors and the District Council Chairman work in coordination with the District Deputy Commissioner and his administration, they will not only supplement each other's efforts and initiatives, but also exercise the necessary checks and balances," he said.

Singh said DDCs will herald a new era of democratisation with accountability in the administration and, therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to make this initiative successful. (PTI)

Finance Dept Issues Instructions To Streamline Govt Expenditure

JAMMU: In order to streamline the revenue and capital expenditure the Finance department on Saturday today directed all the Drawing & Disbursing Officers (DDOs) and Treasury Officers to observe certain guidelines while raising invoices or passing bills for payment.

According to an official spokesperson, the directions have been passed for timely delivery of goods and services it has been directed to fix responsibility in case of delay.

"It has been instructed that if delay is attributable to supplier/contractor penalty as stipulated in contract document should be levied and relaxation of these conditions shall be made only with the approval of next higher authority," he said.

"Further it has been ordered that if delays are due to concerned executing agency, these matters shall be brought to the notice of Administrative Department for suitable corrective action against the concerned. The Treasury Officers have also been asked to point out cases of exceptional delays by respective DDOs without adequate reasons and submit Monthly Delay Reports (MDRs) to Finance department," he added.

As a breather to contractors, the official spokesperson said, it has been said in the order to release payments to the contractors of the executed works within the time frame laid down as per contract. He said that it has also been directed that the security deposit of contractors

shall remain withheld for defect liability period and shall be released only after satisfactory completion of work and report by the concerned authority.

"In order to see for the mismatch in the amount of work done on ground and in work order the Treasury Officers have been ordered to check Measurement Books duly signed by the concerned executing agency while preferring their invoices to the treasuries. It has also been instructed that no bill beyond the allotted cost shall be entertained in the treasuries. No deviation in the scope of work after the work has been tendered, reads one of the instructions," he added.

He further said that it has also been ordered that bills on account of rent shall only be entertained in the treasury when accompanied by relevant Rent Assessment Order issued by the competent authority.

"Moreover the Power Development Department has been advised to provide online electricity bills on monthly basis to each DDO. They in turn have been directed to contra-credit it the monthly billed amount through JKPAYSYS only," the official spokesperson said.

"To make the fund transfer to beneficiaries of government schemes exclusively through DBT it has been impressed that no beneficiary related bills shall be entertained by the treasury officer unless schemes are registered on the PFMS portal w.e.f February 2021," he added.

Div Com for closure of brick kilns within 8 km radius of Airport

Instructs DC Budgam to submit action taken report

SRINAGAR : The Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole today called for closure of brick kilns operating within the radius of 8 kilometre distance from Srinagar International Airport.

Div Com said this while chairing a meeting of officers to take review of the implementation of High Court instructions.

The meeting among others was attended by Deputy Commissioner Budgam, SP Budgam, Commandant CJSF Srinagar, Commandant 35 Bn, SM Operation AAI and JE Operation AAI.

At the outset, DC Budgam was given instructions to ensure

closure of unregistered brick kilns operating within the aerodrome area.

He stressed on the strict implementation of High Court orders, and instructed DC Budgam to conduct survey besides submit the action taken report.

He emphasized on the implementation of Brick kills closure orders while as Director FCS&CA was directed to ensure proper compensation and rehabilitation of the affected brick kiln owners at identified 1200-kanal Wullar site.

Director, AAI was directed to submit point wise action taken report of all concerned directions.

3.65 Lac J&K Accounts Benefit Under Business Revival Package

J&K Bank says passed on relief to 2.61 lac beneficiary accounts

Srinagar : Over three lac sixty five thousand accounts in J&K have benefited from the first tranche of relief released by the UT Government under its Business Revival Package for the eligible businesses affected by the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic and the restructured accounts of 2014-floods and 2016-disruption.

As the leading bank, J&K Bank alone has received Rs 222 Cr out of the Rs 250 Cr released by the government in its first tranche so far out of Rs 950 Cr sanctioned for the banking sector. The bank has already passed the amount of Rs 222 Cr as relief to 2.61 lac eligible beneficiary accounts. Meanwhile, other banks operating in the region have released over Rs 27 Cr to 1.04 lac beneficiary accounts.

Notably, J&K Government led by Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha had constituted a five-member committee to work out modalities for the economic revival in the union territory and extending support to its business community. The committee, headed by the then Advisor to Lt Governor, K K Sharma, comprised of Financial Commissioner (Finance Department), Commissioner Secretary Industries and Commerce, Secretary Tourism and the bank's Chairman and MD. The committee recommended the financial relief of Rs 950 Cr for banking sector as major part of the total Economic

Revival Package of Rs 1350 Cr. The package included 5% interest subvention for the eligible businesses affected by the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic.

"The comprehensive package has been a game-changing step in various ways to revive the economy of the region. It has provided much needed relief to the business and traders community who had been pegged back by the unprecedented pandemic. For such a huge relief and revival package that has helped the entire trader and business community besides banks operating in the region, we must express our sincere gratitude to the hon'ble Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam and Financial Commissioner Dr A K Mehta, who are very much concerned about the economic development of the people of J&K," the CMD said.

"The subvention released by the government has not only brought relief to the business community by hand holding them in repayment of interest charged to their accounts but also helped the bank in realisation of the part amount of interest from the borrowers. The remaining instalments when released by the government will further strengthen the bank's asset quality and bring more relief and happiness to the business community," he said.

Kin of 3 Jailed Kashmiris Protest At BJP Rally in Budgam

Budgam: Family members of the three men from Budgam district who were arrested by the Delhi Police's Special Cell a few days ago held a demonstration here in Budgam on Saturday during a BJP election rally. They were demanding release of their kin who they insist are innocent.

According to news agency Kashmir Dot Co- (KDC) the family members of the three men, who have been arrested by Delhi Police Special cell for their alleged links with ISI and Khalistani groups, held a protest while BJP rally was on at Bus stand

Budgam. National general secretary BJP, Tarun Chug, Union MoS Anurag Thakur and spokesperson Shahnawaz Hussain were addressing this public rally here.

The family members mostly women assembled at the spot and raised slogans of Delhi Police "Hai Hai", "we want justice" and "our sons are innocent".

"The Delhi Police can verify the records of all the three persons through the Jammu and Kashmir Police and other government agencies. They are not involved in any illegal activities," they said in front

of BJP'S top leadership.

They said the Delhi Police Special Cell has "implicated them in a false case without justifying their involvement in any militant activity".

The protesting family members said they want the higher ups to intervene in the matter to secure release of their kin.

Shabir Ahmed Gojri, Reyaz Ahmed Rather, and Muhammad Ayub Pathan, all residents of Budgam district were arrested on 7th of this month along with two Sikh men in New Delhi for their alleged links with ISI and Khalistani groups.

Gupta reviews Smart City Project for twin cities of Jammu, Srinagar

JAMMU, DECEMBER 12- Principal Secretary Housing and Urban Development, Dheeraj Gupta, today chaired a high level meeting to review progress on implementation of Smart City Project for twin cities of Jammu and Srinagar at Civil Secretariat here.

The meeting was attended by Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Sanjeev Verma; Deputy Commissioner, Jammu, Sushma Chauhan and other officers of the concerned department while as Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, PK Pole and Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Shahid Iqbal Choudhary participated through video conferencing.

Speaking during the meeting,

Principal Secretary said that the smart city project will improve the living standards of the people of both the cities as uninterrupted water and electricity will be provided to the general public besides efficient mechanism for solid waste management will also be put in place through this project.

Dheeraj Gupta also highlighted that the project will also provide efficient public transport for urban mobility as well as affordable housing to the citizens of twin cities.

He directed the officers to maintain an effective coordination with the implementing agencies in order to speed up the pace of works

on developmental projects under the Smart City project for Jammu and Srinagar.

Dheeraj Gupta asked the officers to conduct regular inspection of the works undertaken through this project so that any hurdle or bottleneck faced during execution of works can be sorted out immediately.

Principal Secretary maintained that the purpose of the smart cities project is to improve the economic growth of people by providing them efficient and affordable public services besides sustainable environmental safety and security as well as an enhanced health and education system.

(GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR)

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) ELECTRIC DIVISION SRINAGAR

Tender Notice No. :- 80 of 2020-21/R&B

Dated: 07.12.2020

For and on behalf of The Lt. Governor of Union Territory Jammu and Kashmir sealed tenders affixed with 5/- rupees revenue stamps are invited for the below mentioned works from approved and eligible Electrical contractors registered with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other state /Central Govt. as per specification and detailed mentioned in the BOQ.

S.No	Name of Work	Approx Cost (lacs)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Class Of Contractor	Time of Completion	Cost of tender document	M.H.of Account
01	Supply, installation testing and Commissioning of Hot and Cold Air Conditioner J&K High Court building Srinagar (part B)	99500/-	1990/-	"A" Class Electrical	05 days	200	2059

AAA/TS = Submitted
Position of Funds: -Demanded

The tender should be addressed to the Executive Engineer (R&B) Electric Division Srinagar and should reach in the office by or before 16.12.2020 upto 4.00 PM. The tenders /bids will be opened on the same day or any other day convenient to tender opening authority in presence of the contractors who may like to be present. In case the last date of receipt of tenders happens to be a holiday /Hartal /curfew day the tenders will be received on next working day.

- The tender document shall be issued by this office from 11.12.2020 upto 15.12.2020 against receipt of treasury challan received from the eligible Electrical contractor and should enclose following documents Viz: valid registration with latest renewal certificate, Pan Card, valid GST registration with latest GST clearance certificate , valid contact No/E-Mail ID in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Electric Division Srinagar. (Tender inviting authority).
- The bidders shall be a liberty to send their bids either in person or through registered post but shall super scribe the following in front of the envelopes.
- i.) Name of work ii) cost of work iii) Full name of contractor with contact No iv) Ref. to CDR No & Date v) Date of receipt of tenders vi) Ref. to NIT No.
- The bidder Should enclose CDR/FDR
- The bidder should sign each page of tender document enclosed with their bid.
- All other Terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in PWD form 25.


Sd/-
Executive Engineer
(R&B) Electric Division
Srinagar

NO:- ERB/ 2984-91
Dated:- 07.12.2020

DIPK-10293/20

SAVE PRECIOUS LIFE

A person has been diagnosed with the failure of both the kidneys the financial condition of the person is worst and is not able to best the expense for her kidney treatment so it is requested to all those who have the means to donate for this noble cause so that the precious life could be saved Name **Shafiqah Bano** W/o Imtiyaz Ahmad Dar R/o Buchpora Dar Mohalla Srinagar



A/C No: 0173040150000537 J&K BANK
Branch Anchar Buchpora IFSC CODE JAKAO ANCHAR
CONTACT NO: 9797665000, 9419378547

PUBLIC NOTICE

I lost my mobile phone having Jio SIM with 7006558933 as its number while travelling from Sarai Dangerpora Sumbal to Batamalo on 29 November 2020
Therefore, I'll not be responsible for any misuse from this number from the day I lost it.*
Moreover, I want to apply for the duplicate SIM of the same number.*
Anybody having any objection in this regard can contact the concerned officials within the seven days from the publication of this notice, after which no objection will be entertained.

Name: Showkat Hussain Rather.
S/o: GH. Hassan Rather R/o: Sarai Dangerpora Sumbal

F-KO

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JSD (PHE) DIVISION PULWAMA

email : xenpheapulwama@gmail.com

CORRIGENDUM

Subject:- ENIT S. No. 47/PHEP of 2020-21
Reference:- This office No. PHEP/3435-46 Dated. 08-10-2020

The tender for the work "Retrofitting of Water Supply Scheme Murran under JJM" figuring at S. No. (1) of the above-mentioned E-NIT is hereby cancelled.

NO: PHEP/ 4947-59
Dated:- 12-12-2020

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
JSD (PHE) Div., Pulwama.

DIPK-10336/20



ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

AWANTIPORA, KASHMIR.

Tele: 01933-247954/247955. Website: www.islamicuniversity.edu.in.

NOTICE

It is notified for information of all the concerned that the provisional selection list of candidates selected against the resultant vacancies generated after issuance of Admission Notification 9 and 10 is available on the University website.

Concerned candidates are advised to visit the University website to access/download the selection list or contact on the below given email/phone no. for information.

Email: admissions@islamicuniversity.edu.in. Phone: 01933-247252, Mobile: 9906400789, 9858306455.
No. IUST/Acad/admissions/20/739
Dated: 11-12-2020

Sd/-
Deputy Registrar, Academics

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE, ANANTNAG, J&K (CAMP OFFICE: MMABM, ASSOCIATED HOSPITAL, GMC, ANANTNAG)

Phone No. 01932-227624 / Fax 01932-227625
e-mail : gmcanantnag2018@gmail.com

Subject: - e-NIT No. 12 GMCA of 2020 Dated: 26.11.2020 for Printing and Supply of College, Magazine at MMABM, Associated Hospital, GMC, Anantnag-Extension of last date thereof.

Due to poor response to our -e--NIT No. 12 GMCA of 2020 Dated: 26.11.2020 for Supply of College, Magazine etc.at MMABM, Associated Hospital, GMC, Anantnag, the last date for submission of BIDs is extended upto 17-12-2020 (4:00 PM). Date of Opening of Bid is 19-12-2020.


NO:-GMCA/Plg/174/3847-51

Dated: /10.12.2020. "T

Principal;
Govt. Medical College, Anantnag

DIPK-10284/20

DIAL-EMMA



- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,245222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

AIRPORTS


SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

RAILWAYS

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BUBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

- Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open)
- Mughal Road - (Open)
- Srinagar- Leh- (Open)



HIJRI CALENDAR

27 Rabi-us-Sani
1442

PRAYERS	
FAJR	5: 54
ZUHR	12: 22
ASR	3:45
Magrib	5:25
ISHA	6:50

This Day In History

- 1294 - Saint Celestine V abdicates the papacy after only five months; Celestine hoped to return to his previous life as an ascetic hermit.
- 1545 - Council of Trent (19th ecumenical council) opened by Pope Paul III
- 1570 - Sweden and Denmark signs Peace of Stettin
- 1572 - Spanish army beats Geuzen fleet (confederacy of Calvinist Dutch nobles) under admiral Lumey
- 1577 - Sir Francis Drake sets sail from England on a circumnavigation of the world
- 1643 - English Civil War: The Battle of Alton takes place in Hampshire.
- 1668 - Jean Racine's "Britannicus" premieres in Paris.
- 1734 - Britain & Russia sign trade agreement
- 1861 - Battle of Alleghany Summit, WV
- 1862 - Battle of Fredericksburg, VA (Marye's Heights)
- 1864 - Battle of Ft McAllister, GA
- 1916 - Avalanche kills 10,000 Austrian & Italian troops in 24 hrs in Tyrol.
- 1918 - US army of occupation crosses Rhine, enters Germany.
- 1920 - League of nations establishes International Court of Justice in The Hague.
- 1920 - Netherland breaks contact with Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia & Slavia forbid National Front & Netherland Union.
- 1941 - Lawine battlers destroy Haaraz, Peru; about 3,000 die.
- 1962 - Relay 1 communication satellite launched.
- 1966 - 1st US bombing of Hanoi part of Operation Rolling Thunder during the Vietnam War.
- 1966 - 1st battle for Bijlmer flats Amsterdam.
- 1974 - Malta becomes a republic.
- 1982 - Earthquake hits Northern Yemen; 2,000 die.
- 1988 - Arafat addresses UN in Geneva.
- 1993 - Space shuttle STS-61 (Endeavour 5), lands President.
- 2001 - The Indian Parliament Sansad is attacked by terrorists. 15 people are killed, including all the terrorists.
- 2002 - Enlargement of the European Union: The European Union announces that Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia will become members from May 1, 2004.
- 2003 - Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is captured near his home town of Tikrit, during Operation Red Dawn by US forces.
- 2014 - The British Government announces it will send hundreds of troops to Iraq, to train Iraqi and Kurdish forces in the conflict with Islamic State.
- 2015 - COP21 climate change summit in Paris reaches a deal between nearly 200 countries to attempt to tackle rising global temperatures.

From KO Archives

High time to settle Kashmir issue: EU

Agencies

ISLAMABAD: French envoy to Pakistan today said European Union welcomes any initiative which would facilitate the resumption of dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad to resolve the Kashmir issue.

Envoy Yannick Gerard called for a peaceful solution of the Kashmir is-sue," which would meet the aspirations of the Kashmiri population, first and exhausted victim of this long-standing dispute". That's why the European Union, and France of course, favour any initiative which could be conducive to a calmer atmosphere and renewed dialogue. We think that such initiatives should be taken by all the concerned parties and we keep on telling that in all occasions," French envoy said in an interview.

EU has already welcomed the truce offered by the Indian government as well as the responding "restraint" announced by Pakistan, he added.

"We certainly think that it is now high time, for all parties, to take the courageous decisions required to stop the present stale-mate". "The current deadlock between New Delhi and Islamabad," is making the region really too dangerous and unstable. So let's hope that such a process can begin," said Yannick Gerard.

Gerard said the continued tension over Kashmir, besides exhausting the populations of the concerned areas, "is a major factor of instability for the whole South Asia." "It creates a volatile and dangerous situation which is jeopardizing and hampering the stability and the development of a whole and potentially dynamic region," said the French envoy.

Some steps, like the Lahore process or the search for confidence-building measures, had been taken, even in the recent past, which could be used as guidelines in order to find a way out.

"We will encourage any of such initiatives' aimed at re-starting dialogue and settling peacefully and fairly the dispute. Confidence and dialogue have to be restored by the parties by any means," he said.

He said the European Union and the French Government, certainly acknowledged the repeated Pakistani offers to dialogue, as "a positive step." Paris have been emphasizing on the necessity for re-sumption of "a since dialogue," between India and Pakistan, he said. To a question on a possible role of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Gerard said, "Everybody concerned by the Kashmir issue has, at its own level, to play its role in breaking the impasse."

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 13 DECEMBER, 2000)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of the
Kashmir Observer LLP

Published from: # 5- Boulevard, Srinagar-190001

Printed at: KT Press Pvt. Ltd, Rangreth Ind Area, Srinagar.

RNI Registration No: 69503/98

Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16

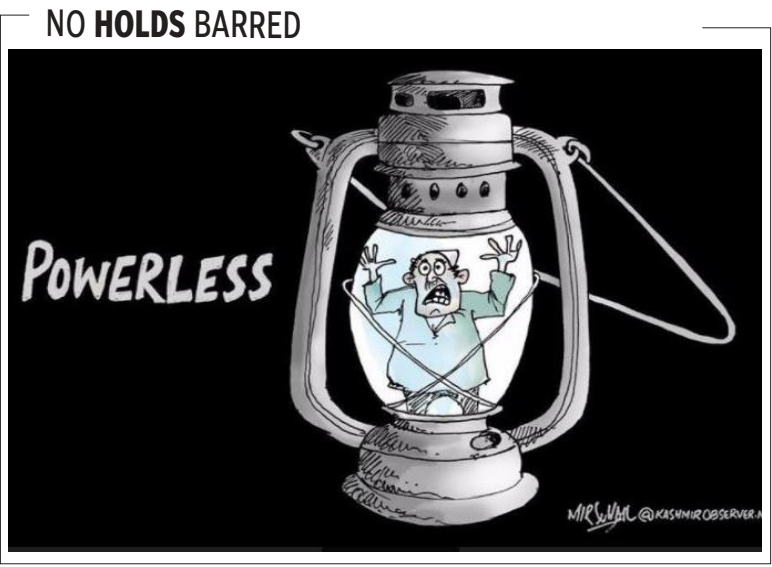
Editor-in-Chief : Sajjad Haider

Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja

Switchboard: (0194) 2106304

Editorial: (0194) 2502327

Email editorial: editor@kashmirobsvserver.net



It could be just coincidence that the J&K DDC is almost a replica of the 1980 Sri Lanka model. In the Sri Lankan experiment, other than the directly elected members, the district MPs were nominated to the DDC. A cabinet minister from outside the district headed it. He was appointed by the president, and answerable only to him

The ongoing District Development Council (DDC) elections in Jammu & Kashmir call to mind a similar exercise in Sri Lanka four decades ago, when that country's political leadership tried to stanch Tamil demands for regional political autonomy with almost exactly the same kind of local government for which J&K is voting now.

The parallel is especially striking because Delhi wants Sri Lanka to settle the still unresolved Tamil question through an elevated form of devolution. Specifically, it wants Colombo to implement provincial devolution along Centre-State lines under the provisions of an amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution resulting from the 1987 Indian intervention, at a time that it is downgrading its own devolution in J&K to district level local government, a near replica of what Sri Lanka tried but had to give up under Indian pressure.

Sri Lanka offered DDCs as a solution at a time when the Tamil polity was already radicalised. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam had come into existence, and the predominant mainstream Tamil party had started getting sidelined because of its failure to extract any concessions from a centralised Sinhalese-dominated polity. Two agreements on devolution remained unimplemented because of competitive politics between the two main national parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLP).

The Federal Party, the main Tamil political entity, remained hopeful of accommodation with the government, but by 1975, separatism had entered Tamil political language. The Federal Party became the Tamil United Liberation Front. In 1976, in what came to be known as the Vaddukoddai Resolution, the TULF adopted the goal of a separate, sovereign Tamil nation, and also outlined the map of Tamil Eelam. It asked Tamil youth "to throw themselves into the sacred fight for freedom".

Nascent Tamil militancy took that as a green signal. A new, violent Tamil nationalism was born. The TULF fought the 1977 general election on the strength of the Vaddukoddai Resolution, sweeping the parliamentary seats in the north and east, and became the main opposition party in Parliament.

The same election also brought J R Jayewardene (JRJ) to power. He first changed the constitution, centralising political and executive power under an executive presidency so powerful he would joke that the only thing he could not do was change a man into a woman or vice versa. In 1979, Sri Lanka enacted the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act, put the police and still largely ceremonial military to tackle Tamil militancy. Politically, JRJ offered TULF the DDCs.

It could be just coincidence that the J&K DDC is almost a replica of the 1980 Sri Lanka model. In the Sri Lankan experiment, other than the directly elected members, the district MPs were nominated to the DDC.

Trying Sri Lankan Model in Kashmir

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN | INDIAN EXPRESS



A cabinet minister from outside the district headed it. He was appointed by the president, and answerable only to him. In Kashmir, the councils will include MPs MLAs, and chairpersons of Block Development Councils falling in the district. The elected members will elect a chairperson of the council. The additional district commissioner, who answers to the Union Home Ministry, will function as its chief executive officer.

Just as is being envisaged for J&K, the DDCs in Sri Lanka were meant to decentralise the work of "development", by drafting annual development plans for the district, and taking up local public works.

The big difference is that the June 1981 DDC elections in Sri Lanka were held in the whole country to show it was not about setting up a separate political system for the Tamil districts.

The TULF, under pressure from the expectations it had created, was divided on the issue of participation in the election, but eventually chose to take part. The LTTE called for a boycott. In Jaffna, events in the run-up to voting day on June 4 were an inauspicious augury of what was to come. The candidate of JRJ's UNP was assassinated on May 24. The government responded by flooding Jaffna with police and army. Two policemen were shot

dead a week later in contested circumstances.

Policemen and mobs in civilian clothes went on a retaliatory rampage. Shops and homes were ransacked and torched. The home of Jaffna MP V Yogeswaran was burnt down even as men in uniform stood guard around it. The office of a Tamil newspaper was burnt down. On June 1, there was more violence. Jaffna Public Library, home to an invaluable collection of Tamil literature including original documents and manuscripts, was burnt down. The UNP's top two Tamil baiters of that period, Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake, who had been dispatched by the party to Jaffna, were named by witnesses as instigators of the violence.

Despite the violence, the turnout was huge in the Tamil districts. People voted to keep the UNP out (the SLFP was boycotting) just as in J&K, people have said they are voting to keep the BJP out. In the rest of Sri Lanka, the response was lukewarm. The Sinhalese majority was simply not interested in DDCs.

The DDCs became a reality but they did nothing for Sri Lanka's relations with its Tamil citizens. The experiment bumbled along until the 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom brought India into the equation.

Attempts thereafter by JRJ to dress up and re-offer the DDC proposal in talks brokered by India between the government and Tamil parties went nowhere. Sri Lanka had to bury the DDCs. In 1987, under the India-Sri Lanka Agreement, the Sri Lankan parliament adopted the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, with provisions for the creation of provincial councils. This remains the only concession on devolution that the country has made to date. But it failed to implement this in letter and spirit in the Tamil north and east. What followed is well known.

Less than three months ago, on September 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the recently elected Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa held a virtual summit that ended with a joint statement reiterating India's wish for "equality, justice, peace and respect within a united Sri Lanka" for Tamils and specifically, for the implementation of the 13th Amendment.

Around the same time, the Centre was drawing up plans to hold direct elections to the DDC in its own troubled J&K, a year after stripping the state of its special status, bifurcating it into two Union Territories, and bringing it under the direct control of the Union Home ministry.

Two senior ministers in the Modi cabinet have the inside track on why the DDC experiment failed to meet Sri Lankan Tamil aspirations, having been closely involved in the Indian intervention at the time.

Call it double irony, or just another coincidence — Sri Lanka now wants to scrap the 13th Amendment and return to its own 40-year-old DDC proposals.

Views expressed in this article are author's own and do not necessarily represent that of Kashmir Observer

National Education Policy 2020 Reversing The Trends Of Education Brain Drain

M. KASHYAP AND MUZAFFAR BHAT

The focal point of this article is to examine the causes, effects of brain drain and how the New Education Policy (NEP 2020)'s proposed revamp of the entire education system would be well suited to tackle the pressing problem of educational brain drain in India.

According to a report issued by the National Science Foundation - Immigrants' Growing Presence in the US Science and Engineering Workforce: Education and Employment Characteristics, 57% of the immigrants were born in Asian countries. Of the lot, India is still the top country of birth for immigrant scientists and engineers. This means there has been an 85% increase from 2003. In just over a decade, India has lost nearly 9.5 lakh individuals to brain drain to the United States alone. That is without taking into account statistics for the outward flow of human capital into other countries like Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, UAE etc.

This trend is highly problematic because competent individuals who could have contributed to the growth of their home country, economically, socially and otherwise leave for greener pastures.

There are a few factors which contribute specifically to educational brain drain in India. Firstly, there is the issue of colleges setting impossibly high cut-off rates as the eligibility criteria. This disheartens a lot of students because the likelihood of scoring around 99% for most is slim to none. On the other hand, there are many coveted universities abroad such as Oxford or Cambridge that set 75% or even lower as the admission cut-off. Therefore, these become the clearly more attainable fruit for those who are able to afford it.

Secondly, the promise of high paying jobs in the future is a big draw for students who go abroad for higher education. It is a huge boon especially for those who wish to work in the private and corporate sectors. Owing to the subpar research facilities, structuring and caliber of Indian higher educational programmes, even the private sector employers in India give preference to "foreign returned" candidates who end up with plum entry-level packages such as INR 15 lakhs or more. This is also an influencing criteria for educational brain drain.

Thirdly, the costs of higher education programmes, especially at the post-graduate level are prohibitively expensive for many students who wish to enroll in Ivy League equivalent institutions such as IITs, IIMs, National law schools etc. Either the process or the pricing is so off-putting that the students would rather apply abroad.

Fourthly, there is the evaluation system itself where in some cases, the universities tend to value and reward quantity over quality. This leads to the students picking up the art of "bullshitting" or writing extensively rather than dissemination of meaningful and pertinent information. There are no net intellectual gains when a system rewards the students for writing expansively, rather than understanding the concept and its application extensively. For the hard working student, this system of evaluation is no less than a curse. However, the foreign universities use a much more transparent and merit oriented system

chasm between the educational approach taken by the Indian education system, and that of the education systems overseas. Our education system is heavily theory oriented, and focuses less on application. While it is key to have a solid theoretical foundation, it is equally paramount to learn the applications of the theoretical knowledge we memorize in a rote fashion, quite mindlessly.

Furthermore, the students cannot choose the subjects of their choice across streams because our system at present lacks that kind of flexibility. If a youngster desirous of being a sound engineer wishes to study PCMC (Physics, Chemistry, Maths and Computer Science) along with undertaking formal Music training at his college, that is not possible in our system. But the same can be pursued abroad simultaneously either in the form of a dual degree or through the majoring/minoring system.

In the past, key foreign investors and stakehold-

students often suffer from serious levels of homesickness and even drop out from programmes when they go abroad. Furthermore, the cost of college abroad is not something which everyone can afford, even if the student secures a scholarship or receives financial aid. Even discounting the cost of college tuition, there are several other expenses to be met such as housing, food, electricity, water, miscellaneous expenses which burn a steep hole in the pocket. However, when foreign universities are allowed to set up campuses here as proposed by NEP 2020, students will be able to get a world class education at their doorstep, provided by the best faculty along with high calibre degrees that make them employment ready locally or globally.

An important criteria for students to study abroad so far was the rigidity of the course structure and content in India. For example, if a student wishes to major in Biochemistry while minoring in Fine Arts, this sort of a "deviation" is impossible because of the inflexible educational framework employed by colleges.

Lastly, at present, foreign universities have an edge over us in the field of research. Owing to the considerable grants and substantial funding poured into research both by the State as well as private stakeholders, there is a deep crevasse between India and the world in terms of expectations towards research publications, eminent research labs and the quality of research. NEP 2020 aims to resolve this with the inception of the National Research Foundation (NRF). With an initial grant of Rs. 20,000 crores per annum from the Central Government, the NRF will design and execute a blueprint for improving research and innovation across all fields and industries, provide on-ground patent application training, and promote a robust application oriented approach to research. Consequently, this will strengthen the link between academia and industry.

NEP 2020 can be the linchpin for not only eliminating educational brain drain, but also bringing about an education revolution of seismic proportions in India. The ripple effect of this education revolution has the potential for what tech billionaire, entrepreneur and scientist Elon Musk calls, the opportunity for ordinary individuals to become something extraordinary.

M. Kashyap is a lawyer practicing in Bangalore and Muzaffar Bhat is a businessman from Srinagar who is passionate about public policy matters

There are no net intellectual gains when a system rewards the students for writing expansively, rather than understanding the concept and its application extensively. For the hard working student, this system of evaluation is no less than a curse

for evaluation and scoring. For the dedicated student, there is guaranteed gold at the end of the rainbow. But, that is not to say that the entire Indian higher education system is a massive swamp that needs to be drained.

Many Indian universities have now established autonomously operational departments which are almost on par with foreign universities vis-a-vis grading and the system of credits allocation per course. The system of cumulative grade point average (CGPA) encourages the students to stay on course, and maintain respectable grades consistently throughout all the semesters. This eliminates the Hail Mary proclivities of slacking off students, especially in higher level courses.

Lastly, and most importantly, there is a wide

ers of the higher education sector have been understandably reluctant to invest in India because of the tenuous logistics issues (securing operation licenses, campus permits, red tapism at bureaucratic levels etc. to mention a few), cultural and linguistic barriers, and tedious legalities especially pertaining to FDI. However, the NEP 2020 promises to ease up on these blockades, and grant them reprieve regarding regulatory frameworks, governance, and content development norms. A smart and sensible educational development policy cognizant of the existing issues, and needs of the people has the potential to be the panacea required to reverse the trend of brain drain and transform it into a positive asset acquisition tool. Besides, the benefit accrues to our students who wish to acquire the full benefits of studying abroad at a fraction of the costs. Some

Dilip Kumar at 98

How the actor became India’s biggest star

SHABIR HUSSAIN

Yusuf Khan aka Dilip Kumar, was to write Indian cinema’s grammar book on acting through myriad performances in the years to follow. Kumar, though, wasn’t sure if this was the track he was supposed to choose, knowing that his father was strictly against watching movies, let alone acting in them.

In 1934, Indian cinema’s first diva, Devika Rani, and her husband, Himanshu Rai, set up Bombay Talkies, which produced several hit movies with Ashok Kumar and her in the lead in most of them.

Brought up and educated in England, Rani, along with Rai, had studied filmmaking in Germany.

While she contributed immensely to the development of the early cinema when the talkies had just begun, Rani’s single most important contribution to the Indian film industry would come a decade later when she introduced Yusuf Khan aka Dilip Kumar, who was to write Indian cinema’s grammar book on acting through myriad performances in the years to follow.

Kumar, though, wasn’t sure if this was the track he was supposed to choose, knowing that his father was strictly against watching movies, let alone acting in them.

Lala Ghulam Sarwar Khan would often snub his close friend Bhasheshwarnath Kapoor on why he had allowed his handsome, strapping son Prithviraj to work in films. Less than a couple of decades later, Khan’s son and Prithviraj were to work together in the epic ‘Mughal-e-Azam’ under maverick genius K. Asif’s baton.

Early years

When Kumar finally made up his mind to join Bombay Talkies as an actor, thanks largely to a princely salary of Rs1,250 per month, he asked Devika Rani that he would work under a nom de guerre to keep it from his family, especially his father. He was given three choices: Jahangir, Vasudev and Dilip Kumar. Anything but Yusuf Khan, he said.

His excellent command on Urdu kept Kumar in good stead as he would assist the Bombay Talkies script writers, most of whom were Bengalis and not much at ease with the language.

His boss made sure he was present at all the shootings and other proceedings before his shaky debut in ‘Jwar Bhata’ (1944), directed by Amiya Chakravarty.

Jwar Bhata was a disaster at the box office and Kumar gave every impression that he didn’t belong there. The unforgiving film critic and editor of now defunct Filmindia, Babu Rao Patel, wrote in his typically trenchant critique that it was an amateurish production. He was particularly dismissive of the debutant, describing him as “new anemic hero.”

Patel went on to say: “He looks gaunt and famished and strikes one as a long ill-treated convict who has escaped from a jail. His appearance on the screen creates both laughter and disappointment. His acting effort in this picture amounts to nil.”

A couple of years later, the same Patel had to write a telling compliment in his biting style: “What did Kamini Kaushal find when Dev Anand embraced her in Ziddi [1948]? She discovered that Dilip Kumar embraced her better in Shaheed [1947].”

But to get there, Kumar had to put in a lot of effort. He worked and reworked on his voice and expressions. To get a sense and feel of the craft and its nuances, he started binge-watching Hollywood movies. He was hugely inspired by James Stewart and Ingrid Bergman whose movies he would watch over and over again. Until then, he had watched just one or two movies.

After Jwar Bhata, Kumar worked again with Amiya Chakravarty in ‘Daag’ (1952) – written by Progressive Urdu writer Rajinder Singh Bedi - and won the Filmfare award for Best Actor. The award was established the same year. Kumar went on to bag it seven more times.

Like Jwar Bhata, Kumar’s second film Pratima too tanked at the box office and his acting wasn’t notable ei-



ther. It was in his third movie ‘Milan’ (1946) – not a runaway success though - that Dilip Kumar found his feet. Thanks to director Nitin Bose who groomed him meticulously. Bose helped him understand how to study the script and interpret roles.

Bose was to again direct him in the profound love tragedy ‘Deedar’ (1951), which won him the sobriquet Tragedy King. It was also the first major attempt, and an extremely successful one, at method acting by the thespian. He spent a lot of time with a blind fakir on the roads of Mumbai (then Bombay) to immerse himself in the character.

It was for the first time that a blind man was played by an Indian actor with open eyes on the screen. Earlier actors would keep their eyes closed while playing such characters. Kumar’s performance and Naushad’s music set to moving lyrics by Shakeel Badayuni turned the movie into a rage. Deedar also established Mohammad Rafi as the thespian’s playback voice.

Between ‘Milan’ and ‘Deedar’, Kumar did exactly a dozen movies that established him as a superstar, none as distinct as ‘Andaz’ (1949).

‘Andaz’, a bold theme for its time, started a productive association between him and director Mehboob Khan. After the movie was released Kumar walked away with all the acclaim. This is the only film that features Kumar and Raj Kapoor together.

With Khan, Kumar went on to make two more movies, ‘Aan’ (1951) and ‘Amar’ (1954) — both terrific movies riding on Kumar’s spectacular performances and Naushad’s brilliant music.

Other than Mehboob and Bose, there was another director who had an even greater influence over Dilip Kumar: Bimal Roy. Kumar did three movies with Roy — ‘Yahudi’,

‘Madhumati’ and ‘Devdas’ — all critically acclaimed.

Kumar’s stellar performance in ‘Devdas’ moved one and all, including the then prime minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, who was swept off his feet by the melancholic portrayal of a doomed lover trying to drown his sorrow in alcohol. It was performances like these that prompted V Shantaram to exclaim: “Had Shakespeare met Dilip Kumar, he would have added one more character to the already well-defined ones he had created.”

So deep under the skin of his tragic characters — especially Devdas — did Kumar go that he had to consult a psychologist in London who advised him to take a break from such intense roles and choose some light, leisurely ones. And that’s how ‘Kohinoor’ and ‘Leader’ happened. Again, Kumar enthralled the cinegoers with his comic timing and showed that he was at equal ease with comedy as well.

So committed was Kumar to his characters that he came under the tutelage of sitar maestro Ustad Halim Jaffar Khan for six months to give a realistic feel in the couple of Naushad-composed songs in ‘Kohinoor’ in which he plays the sitar with a svelte Kumkum dancing to the classical tunes. It was not for nothing that Satyajit Ray called him the ultimate method actor.

A polyglot extraordinaire, Kumar performed in Bengali film ‘Sagina Mahato’ leaving the Bengali viewers and critics in awe of his impeccable diction and acting. Noted actor Utpal Dutt wrote in his review: “Perhaps Dilip Kumar had come to Bengal thinking that he would give us Bengalis a lesson in the art of acting. I must admit that he did exactly that.”

....
Gulf News

Zombie Films and Covid-19

What zombie movies tell us about the true dangers of living through a Pandemic

JAMES DER DERIAN | PHILLIP GARA

Zombies and SARS-CoV-2, the virus behind the COVID-19 disease, have a close if fitful relationship. Both zombies and the virus are the living dead, in the sense that they acquire vitality only after they find and infect a host. First encounters with them are marked by denial and complacency, which rapidly escalate into panic and fear of the other. Seeking individual security at the cost of the collective good, the most dangerous of enemies is created: our worst possible selves, ready to do whatever is necessary to survive.

The zombie clearly has something to teach us about the virus. The zombie film holds up a mirror to realities we’d prefer to bury, reflecting deep-rooted racism (Night of the Living Dead), superficial life-styles (Dawn of the Dead), environmental degradation (World War Z), and totalitarian eugenics (Overlord).

But in our post-truth era, in which story and world have become increasingly difficult to distinguish, the boundary between zombie zeitgeist and collective unconscious has become equally attenuated. This moment is captured in Jim Jarmusch’s 2019 film, The Dead Don’t Die, by the call-and-response between Officer Ronnie Peterson, played dead-pan by Adam Driver, and his partner, Cliff Robertson, played zombie-pan by Bill Murray. “This is all gonna’ end badly,” says Ronnie. “How can you be so sure?” asks Cliff. Because, says Ronnie, “I read the script.”

Characters in a zombie film know they are in an authored story. But do we? Have we lost our ability, our will, to ascertain fact from fiction? In the world of COVID-19, in the theater of security that pretends to be the real story, the fourth wall between author and audience—eroded by media disinformation, political confabulation and wishful thinking—has collapsed, and so too our best defense against the contagion: a credible script directed by competent leadership with sufficient resources to flatten the curve of the pandemic.

After denial and dithering by world leaders, most consistently President Trump—it’s “going to be fine” (February 10), “under control” (February 24), “going to disappear” (February 28), “going to go away” (March 12), and “opened up and just raring to go by Easter” (March 25)—we’ve been handed a series of script rewrites, rang-

ing from ad hoc denial to aspirational planning to the ultimate power in politics, all-out war. President Macron of France fired the first salvo (“We are at war”), which was escalated by U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres (“The world is at war with the virus”), traduced by U.S. President Trump with tropes first WWII (“This is our big war”) and then the Global War on Terror (“nothing would be worse than declaring victory before the victory is won”), and invoked for permanent state of emergency in Hungary (“war-like state”).

Characters in a zombie film know they are in an authored story. But do we? Have we lost our ability, our will, to ascertain fact from fiction? In the world of COVID-19, in the theatre of security that pretends to be the real story, the fourth wall between author and audience—eroded by media disinformation, political confabulation and wishful thinking—has collapsed

When the war of spectacle morphs into the spectacle of war, dangerous new specters emerge. In Carl von Clausewitz’s 1832 book, On War, the Prussian military strategist noted how “war gives to things exaggerated dimensions and unnatural appearance,” a warning taken up today by people like Dr. Anthony Fauci, who compares the current situation to “the fog of war.” To illustrate his point, Clausewitz likened war to the interactive nature of language, noting how war “has its own grammar, but not its own logic.” Clausewitz died long before geopolitical conflict gave way to a “full-spectrum battlespace,” in which language is weaponized as an instrument of an infowar let loose like a virus by those more self-interested in the control than the well-being of a population.

What does it mean, if language is a virus (pace William Burroughs) and the coronavirus is a language? For a start, we must decipher the mathematic and genetic grammars of SARS-CoV-2 to control the pandemic by quarantine and vaccine. We also need to understand the affective languages of war and disease, how dread,

fear and panic force-multiply the effective impact of both, not only to sicken and kill but to crash economies, threaten civil liberties, and estrange whole populations.

To those closely following the zombie genre or pandemic preparedness exercises for the past decade, the COVID-19 pandemic would not be a Black Swan or even an unmanageable crisis. Many elements of current events mimic the scenario that plays out in Max Brooks’ novel World War Z—about a zombie apocalypse that the author based on desktop models and field exer-

cises prompted by the 2003 SARS outbreak. The book, in turn, has been used by the CDC, Naval War College, and the U.S. Army to update its own unconventional threat training exercises. From the Trump administration’s denial, unpreparedness, and self-destructive isolationism to the Chinese government’s Chernobyl-like initial censoring of reports on the COVID-19 outbreak, the similarities are uncanny. These avoidable missteps incubated a containable crisis and should be a sealed indictment for all the guilty parties who will try, once again, to hide behind the sorry excuse, ‘if we had only known then what we know now.’

In our film Project Z: The Final Global Event zombies helped us understand a wave of national security failures in the face of similar complex, globally interconnected events—from an illusory faith in high-tech warfare in Iraq to climate disasters, economic meltdowns, viral movements, cyberwar, and pandemics. A borderless zombie contagion revealed the gaps in our post-cold war defenses. Instead of good guys versus bad guys, a zombie threat—like the virus—forces us to contend

with complex systems, feedback loops, quantum phase shifts, tipping points, and non-linear conflicts that confound predictive models.

While these new types of crisis expose hidden social vulnerabilities—like economic insecurity, poor health-care infrastructure, fragile supply chains—they provide us with opportunities to become more resilient in the long term. In the shadow of COVID-19, we are seeing an enormous wave of innovation at a collective level. On Twitter, a chorus of epidemiologists, social scientists, statisticians, complexity researchers, and doctors on the front lines have stepped up to fill the void of an official response, and to push governments to respond to alarming viral growth rates. Who would have ever predicted that #flattenthecurve could become a trending hashtag? Or that the exponential impacts of small everyday safety precautions would become part of our cultural lexicon?

In businesses across the world we’ve seen adaptation, with agile companies and p2p communities coming in to produce supplies where market forces and government planning has failed. As researchers race to create a vaccine in record time, new rapid response approaches like mRNA synthesis are emerging to combat fast-moving viral diseases. Perhaps we can draw hope in their similarity to defense preparedness exercises modeled on a zombie threat. Just as the CDC, NAVY and U.S. Army use zombie simulations to plan for viral security threats, these novel therapeutics use a synthetic virus expression to build needed antibodies.

Some might try to write off the trials of the past few months as just another “500-year flood.” Bewildered and failing in the face of a global epidemic, nationalist leaders will also try to fortify anti-globalization agendas, expanding surveillance and eroding democratic rights. But in our globally interconnected and tribally fragmented world, there will be more local incidents, networked accidents and emergent threats that cascade into planetary crises with no single-state solutions.

....
Views expressed are author’s own and do not necessarily reflect that of Kashmir Observer

Zocalo

70 pc urban India claims to suffer from or knows someone who suffers from mental health issue: Study



About 70 per of urban India claims to suffer from or knows of someone who suffers from a mental health ailment, with depression being the most prominent one, according to a new study. The study by Times Network surveyed 2,440 people in Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Jaipur, Patna, Ahmedabad, Vishakapatnam,

Bareilly, Guwahati, Raipur and Mangalore. It found that 70 per cent of urban India claims to suffer from or knows of someone who has suffered from a mental health ailment. "Among people who are suffering/ know someone suffering from mental health ailment, depression come out as

the most prominent at 58 per cent," it said. The study also found that 76 per cent of people perceive that "people are not open to talk about mental health to everyone" and there is still shame and stigma associated around mental health. "About 52 per cent of the people face problems in accessing a mental health professional and 63 per cent perceive that there is difficulty in procuring medication," it said. The study said 54 per cent people are not completely aware of the diseases covered in a health insurance policy and 47 per cent are unaware of the government mandate for health insurance policies to cover treatment of mental health ailments. "Fifty-seven per cent of urban India considers financial pressures to be the leading cause of negative impact on mental health," it said. The study was part of Times Network's #ActNow initiative which aims to spread awareness, normalise conversations around the issue and sensitise people to be responsive to the mental health needs of others. -PTI

‘Why Am I Anxious’: Inside ‘Hope Sessions’ Of Kashmiri Troika-II

.... from page 1

was through Telegram and we would regularly advertise and inform about the sessions via our personal Twitter handles.

Two months and twenty-four sessions later, I can say with positivity that more than the participants, the impact of these sessions will stay with us for a long time.

"Thank you for creating this initiative," a student's tired voice floated through my earphones during one of our earliest sessions.

"It's very important especially for people like us when we're dealing with so much stress. I'd like to request you to please do a session on depression and how to deal with it. That's all I have to say."

For the first few times, the interactions started with similar suggestions from students, job-seekers and interested netizens. We spoke about a topic, and opened the floor for interaction, wherein questions would be asked and a general discussion around them would ensue.

We made it clear from the get-go and reiterated time and again that we weren't professionals. We were just concerned people who were spreading awareness and giving a non-reactionary space to talk about them.

"Why are we as Kashmiris so judgmental?" a quipped voice said. "Why can't we leave people alone? Why do we have this concept of superiority over everything? Sab toh insaan hay na? And why can't we talk about our issues? Hume chup karaaya jaata hai in the name of keeping the discourse on domination alive, jabki we are the same people who are actually talking about the establishment discourse!"

It was a monumental task, staring at the Zoom screen on our phones and bracing ourselves for questions we would be too stumped to answer. What if they asked a question we didn't know anything about? What if someone expressed a wish to kill themselves? What if we failed in delivering a comfortable space?

Initially, it was a nerve-racking exercise. We listened carefully to every person's account and understanding of our topic and were extremely cautious in

maneuvering around the inquiries.

"Why am I anxious, Hameeda?" "Is there a way to control this anxiety?"

"Please suggest ways through which I can feel less like this and more like my old self."

Zarqa and I were aware of the intensity and intention behind these words. Hearing fellow Kashmiris speak out hesitantly, yet with growing conviction gave us strength that we were on the right track.

We gave them examples on different techniques through which they could try and understand themselves and stressed continuously on communicating with loved ones. At the end of the session, we exhorted them to seek out professional help, to break the stigma prevalent in their minds and to make them take a second chance on themselves.

We covered anxiety, its disorders, eating disorders, and relevant, timely topics like social media and anxiety, how to seek professional help, drug addiction and mental health and so forth.

One of the topics we were passionate about was "Patriarchy and Mental Health."

In the session, we said, "Patriarchy is prevalent on both individual and societal levels. We have internalised it so much that we do not think twice before considering it as the accepted norm. For instance, your individual liberties and identities as a man are suppressed because you do not adhere to the accepted patriarchal definition of what it is to be a man, i.e, strong, powerful, devoid of emotion or anything that is remotely considered feminine."

However, that particular day, the number of participants strangely dwindled from a strong 12-20 to merely 6.

Was it because of the topic or because of the IPL season? We couldn't say. But we both knew that we had a long road to walk ahead.

Soon enough, we were joined by a concerned netizen who volunteered to help us out.

Having done her Masters in Clinical Psychology and previously worked on ground in Kashmir, Sofiya Nazir spear-

headed the Self-Assessment program, in which our participants would fill out forms that would find out the intensity of a particular mental illness, for example depression, that they thought they had.

Once the results of the self-assessment would be calculated by her, individual emails would be sent out to all those who had filled the form, informing them of the next mode of exercise to help them combat their illness.

Sofiya also took sessions explaining in depth the topic of Personality and its disorders, giving relevant local examples.

"We as Kashmiris need to learn how to give a helping hand, how to be kind to oneself and to others," she said to a riveted audience during our session on "Drug Addiction and Mental Health".

"My experience has taught me so much, one of it being how desperately the youth of Kashmir need our help. And unconditional help. My personal request to all of you listening is to create a space like the one we have created here, and never, ever show a negative attitude. You have no idea how much it can drive Kashmiri youth to do things that destroy them in the end."

Every Monday, we dropped two topics to write a journal entry on the Telegram channel, to facilitate a conversation between themselves and help them create kindness in the path to growing into mentally resilient individuals. One participant remarked how the journal entry helped them organise and express their thoughts out.

In this way, we were successful in creating a space for Kashmiri youth, with the realisation that our prophecy had been self-fulfilled: they just wanted someone to listen kindly, without judgment.

We're often told by our elders to be understanding, to be humane in our approach in dealing with others. But in Kashmir, with the sword of political uncertainty hanging on its head, many personal and individual issues or discussions take a significant backseat without hope for reviving it in the future.

The creation of this space and the sheer necessity of it voiced by our

Google Assistant feature now available for wired headsets



Google has started rolling out Assistant support, including spoken notifications, on all wired headphones.

According to 9To5Google, this feature will work on all wired headphones, regardless of their USB Type-C or standard 3.5mm connection.

Now, after connecting wired headphones to the phone via the USB Type-C port or 3.5mm headphone jack, there will be a notification from Google Assistant. Tapping the notification will start the setup process and a user will have to 'Allow your Assistant to read your notification to you.' After giving the assistant some more permissions, the setup will be completed.

For voice commands, one can sync the call-accept button on the earphones. With Google Assistant support, one can get personal results, calendar info and more through voice without unlocking the phone. Until now, this Assistant feature was only available on select wireless Bluetooth headphones. On the wired side, it was only available on Google's USB-C Pixel Buds. -Agencies

Scholarships This Week

Kashmir Observer in association with Buddy4Study.com presents scholarships available for the meritorious students of Jammu and Kashmir.

The J N Tata Endowment Loan Scholarship 2020-21

Description: Tata Trusts invites applications from Indian students who wish to pursue their higher studies outside India. The programme also offers 'Gift Scholarship' and 'Travel Grants' to Indian students for their study abroad programmes.

Eligibility: Indian students who have completed their graduation, or are in the final year of any graduation programme at a recognised institution in India can apply for this scholarship. Applicants must have scored minimum 60% marks in their last academic examinations. Only students applying for PG/PhD/Postdoctoral/Research programmes at academic institutions outside India are eligible. The age of the candidates should not exceed 45 years as on 30th June 2021.

Prizes & Rewards: Loan scholarship up to INR 10 lakh

Last Date to Apply: 08-03-2021

Application mode: Online applications only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/JNT4

NIT Warangal Department of ECE Junior Research Fellowship 2020

Description: The National Institute of Technology (NIT), Warangal invites applications for the NIT Warangal Department of ECE Junior Research Fellowship 2020 from B.Tech/BE in ECE/EEE degree holders. The fellowship is applicable for a sponsored research project titled, "Programmable Electronic Jacquard Machine for complex designs in Handloom sector".

Eligibility: The fellowship is open for candidates who hold a first-class B.Tech/BE degree in ECE/EEE with not less than 60% aggregate. They must have a valid GATE score. Preference will be given for the candidates having knowledge of handloom machines and weaving.

Prizes & Rewards: INR 31,000 per month

Last Date to Apply: 24-12-2020

Application mode: By email or by post to Principal Investigator Assistant Professor, Department of ECE National Institute of Technology, Warangal - 506004, Telangana, India.

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/WDF2

INSPIRE Scholarship For Higher Education (SHE) 2020

Description: Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India is inviting applications from students who have passed Class 12 in 2020 and are studying in basic three-year B.Sc/four-year B.S or five years integrated M.Sc/M.S courses from any recognised college/university/institute in India.

Eligibility: The scholarship is open for candidates in the age group of 17-22 years. They must have passed the Class 12 examination from any central/state board in India with aggregate marks within the top 1% of the class. They must be pursuing a B.Sc/BS/Int.MSc/MS degree course in Basic and Natural Sciences from any recognised institute/college/university in India. They must be among the top 1000 rank holders in JEE of IIT or AIPMT/NEET and pursuing a B.Sc/BS/Int.MSc/MS course in basic and natural sciences. They must be pursuing an integrated MS course at selected institutions or be a medalist of International Olympiad pursuing bachelor/master level course in Natural Science.

Prizes & Rewards: Up to INR 80,000 per annum

Last Date to Apply: 31-12-2020

Application mode: Online applications only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/IRE3

SRINAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION. OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER LEFT RIVER WORKS DIVISION

TENDER NOTICE INVITING E- TENDERS

NIET NO: 29 e-Tendering/2020-21

Dated: 10-12-2020

For and on behalf of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation, e-tenders are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible Contractors for the following work:-

	Name of work	Est. Cost (In	Cost of Tender Document (Non-refundable)	Earnest moneydays/ Weeks	Time of Completion in	Class of Contract (Civil)	Head of Account
1.	Development of lane from House of Fayaz Ahmad Bhat to House of Ghulam Ahmad Kaloo near Bund, Bilal Colony, Qamarwari, Srinagar. (W-25)	3.71	200/=		7 days strictly	DEE	State Capex 2019-20 @ 25.00 lacs
2.	Construction of Lane of Drain by way of side blocks and Slab From H/O Mr. Abdul Aziz Bhat, Bilal Ahmad Bhat at Astanpora. Rawalpura (Ward-14)	2.28	200/=		7 days strictly	DEE	State Capex 2019-20 @ 25.00 lacs
3.	Development of Lane at Gousia Colony Lal Nagar Chanapora	5.13	200/=		7 days strictly	DEE	State Capex 2019-20 @ 25.00 lacs

1	Publish date	10-12-2020 04:00 PM
2	Document download	11-12-2020 10:00AM To 18-12-2020 04:00PM
3	Bid submission/uploading date	11-12-2020 10:00AM To 18-12-2020 04:00PM
4	Bid Opening date	19-12-2020 02:00 PM
5	Submission of hardcopy for successful bidder	21-12-2020 upto 4.00 PM

Other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

Note: The intended bidders have to deposit the tender fee in the Municipal Account No: 0216010200000007 payable at J&K Bank Balch Bargarden, before uploading of their bids and scanned copy of the same (with NIET No & Serial no. mentioned) to be uploaded along with all other documents prescribed in the NIET while uploading their bids and also upload the CDR, Bank Receipt.

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

1. In case bid of the tendered is found unbalanced, the bidder shall have to produce/deposit additional performance security in shape of FDR/CDR pledged to Executive Engineer LRWD SMC before issuance of allotments to protect the department against any financial loss in the event of default of the successful bidder/tenderer which the successful bidder should submit / deposit within 05 days from the date of formal intimation is issued in his favor from the corporation and failing which his Earnest Money in shape of CDR/ FDR shall be forfeited and his tender shall not be considered and treated as invalid bid/tender and shall be rejected. This performance security shall be released when the concerned AEE shall recommend after the work stands completed. The performance Security is recommended (as per the order/circular issued by Chief Engineer PWD(R&B) Kashmir vide No: CE/R&B/HD/13271-73 dated: 03-08-2018 & duly Endorsed by Commissioner SMC vide No: SMC/PS/COM/5121-24 dated: 22-09-2018.

S.No	Percentage of unbalanced bid Viz, Advertised cost on account of low rates Upto and including 15% below	Additional performance security to be deposited of the adv. Cost
01	Upto and including 15% below	Nil
02	Greater than 15% & upto 20% below	5.00%
03	Greater than 20% & upto 25% below	10.00%
04	Greater than 25% & upto 30% below	15.00%
05	Greater than 30%	20.00%

2. The successful bidders/tenderers should submit the hard copies of their documents like CDR/DD etc. after the opening of tenders.
3. In Case of Holidays/office happens to be closed on the date of opening of bids. Bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue
3(a) the intending tenderer/bidder should attach sales tax clearance certificate with upto date validation without which no tenders/bids will be entertained.
4. The bid shall be opened online in the Office of Executive Engineer LRWD, SMC at Old Funds Office Building Karan Nagar near National School Municipal Park on 19-12-2020 2:00 PM.
5. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of demand draft pledged in favor of Chief Account Officer SMC payable at Srinagar and Earnest money /Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR pledged to Executive Engineer LRWD SMC the bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of bids.

No: SMC/EELRWD/4263-4272
Dated: 10-12-2020

Executive Engineer,
Left River Works Division,
Srinagar Municipal Corporation.

:DIPK-NB-4546/20

Government of Union Territory Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION PULWAMA

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

E-NIT No. 223/EEP/RNB/2020-21/8781-91 Dated: 10/12/2020

For and on behalf of the President of India e-tenders (single Cover system) are invited on Item rate basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with UT of J&K Government, CPWD, Railways and other state/Central Governments for each of the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Time of Completion in days	Time & Date of Opening of Bid	Class of Contractor	Major Head of Account
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1.	Development of berm by way of RBM filling to Achagoze Abhama Sangerwani road (BW).	1.88	200/-	3,800/-	5 days	19/12/2020	DEE	C&T
2.	Development of road berm by way of P/L of RBM filling to Chakura Naina at spots.	2.16	200/-	4,400/-	5 days	19/12/2020	DEE	C&T
3.	Development of road berm by way of P/L of RBM filling on interior roads of Pulwama.	3.02	200/-	6,100/-	5 days	19/12/2020	DEE	C&T
4.	Construction of Hard berm to Keller Lassidaban road by way of RBM filling and WBM Grade-II in Km 2nd to 4th (BW).	6.00	300/-	12,000/-	5 days	19/12/2020	CEE & DEE	C&T
5.	Development of road berm by way of P/L of RBM filling to Litter Lassipora Sangam road at spots.	9.05	600/-	18,100/-	5 days	19/12/2020	CEE & DEE	C&T
6.	Development of road berm by way of P/L of RBM filling to Pampore Shopian road Km 27th to 30th including circular roads.	3.91	200/-	7,900/-	5 days	19/12/2020	DEE	C&T
7.	Development of road berm by way of P/L of RBM filling to Pulwama Tahab Lassipora road at spots.	6.50	300/-	13,000/-	5 days	19/12/2020	CEE & DEE	C&T

The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per Schedule of dates given below:-

1.	Date of Issue of tender Notice	10/12/2020
2.	Period of downloading of bidding documents	10/12/2020 10:00 AM to /12/2020 04:00 PM
3.	Bid submission Start date	10/12/2020 10:00 AM
4.	Bid submission End date	18/12/2020 04:00 PM
5.	Date and time of opening of Bids (online)	19/12/2020 11:00 AM

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Valid Treasury Receipt/e-Challan under Major Head 0059 Revenue in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Pulwama (tender inviting authority) and Earnest money /Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Pulwama (tender receiving authority)
2. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on website www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the Bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online on same web site in the office of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Pulwama (tender receiving authority).
All other terms and conditions shall be available in website www.jktenders.gov.in
Head Draftsman
DIPK-10300/20

Executive Engineer,
R&B Division Pulwama

India Preps For 60 Crore Covid Shots With Vast Election Machinery: Report



NEW DELHI: India will deploy its vast election machinery to deliver 600 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to the most vulnerable people in the next six to eight months through conventional cold chain systems, the expert leading the initiative said on Friday.

The government has lined up cold storage facilities with temperatures between 2 to 8 degrees Celsius (36 to 48°F), said VK Paul, who heads the group of experts on vaccine administration for COVID-19 that advises Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Paul said these preparations meet the requirements of what he said were the four emerging candidates in the race for India's vaccine.

"The four that I can see, including Serum, Bharat, Zydus, and Sputnik need normal cold chain. I see no problem for these vaccines," he told Reuters in an interview.

Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine maker, is already mass producing and stockpiling AstraZeneca's Covishield shot, while Indian biotech players Bharat Biotech and Zydus Cadila are developing their own vaccine candidates.

And last month, Indian pharmaceutical player Hetero inked a deal with Russia's RDIF to manufacture over 100 million doses of the Russian Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine per year in India.

The government expects the first approvals "very soon" from the independent drug regulator for emergency use, he said.

"I am hoping at the earliest because we are ready."

The government, however, was yet to have formal talks on pricing and had no firm purchase orders, he said.

"The Indian companies know the government will give a fair and reasonable price."

SUPPLIES AND STORAGE
At present, Indian regulators

are considering three vaccines for emergency use authorisation, including those from Pfizer Inc, AstraZeneca and Bharat Biotech.

But, Pfizer's limited stockpiles and its extreme storage condition requirements at minus 70 degrees Celsius or below, would likely limit its use in India, which lacks such infrastructure.

"In a theoretical scenario, where there is no vaccine with conventional cold chain requirement, minus 70 degrees Celsius capacities will have to be created, and we will do so," Paul said.

Paul said the government is also in talks with Moderna, which also has requirements for ultra-cold storage.

India does not anticipate supplies from either Pfizer or Moderna until the second half of next year, said Paul.

"We would like to work with them (Moderna) to make that vaccine available in India, and (ensure) that vaccine is also manufactured in India - for us and for other countries. This is the call we have given to Pfizer also and we are in touch with them as well."

Paul said India may still consider granting Pfizer emergency use authorisation, despite it not having conducted safety and immune response trials in India, but said that decision would be taken by the drugs regulator.

"As of now, it is a norm or standard operating procedure that any vaccine marketed in India should have human study results from the Indian subjects," he said.

India has the world's second highest caseload of coronavirus behind the United States, but its death rate has been far lower.

Still, Paul said the immediate task was to protect lives and the government had prepared a plan to administer vaccines to 300 million people - or 600 million doses at two jabs each - in the first part of the programme.

This would be made up of 260 million people above the age of 50, an estimated 10 million below the age of 50 with serious co-morbidities and 30 million frontline workers, who have borne the brunt of infections.

"The way it looks as of now, optimistically, it appears possible to cover the above population of 300 million in six to eight months' time."



A group of boys playing football in snow-covered Polo Ground in Srinagar on Saturday.

Farmers Intensify Stir, Take Over Toll Plazas

NEW DELHI, DEC 12 (PTI): The Delhi Police on Saturday increased deployment of personnel and placed more concrete barriers at various border points as farmers have announced that they will intensify their protest against the Centre's new agri laws, with plans to block the Delhi-Jaipur highway and the Yamuna Expressway.

There is no protest yet on Delhi's borders with Gurgaon and at other points of National Highway-8 that connects the national capital with Jaipur, a senior police officer said.

"So far, there is no protest at Delhi-Gurgaon border. There is no disruption in traffic movement. However, we have proper security arrangements in place to deal with any situation," the officer said.

Taking to Twitter, social activist Yogendra Yadav, who is part of the ongoing protests, said farmers from areas in Rajasthan and Haryana are assembling on Saturday and their "Delhi Chalo" march would begin on Sunday.

"Farmers" "Delhi march" on Jaipur-Delhi highway will not start today and it will begin from Shahjahanpur border tomorrow. Today, farmers from Rajasthan and Haryana will congregate in Kotputli and Behror," Yadav tweeted in Hindi.

The increase in security arrangement comes amid thousands of farmers protesting at various areas on Delhi's borders for the last 16 days and demanding that the legislations be withdrawn.

The police have made adequate

arrangements and these include multi-layered barricading and deployment of personnel. Measures have also been taken to ensure commuters do not face inconvenience at places where protest are being staged, another senior police officer said.

The Delhi Traffic Police has deployed its personnel across important border points to ensure commuters do not face difficulties and is constantly updating people about open and closed routes on its Twitter handle.

The developments come after farmer leaders on Wednesday rejected a government proposal to amend the new agri laws and announced they would intensify their agitation by blocking the Jaipur-Delhi and the Yamuna expressway by Saturday.

In a tweet, the traffic police on Saturday informed commuters about the closure of the Singhu, Auchandi, Piau Maniyari and Mangesh borders. Since these borders are closed, it suggested that motorists take alternative routes via Lampur, Safabad, Saboli and Singhu School toll tax borders.

Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba and GTK Road. So, commuters have been advised to avoid Outer Ring Road, GTK Road and National Highway-44, the traffic police said.

Due to the ongoing farmers' protests, it said that both the Chilla and the Ghazipur borders are also closed for traffic from Noida and Ghaziabad.

"The Chilla & Ghazipur borders are closed for traffic from Noida & Ghaziabad to Delhi due to farmers protests. People are advised to take

alternate route for coming to Delhi via Anad Vihar, DND, Apsara & Bhopra borders," it tweeted.

The Tikri and the Dha's borders are also closed for traffic movement but the Jhatikara border is open only for two wheelers and pedestrian movement, the traffic police said in a tweet.

Those going towards Haryana, can take Jharoda (only single carriage-way), Daurala, Kapashera, Badusari, Rajokri NH 8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundahe borders as they are open, the traffic police said.

The government had asked farmer groups to consider its proposals for amending the laws to address their concerns and said it was open to discussing its offer further whenever the unions want.

Farmers leaders on Thursday also announced they would block railway tracks across the country if their demands were not met by the government and would announce a date for that soon.

At least five rounds of formal talks have taken place between the Centre and representatives of farmers, mainly from Punjab and Haryana, protesting on various borders of the national capital for over two weeks, but the deadlock has continued with the unions sticking to their main demand for the repeal of the three contentious laws.

The sixth round of talks between the government and farm union leaders, which was scheduled for Wednesday morning, was cancelled. PTI AMP BUN BUN ANB ANB ANB.

How many sacrifices will farmers have to make to get agri laws repealed, asks Rahul

The Congress cited a media report to claim that 11 farmers had died in the last 17 days while protesting against the new agri laws

NEW DELHI, DEC 12: The Congress on Saturday cited a media report to claim that 11 farmers had died in the last 17 days while protesting against the new agri laws, with former party chief Rahul Gandhi asking how many more sacrifices will farmers have to make to get the legislations repealed.

At least five rounds of formal talks have taken place between the Centre and representatives of farmers, mainly from Punjab and Haryana, protesting on various borders of the national capital for over two weeks, but the deadlock has continued with the unions sticking to their main demand for the repeal of the three contentious laws.

"How many more sacrifices will the farmers have to make to get the agri laws repealed?" Gandhi asked in a tweet in Hindi, tagging a media report which claimed that 11 protesting farmers had lost their lives in the last 17 days due to various reasons such as ill-health or a mishap.

Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said despite the "martyrdom of 11 farmer brothers in the last 17 days, the Modi government is not relenting." "They (government) are still standing with their 'money providers' not with 'annadaatas' (food providers)," he alleged in a tweet in Hindi.



"The country wants to know — 'Is Rajdharm (constitutional responsibility) bigger or Rajhat' (stubbornness)?" Surjewala asked, tagging the media report that Gandhi also cited. Farmers are protesting the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020.

Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the government as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of the minimum support price (MSP) and do away with the mandis, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates. —PTI

'Abnormal levels of metals in blood and rice, pesticides in veggies triggered disease outbreak'

Lead and nickel in blood, mercury in rice, pesticides and herbicides in vegetables were found in more than permissible limits, triggering the outbreak of the mysterious disease in Eluru city of Andhra Pradesh, different analytical reports said on Friday.

Just four fresh cases of the disease were reported on Friday, taking the cumulative to 613, but only 13 of them were active now.

A report submitted to the government by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Indian Institute of Chemical Technology established the presence of lead and nickel in blood (of the victims), but nothing in drinking water.

An analysis by scientists at the National Institute of Nutrition found traces of mercury in rice and pesticides and herbicide residues in excess quantities in vegetables.

The NIN also found out that residues of organophosphorous in blood, but said it has to be studied how they entered the humans.

A study of ambient air quality and water, conducted by the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board, revealed no presence of heavy metal in water. The Institute of Preventive Medicine, in its analysis, found no heavy metal in milk.

Reports related to the

analysis of meat and fish were yet to come, according to state Health Commissioner Katamaneni Bhaskar. But most of the people did not consume non-vegetarian food in recent days due to the festive season, he said. "What exactly caused the disease is not clear yet and it can be established only after detailed reports of the tests come out," Bhaskar said.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy held another round of video conference with experts from the Central research institutions on Friday evening, who told him that the drinking water supplied in Eluru was clean.

However, the chief minister asked them to test drinking water samples repeatedly and ensure nothing was amiss.

He asked them to precisely trace out how lead, nickel, organochlorine and organophosphorous entered humans. The chief minister said indiscriminate use of pesticides and unauthorised insecticides should be stopped and wanted the officials concerned to focus on it.

"Take this programme up for a month. Educate farmers on organic farming and use of permitted pesticides. This way we can prevent contamination of food items," he said.

India Being Tested, Will Meet Challenge: S Jaishankar On Ladakh Standoff

In an interactive session at the FICCI's annual general meeting, S Jaishankar also said that what has happened in eastern Ladakh was not actually in China's interest as it has significantly impacted public sentiment in India.



NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said India was being tested in the seven-month-long border standoff with China in eastern Ladakh and expressed confidence it will rise to the occasion and meet the national security challenge.

In an interactive session at the FICCI's annual general meeting, S Jaishankar also said that what has happened in eastern Ladakh was not actually in China's interest as it has significantly impacted public sentiment in India.

Calling the "events" along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) very disturbing, the external affairs minister said they have raised some very "basic concerns". When asked whether it will be a long-haul or a breakthrough is expected soon, S Jaishankar said: "I would not go into prediction zone at all whether it is going to be easy or not, and what will be the timelines and so on."

"I also believe that what has happened is not actually in the interest of China. Because what it has done is -- it has significantly impacted public sentiment

(in India). Professionally, I have seen the evolution of how the Indian public feels about China over the last many decades and I am old enough to remember much more difficult days, especially in my childhood and in my teens," he said.

S Jaishankar said a lot of work had gone into developing the relationship on both sides.

"I do not believe that the events of this year have helped at all. In fact I think the real danger is that the goodwill which was so carefully developed will dissipate."

"But I also would say that, yes, we are being tested. I have every confidence that we will rise to the occasion; we will meet that national security challenge. But beyond that, at this time, I would really frankly keep my own counsel," S Jaishankar said.

The armies of India and China are locked in a tense border standoff in eastern Ladakh since early May. Both sides have held multiple rounds of military and diplomatic talks. However, no breakthrough has been achieved yet.

Trump's tweets flagged within an hour

Micro-blogging site Twitter on Saturday flagged a series of tweets posted by US President Donald Trump, who still disputes the outcome of the November 3 election that has projected his Democratic rival Joe Biden as the winner, within a span of an hour.

The tweets said: "So, you're the President of the US, and you just went through an election where you got more votes than any sitting President in history, by far - and purportedly lost."

"You can't get 'standing' before the Supreme Court, so you 'intervene' with wonderful states that, after careful study and consideration, think you got 'screwed', something



which will hurt them also.

"Many others likewise join the suit but, within a flash, it is thrown out and gone, without even looking at the many reasons it was brought. A rigged election, fight on."

Twitter flagged the tweets and said: "This claim about election

fraud is disputed." The micro-blogging site has flagged nearly all tweets by Trump as he continues to keep making "potentially misleading claims" about the outcome of one of the most contentious presidential races in the history of the US.

Just days after the election, Twitter flagged four tweets posted by the President. A company spokesperson had said then that "in line with our Civic Integrity Policy, and as is standard with this warning, we will significantly restrict engagements on these tweets".

Even before the election, some tweets of the President about the raging coronavirus pandemic were also flagged.

Sonia Gandhi was unable to handle affairs of party: Pranab Mukherjee's memoir

The Congress had lost political focus after his elevation as the president and some party members believed that had he become the prime minister in 2004, the 2014 Lok Sabha poll debacle could have been averted, Pranab Mukherjee wrote in his memoir.

Mukherjee completed the book "The Presidential Years" before his death. It will be published by Rupa in January.

The former president died on July 31 at the age of 84, following COVID-19 complications.

His observations come at a time of intense internal turmoil in the Congress.

The publishers issued a statement announcing the book.

"Some members of the Congress have theorized that, had I become the PM in 2004, the party might have averted the 2014 Lok Sabha drubbing. Though I don't subscribe to this view, I do believe that the party's leadership lost political



focus after my elevation as president. While Sonia Gandhi was unable to handle the affairs of the party, Dr (Manmohan) Singh's prolonged absence from the House put an end to any personal contact with other MPs," Mukherjee is quoted as saying in his book.

"I believe that the moral authority to govern vests with the PM. The overall state of the nation is

reflective of the functioning of the PM and his administration. While Dr Singh was preoccupied with saving the coalition, which took a toll on governance, (Narendra) Modi seemed to have employed a rather autocratic style of governance during his first term, as seen by the bitter relationship among the government, the legislature and the judiciary.

"Only time will tell if there is a better understanding on such matters in the second term of this government," Mukherjee said in the book, according to the statement by Rupa.

Mukherjee was the 13th President of India after having spent five decades in politics.

The book gives a rare glimpse of his fascinating journey from a remote village in Bengal to the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

"This is a deeply personal account of the manner in which one of the country's most respected, veteran politicians reshaped the functioning of Rashtrapati Bhavan and responded to tumultuous events as the country's first citizen, leaving behind a legacy that will be hard to match," the statement said.

In this first-person account, Pranab da, as he is affectionately called, recounts the challenges he faced in his years as president—the difficult decisions he had to make

and the tightrope walk he had to undertake to ensure that both constitutional propriety and his opinion were taken into consideration, it further said.

The book also reveals a minor diplomatic issue that arose during the visit of US President Barack Obama in 2015 when the US Secret Service insisted that their president travel in a specially armoured vehicle that had been brought along from the US, and not in the car designated for use by the Indian head of state.

"They wanted me to travel in the same armoured car along with Obama. I politely but firmly refused to do so, and requested the MEA to inform the US authorities that when the US president travels with the Indian president in India, he would have to trust our security arrangements. It cannot be the other way around," Mukherjee wrote in the no-holds-barred account.

I do not believe that the events of this year have helped at all. In fact I think the real danger is that the goodwill which was so carefully developed will dissipate"