



P4 WORLD
**RECORD CLIMATE DISASTERS
IN ASIA-PACIFIC PUSH MILLIONS
TO 'BREAKING POINT'**

Asia-Pacific has faced a record number of climate-related disasters in 2020 ...

P7 THINK
**WHY ARE KASHMIRI
POLITICIANS DENYING
INTERVIEWS TO LOCAL
JOURNALISTS?**

Journalists claim that PAGD leaders do not want to face local journalists ...



P10 LIFE & TIMES
**EATING AN AVOCADO DAILY
KEEPS GUT HEALTHY: STUDY**

Avocados are a healthy food that is rich in dietary fibre and monounsaturated fat which impacts the microbes in ...



Wisdom Quote!
"It's always about timing. If it's too soon, no one understands. If it's too late, everyone's forgotten."
—Anna Wintour

news DIGEST

**Political Worker
Shot At In Rajouri**

JAMMU: A political worker was shot at and injured by unknown gunmen in Rajouri district overnight, reports said Wednesday.

They said 36-year-old Ranjit Singh son of Prem Singh, reportedly a worker of Apni Party headed by Altaf Bukhari, was fired upon by unidentified gunmen outside his residence at Draj village of Kotranka, local news agency GNS reported.

The injured man was immediately removed to community health centre (CHC) Kandi for treatment. [➔ More On P8](#)

**LG Pays Tribute
To 1971 Warriors**

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Wednesday paid tribute to the soldiers who laid down their lives for the nation during the 1971 war.

In his message, the LG said- "On Vijay Diwas, let us remember the valour of our soldiers and their unwavering commitment to defend India's sovereignty and protect human dignity".

"We are eternally indebted to our brave soldiers for their courage and selfless service to the nation for protecting our frontiers from the enemies and maintaining peace in the country," he added. [➔ More On P8](#)

**Leopard Caught
After Injuring Man**

SRINAGAR: The officials of the wildlife department on Wednesday caught a leopard in Tangmarg area of Baramulla district after the beast attacked and injured a villager.

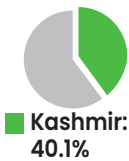
Mohammad Ramzan Ganie was attacked and injured by a leopard when the villagers in Marispora tried to corner him on Wednesday morning, reports said. [➔ More On P8](#)

**Suspected Militant
Arrested In Pulwama**

SRINAGAR: Police on Wednesday arrested a suspected militant from south Kashmir's Pulwama district.

The government forces intercepted a three-wheeler on Tuesday night and during searches recovered an AK-47 rifle and a magazine from it, news agency KDC reported Wednesday.

The report further said that the auto driver identified as Mudasir Ahmad was detained and quizzed over the recovery.



Budgam	45 %	Ganderbal	53.7%
Kupwara	60.3 %	Anantnag	23.3 %
Baramulla	61.9 %	Shopian	6.6 %
Bandipora	71.6 %	Pulwama	11 %



Jammu	68.7 %	Ramban	67.7 %
Rajouri	76.2 %	Reasi	76.2 %
Poonch	80.1 %	Samba	74.4 %
Doda	58.8 %	Udhampur	75.6%
Kathua	73 %	Kishtwar	70%

DDC ELECTIONS

57 % Polling In Phase-7



**6 Employees Suspended
Over Booth 'Capturing'**

Srinagar: At least six government employees were suspended in Poonch district of Jammu region over allegations of capturing booth and manhandling of Congress party candidate during the seventh phase of polls Wednesday.

Deputy Commissioner Poonch, who is also District Panchayat Election Officer, ordered suspension of the six employees accused of "booth capturing, tampering of votes and manhandling of INC candidate during today's DDC elections in Mendhar area of the district. [➔ More On P8](#)

"The Kashmir Division recorded 39.52% average voter turnout with Bandipora district recording the highest polling at 70.47% followed by Baramulla with 59.53% and Kupwara district recorded 59.23% polling," he added.

Giving district wise details, the SEC informed that in Kashmir Division the polling percentage recorded in Budgam was 45.11%, Ganderbal 53.69%, Anantnag 22.46, Kulgam 17.98%, Pulwama 11.06% and 6.55% polling was registered in Shopian. [➔ More On P8](#)

JAMMU: The seventh phase of district development council (DDC) elections held across 31 constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir, recorded 57.22 per cent voter turnout, the State Election Commissioner (SEC), K K Sharma said Wednesday.

Addressing a press conference here, the SEC said that polling was by and large peaceful in the poll going 31 constituencies of DDC including 13 in Kashmir division and 18 in Jammu division that witnessed 57.22 per cent of

polling. He said that voting was held in 1852 polling stations including 1068 from Kashmir division and 784 from Jammu division.

"Jammu division recorded an average voter turnout of 71.93% with Poonch district recording the highest percentage of 80.12% followed by Reasi district with 76.75% and 75.63% voting recorded in Udhampur district. The lowest turnout in Jammu division was in Doda district which recorded 58.82%," Sharma said.

Rs 223 Cr Fraud HC Grants Bail To Ex-Chairman J&K Cooperative Bank

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court Wednesday granted bail to Mohammad Shafi Dar, ex-Chairman of J&K State Co-operative Bank Ltd in the Rs. 223 crore loan scam.

Dar was represented by Advocate Tasaduk Khwaja who was assisted by Faizan Nazir while Bashir Ahmed Dar Sr. AAG appeared on behalf of the Union Territory of J&K.

A single-judge bench comprising Justice Sindhu Sharma noted the fact that the money taken from the bank was paid to the owners of land, who executed a power of attorney in favour of the Chairman of the Jhelum Co-operative Society.

The High Court further noted that the investigation in the matter was complete in respect of Dar, including the filing of the

charge sheet and supplementary charge sheet, and accordingly, the custody of Dar was not required.

The High Court has granted the bail subject to the furnishing of a personal bond as well as a surety bond to the tune of Rs. 50,000 each to the satisfaction of the Registrar Judicial of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir at Srinagar.

While granting the bail, the court has imposed certain conditions also. He has been asked to cooperate with the investigation as and when required, not hamper or tamper with the prosecution witnesses or evidence and that he will appear before the Trial Court on each and every date of hearing unless exempted by the Court concerned and that he shall not leave the territorial jurisdiction of this Court without prior permission.

5 More Covid-19 Deaths In J&K, 332 New Cases



SRINAGAR: At least five more people succumbed to coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, taking the number of fatalities since the outbreak of pandemic in the Union Territory to 1817.

Among the victims, officials said, four belonged to Jammu and one to Kashmir Valley—a 73-year-old man from Munawarabad Srinagar. Among those who succumbed to the virus in Jammu region include three from the J&K's winter capital and one from Reasi district, they said.

With these deaths, the total fatality count in J&K reached 1817—1157 in the

Valley and 660 in the Jammu region.

Srinagar district with 437 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (336), Baramulla (169), Budgam (105), Pulwama (88), Kupwara (88), Anantnag (82), Doda (60), Bandipora (57), Udhampur (54), Kulgam (53), Rajouri (53), Kathua (47), Ganderbal (41), Shopian (37), Samba (34), Poonch (22), Ramban (21), Kishtwar (21), and Reasi (12).

Meanwhile, 332 fresh cases of Covid-19 were detected in the Union Territory during the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases in J&K to 116932. [➔ More On P8](#)

Aftershocks Of Anaesthesia Hospital Details Comatose Girl's Trauma



OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: A day after carrying their comatose 14-month-old daughter on their arms for seeking justice in Srinagar's Press Enclave in full media glare, the accused ASG hospital countered the claims of the family.

On Tuesday, Zikra Farooq was neither moving, nor able to see when her mother, Soliyah, longed to hear a word from her.

"My daughter is not able to walk or move her arms," Soliyah lamented. "She is the victim of medical negligence which damaged her brain at a private hospital in Srinagar." [➔ More On P8](#)

District Development Council
Elections and
Panchayat By-Elections 2020

CAST YOUR
VALUABLE VOTE
As it counts

Poll Hours 7:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.



POLL DATE
19-12-2020

Issued in public interest by:
STATE ELECTION COMMISSIONER, J&K

DIPK-NB-4632/20



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Monday - Saturday (9am - 6pm)

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BAZAR
OBSERVER

2

Thursday|17-12-2020

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER ELECTRIC DIVISION-IIIRD, SHEREEN BAGH, SRINAGAR.

Notice Inviting Tender.

e-NIT No.:- e-ED-III /19 of 2020-21

Dated: 15-12-2020.

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of UT of Jammu and Kashmir, e-Tenders, (In Two Cover System) are hereby invited from reputed companies or relevant class registered contractors/suppliers enlisted with CPWD/MES/Railways/DGS&D and Inspection Agency of JKPD, for execution of Execution of Creation of 200 KVA, DT Sub-Station along with HT/LT Network at lane No. 1 Rose Avenue Tail End HMT to be fed by Feeder No. 3 Receiving Station Zainakote, Sub Division Zainakote, (on SITC basis) as details below:-

Name of the work.	Estt. Cost (Lacs)	Cost of Tender Document	EMD (In Rs)	Completion Period	Position of funds
Execution of Creation of 200 KVA, DT Sub-Station along with HT/LT Network at lane No. 1 Rose Avenue Tail End HMT to be fed by Feeder No. 3 Receiving Station Zainakote, Sub Division Zainakote	6.95	Rs. 500/-	13900/-	15 days	Authorization received from CE (Distribution) under Capex 2020-21

- Bidders are advised to study the Standard Bidding Document (SBD) / Tender Specifications carefully. Submission of e-Bid against this SBD shall be deemed to have been done after careful study and examine, of the procedures, terms and conditions of the Standard Bidding Document with full understanding of its implications by the bidder.
- The tender document is available on website <http://jktenders.gov.in>. Interested bidders may view, download the e-Bid document, seek clarification and submit their e-Bid online up to the date and time mentioned in the table below:

A	Date & Time of downloading of Standard Bidding Document	The standard Bidding Document can be downloaded over http://jktenders.gov.in from 16-12-2020; 02:00 PM
B	Sale of Bid Document (Start)	17-12-2020; 11:00 AM
C	Sale of Bid Document (End)	28-12-2020; 02:00PM.
D	Clarification start date	18-12-2020; 10:00 AM
E	Clarification End date	21-12-2020; 03:00 PM
F	e-Bid submission (start) date and time (submission of e-tender fee, EMD and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS format).	17-12-2020; 11:00 AM
G	e-Bid submission (End) date and time (submission of e-tender fee, EMD and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS format)	28-12-2020; 02:00PM
H	Hard copy of tender document Submission end date (along-with Original Copy of e-tender fee, EMD Instruments and other supporting documents)	Required for L1 only & to be submitted on or one day after opening of financial e-bid.
I	Online commercial and technical e-bid opening date and time	29-12-2020; 02:00PM
J	Online financial e-bid opening date & time (only of the technically qualified bidders)	Will be communicated to the technically qualified bidders
K	Venue of opening of technical & financial e-bids	The office of Executive Engineer ED-III, Sgr.
L	Cost of e-bid document. (Copy of treasury challan/receipt to be up-loaded with e-tender), DD also acceptable, (however Original DD to be submitted on end date of e-Bid submission).	Rs. 500/- (Rupees Five hundred only).
M	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit (Copy of CDR/FDR/DD, duly pledged to Executive Engineer Electric Division-IIIRD, Shereen Bagh Srinagar, JKPD, should be up-loaded with e-tender)	Rs. 13900/-

No.:- ED-III/TS/ 5888-96

DIPK-NB-4620/20

Dated:- 15-12-2020.

Sd/-Executive Engineer
Electric Division-III, Srinagar.

Jammu & Kashmir Small Scale Industries Development Corporation Limited (SICOP)

(A J&K Government Undertaking)
2nd floor, Sanat Ghar building Bemina Srinagar
Email: bhatmushtaq1079@yahoo.in

E-TENDER NOTICE NO: 38a-PES of 2020 dated: 15-12-2020

For and on behalf of the Managing Director of Jammu & Kashmir Small Scale Industries Cooperation Limited, online tenders are invited from reputed contractors who are registered with PWD/MES/CPWD of appropriate class in India.

Name of work	Adv. cost of work Rs. in lakhs)	Earnest money	Class of contract	Cost of tender document	Time of completion	Position of AA
up gradation of Science laboratories and library blocks at Government Degree College For Women Anantnag Kashmir.	195.00	390000	"A" only	Rs. 5000	45 Days	Accorded

Terms and Conditions:

- The tender documents for the above job can be seen on the website www.jktenders.gov.in from 15-12-2020 (1200Hrs)
- The tender documents can be downloaded from the above website from 15-12-2020 (1200Hrs) onwards.
- The bids shall be deposited in electronic format on website www.jktenders.gov.in from 15-12-2020 (1200Hrs) upto 31-12-2020 (1700Hrs) only.
- The uploaded Pre-Qualification bids in the first instance on the website will be opened on 01-01-2021 (1200Hrs). In case of holiday on the date of opening of bid, bids will be opened on the next working day. The financial bids of only those firms shall be opened who qualify in pre-qualification bid, intimation in respect of opening of financial bids shall be notified separately.
- Cost of tender documents (in shape of demand draft) shall be deposited within two days positively in the office Managing Director, SICOP Sanat Ghar Bemina Srinagar after opening of the tender (CDR's shall not be released without depositing tender document fee). The Corporation shall not be responsible for any delay due to any reason.
- The advertised cost shown above is inclusive of SICOP service charges and other taxes as admissible.
- All documents as required in SBD should be uploaded with the pre-qualification bid.
- The conditional tender shall not be rejected.
- The Managing Director J&K SICOP reserve the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/-
Project Engineer
SICOP Kashmir

DIPK-NB-4618/20

Office of the Wildlife Warden, Central Division Srinagar

New Theed, Harwan, Dachigam Pin code: 191123

E-mail: wlwc786@gmail.com
Ph/ Fax No. 0194-2462327

Mr. Nazir Ahmed Reshi,
S/o: Mohammad Abdullah Reshi
R/O: Khimber, Srinagar.
Regd. No:SE/Hyd/Sgr/AA/15/Civil of 2002-03

No: WLWC/Estt/20-21/2285-87

Dated: 15/12/2020

Subject: (Final Notice).Construction of Health Centre at Dachigam National Park, Srinagar
Reference: Wildlife Warden, Central's allotment No: WLWC/Esstt/18-19/2595-98 Dated: 4-02-2019.

Dear Sir,

In view of your lowest offered rates, you were awarded the contract of work titled "Construction of Health Centre at Dachigam National Park, Srinagar" vide above referred allotment No.

Whereas, the said work was supposed to be completed within a period of 10 months i.e. by 11/2019.

Whereas, due to prevailing circumstances in the valley you were allowed to completed it by end of March, 2020, but you failed to complete the said work within the stipulated time.

Whereas, during the construction of said Health Centre at Dachigam a patch of chain link fencing has been opened by you to make accessible to brought the construction material through this open portion which you was supposed to repair/restore immediately after stocking the construction material.

Whereas, it was found that from 1st of April, 2020 the left out construction work has not been started by you till date and even the opened portion of chain link fencing also has not been repaired/restored by you till date, thus resulting the existing standing chain link fencing is getting damaged day by day also the people from various localities are sneaking into Dachigam National Park through this open space which has become a grave concern for the department.

Whereas, the Range Officer, Dachigam vide his notice No:9/DR/154-55 Dated: 22-06-2020 informed you to restore the damaged Chainlink fencing and start the work, but you did not bother to respond to the notice served to you.

Whereas, you were again served a notice vide this office No: WLWC/Esstt/2020-21/967-69 dated: 13-08-2020 to start and complete the said work and foremost the repair/restore the open space of Chainlink fencing within a week's time positively, failing which action under rules shall be initiated against you.

Whereas, again vide his office final notice No: WLWC/Esstt/2020-21/1887-89 Dated: 4-11-2020, you were informed that you have failed to execute the left out item of works titled

"Construction of Health Centre at Dachigam National Park, Srinagar" and action under rules have been initiated/recommended as under:

- The allotment of tender contract of the said work in your favour is cancelled forthwith at your risk and responsibility.
- Your earnest deposit amount which is in shape of (CDR No: 2818105 Dated:19-12-2018 for Rs.36,000/- and No: 2818104 Dated: 19-12-2018 for Rs.77,000/-) is hereby forfeited.
- The damage to the work executed by you so far, which has remained open to harsh weathers shall be accessed by the engineering wing and shall be communicated to you through the legal cell of the department.
- Necessary repair/restoration of damaged chain link fencing estimate shall be prepared by the engineering wing of the department and the said estimated amount have to be deposited in the department in shape of cheque or DD/CDR which shall be later on released in favour of the agency who shall be awarded the contract of restoration/repair of the same.
- The items which you have not executed so far shall be put to re-tenders, the excess cost if any involving there to, shall have to be born by you.
- The penalty amount shall be decided by the Tender opening committee and shall be served to you through the legal cell of the department.
- Necessary action shall be initiated from this office for cancellation of your registration card bearing No: Reg. No: SE/Hyd/Sgr/AA/15/Civil of 2002-03.

Wildlife Warden
Central Division, Srinagar

DIPK-10506/20

CONDOLENCE

Regional Passport Office (RPO) observed a two minute silence on the sad and untimely demise of the mother (Smt Sudesh Rani Nagar) of Regional Passport Officer Kashmir & Ladakh Shri BB Nagar and prayed for the departed soul and the entire Nagar family.

Officers and staff

X

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 **Shafiq 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 X

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

Office of the Director Archives, Archaeology and Museums Culture Department

E-mail: jk.dama.gov@gmail.com
Phone / Fax No: 0191-2578834

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Bid Identification No: 2020_cc_111536_INOeNIT/DAMA-01/2020-21

Dead line for submission of Bids:11 January 2021 up-to 1600 Hours

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Director, Archives, Archaeology and Museums, Culture Department Jammu & Kashmir Invites e-Tenders comprising of two covers A&B from eligible Consultants who are registered as company/ firms for below mentioned work.

Sr.No.	Name of Work	Bid security	Cost of Bid Document	Time of completion for work
1.(a)	Consultancy services for restoration and conservation and Development of Shergari Heritage Complex, Srinagar as Cultural centre and.. Consultancy services for Restoration/conservation of Old SPS Museum Building, and its re-use plan and setting up Decorative Art Museum	50,000/-	2000/-	Till completion of project.

The bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen / downloaded from the J&K Government e-procurement website www.jktenders.gov.in

Sd/-
Director,
Archives, Archaeology & Museums, J&K

DIPK-10515/20

Government of Jammu and Kashmir

Directorate of Tourism Kashmir

Phone 0194-2502279

directortourismkmr@gmail.com

Fax. 0194-2502281

CORRIGENDUM

Walk in Interview Notice

In partial modification to the Walk – In – Interview Notice No. DTK/Rec/261/2205 dated 14.12.2020 regarding temporary hiring of Ski Instructors for the winter season 2020 at Gulmarg, it is hereby informed that the age of the interested candidates should be upto 40 years, with all requisite qualification, as mentioned vide earlier Notice.

The eligible candidates are informed to reach the office of Dy. Director Tourism, Recreation, TRC Srinagar along with the relevant documents on 19.12. 2020 at 11.30 A.M for Walk-in-Interview.

Sd/-
Dy. Director Tourism
Recreation, Kashmir

No: DTK/Rec/261/2209
Dt: 16.12.2020

DIPK-10531/20

Government of Jammu and Kashmir

Department of Wildlife Protection Office of the Wildlife Warden Wetland Division Hokersar, Srinagar.

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING QUOTATIONS
TENDER NOTICE No. 110F 2020-21Dated:15/12/2020

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K e-tenders are invited on item rate basis from approved / registered dealers for supply of Motor for Boat to be used in the Dal Lake by this Division as per the details given below: -

S. No	Name of Item	Cost of T/Doc	Earnest Money	Time to Supply	Supplier
1	Supply of Honda Boat Engine GX 160 5HP Petrol / Diesel.	Rs. 500/-	Rs. 5000/-	07 Days	Registered Under GST

AAA :Committed.

Position of funds: Committed.

Major head of Account:PLAN

VITAL DATES TO NOTE

1	Date of issue of Tender Notice	15/12/2020
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	15/12/2020 to 21/12/2020
3	Bid submission start date	15/12/2020
4	Bid submission End date	21/12/2020 upto 06:00 PM
5	Date & time of opening of bids (online)	22/12/2020 at 02:30 PM

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Tender documents can be downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in.
- The successful bidder / supplier / quotationer is bound to supply the items within the stipulated time at Divisional Stores after issuance of supply order and the items supplied should meet the standards for safety, efficacy and quality.
- Bids uploaded must accompany Earnest Money / CDR of Rs. 5,000/- (Rs Five thousand) pledged to Wildlife Warden Wetlands Division Srinagar and Treasury Challan / Receipt (Cost of tender documents) of Rs. 500/- (Rs. Five hundred) deposited in Govt. Treasury under Account Head 0406-Forest and Wildlife. The bids shall remain valid for a period of 30 days from the date of opening of bids.
- The Rate quoted should be inclusive of all taxes (GST / CGST) applicable presently as per the norms.
- No conditional tenders shall be accepted / incomplete tenders shall be out rightly rejected.
- The unit rate and price quoted by the suppliers should be in Indian Rupee (INR) and the rate quoted shall be deemed to include price escalation and all taxes upto end of the current financial year i.e.2020-21.
- The success full bidder shall have to supply the items within 20 days from the date of supply order, delay without any valid reason shall attract penalty of the allotted cost @ 2% per day.
- In case the supply is not found upto the required quality/mark, the suppliers shall have to make his own arrangement for replacing the material at his own risk, cost and responsibility otherwise the payment shall be withheld.
- The firm should be in possession of valid Drug Licenses (Schedule X)
- The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any quotation or a part thereof without assigning any reason thereof.
- In case the supply is not found upto the required quality/mark, the suppliers shall have to make his own arrangement for replacing the material at his own risk and cost, otherwise the payment shall be withheld.
- The payment will be made only after funds are available with the Department.
- The expiry date of the drugs should not be less than 24 Months at the time of supply.
- The brand of drugs supplied shall be approved by Veterinary Surgeon of Wildlife Protection Department.
- All other terms and conditions if any shall remain same as per the rules amended till date.

No.WLW(WL)/ESTT/2020-21/5330-34

Date:15/12/2020

DIPK-10505/20

--sd--
Wildlife Warden
Wetland Division, Srinagar

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ACB Conducted Searches Of Housing Board Officials

SRINAGAR: The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday afternoon raided the house of Manager Housing Board Bemina at his residence at Hyderpora and other places in Kashmir valley into the corruption allegation, reported news agency KDC

Probing agency ACB said in a statement "Anti Corruption Bureau has registered case FIR 27/2020 against the officers/officials of J&K Housing Board Srinagar on the outcome of a JSC conducted by this Bureau into the allegations of procurement of material on exorbi-

tant rates and use of standard material in projects of construction of the buildings undertaken and progressed ahead by J&K Housing Board Unit 2nd, Srinagar without tendering process during the period 2015-2017."

They said "During the probe it has been found that these works were to be executed in two fold mechanism; labour component and material component wherein the labour component was to be executed through piecemeal workers and the material was to be produced through tendering from original

manufactures. Apart from lot of procurements done without tendering in conspiracy with portrayed piecemeal workers, made procurement of many items on exorbitant rates."

"It has surfaced that at one project in Srinagar, the excavated earth to the tune of 11756 cubic metres has been shown transported to a dumping site but the dumping site has not been identified by providing any site plan etc. The dumping site is located at a far distance from the project site but the same has been shown located at minimum distance.

The auction or sale of excavated material could have generated revenue for government as such wrongful loss has been caused to the State Exchequer," reads the statement.

ACB said "These commissions and omissions on part of officers/officials of J&K Housing Board, namely Aftab Rashid Pandit, the then Deputy General Manger J&K Housing Board Unit 2nd, Srinagar, Shiekh Sajjad Bashir, the then Assistant Manager J&K Housing Board Unit 2nd, Srinagar and others constitute offences under section 5(1) (C), 5(1) (d) r/w section 5(2) J&K

PC Act Samvat 2006 and section 120-B RPC. Accordingly, a case FIR No. 27/2020 was registered in Police Station ACB Srinagar on 15.12.2020."

Sources said that the search warrants were obtained from the competent court and searches were conducted at various places including a residence at Hyderpora.

A senior ACB official said that yes we have raided the house of Manager Housing Board Bemina and we have seized several documents including that of bank related property and further investigation into the case is on.

IT HAS SURFACED THAT AT ONE PROJECT IN SRINAGAR, THE EXCAVATED EARTH TO THE TUNE OF 11756 cubic metres has been shown transported to a dumping site but the dumping site has not been identified by providing any site plan etc. The dumping site is located at a far distance from the project site but the same has been shown located at minimum distance.

LG Reviews Implementation Of PMDP Projects



JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today reviewed the progress of Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) projects in a high-level meeting here at Civil Secretariat.

Chief Secretary B. V. R. Subrahmanyam, Financial Commissioner (Finance) Arun Kumar Mehta, Financial Commissioner (Health) Atal Dulloo, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor Nitishwar Kumar, Administrative Secretaries of various departments besides senior officers from NHAI, BRO, Jal Shakti, PWD, PDD, Tourism, Horticulture, etc. were present in the meeting.

During the meeting, the Lt Governor sought a comprehensive report of the sector-wise implementation of 54 projects sanctioned under PMDP with an outlay of Rs 58,627 crores and reviewed the Financial and Physical progress achieved so far.

Secretary Disaster Management Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction (DMRRR) gave a Power-Point presentation and informed the Chair about the present status of PMDP projects of various departments and iconic projects including Health, Education, Tour-

ism, Horticulture, Sports, Jal Shakti, PWD, and Housing & Urban Development.

The Lt Governor was apprised about various major projects including upgrading of Uri-Poonch road, Srinagar-Leh road via Kargil, special repair of roads and bridges, projects proposed under Bharat Mala for the length of 105 KM for tourist connectivity, Jammu-Akhnoor-Poonch road, construction of semi-ring roads in Jammu and Srinagar, AIIMS at Jammu/Kashmir, construction of IIM Jammu and IIT Jammu, etc.

Secretary DMRRR informed that 11 projects have been completed and 9 are substantially completed whereas 34 projects are at different stages of execution out of which 19 shall be completed by ending 2021.

The Lt Governor also reviewed the progress of Iconic projects which included Hydro-electric Projects (HEP) of Kiru, Kwar, Shahpur Kandi, and Ujh.

Laying special emphasis on the timely execution of the projects, the Lt Governor directed the Administrative Secretaries to closely monitor the execution of all PMDP projects and have a regular review of the progress made thereof in order to remove the bottlenecks if any.

The Lt. Governor passed strict directions for speeding up on the ground implementation for early completion of the works. The Lt. Governor also called for regular monitoring and submission of progress report on a monthly basis.

"Sectoral progress should be monitored regularly to avoid unnecessary delay", he maintained. The Lt Governor asked the concerned officers to incorporate every detail of the projects including date of sanction, date of start of work, present status and targeted date of completion for effective monitoring.

J&K Launches Portal For Online Registrations For Certified Pharmacists

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Wednesday launched a portal for online registration of certified pharmacists.

As many as three candidates who had uploaded their documents on the portal were handed over certificates as Registered Pharmacist by Financial Commissioner, Health and Medical Education Department, Atal Dulloo, an official spokesman said.

The Financial Commissioner, while appreciating functioning of Pharmacy Council of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, expressed hope that all stakeholders will get immensely benefited by this initiative.

Dulloo, who led the department during the coronavirus outbreak, said that pharmacists play a pivotal role in the healthcare system and their contribution is critical towards mitigating sufferings of ailing masses.

He expressed hope that the Pharmacy Council shall strive hard to ensure that the practice and profession of Pharmacy in the Union Territory of J&K is regulated in an efficient manner and this body continues to uphold the

sanctity of moral ethics, code and conduct among Pharmacy professionals.

He appreciated the Jammu & Kashmir Pharmacy Council for eliminating physical interface in various services offered by it.

He said that a transparent, accountable and time-bound system is always required to address the problems being faced by candidates aspiring to acquire grant and renewal of their Pharmacist Registration certificates.

Dulloo said in the past applicants had to run from pillar to post to get their bonafide claims settled.

He also lauded the central government for considering a one-time exemption of considering all those Registered Pharmacists who were registered under the repealed State Law, i.e. J&K Pharmacy Act, Samvat, 2011 (1955 A.D) by incorporating a provision 32C in the Pharmacy Act, 1948.

Dulloo said that the candidates pursuing profession and practice of Pharmacy in the UT of J&K have been enabled and motivated to join the national main stream in all aspects governing the field.

NATIPORA ATTACK AFTERMATH

Two Youth From Srinagar's Uptown Go Missing

SRINAGAR: Two youth had gone missing from Natipora area of central Kashmiri's Srinagar district.

Sources said that two youth identified as Irfan Ahmad Sofi Son of Nazir Ahmad Sofi and Bilal Manzoor Bhat Son of Manzoor Ahmad Bhat both residents of Natipora Srinagar.

Irfan is an auto driver and Bilal has got engaged recently

and is a shopkeeper by profession, both are neighbors.

Family members of both the missing youth told news agency KDC that on 14th December, when militants shot dead a PSO of PDP leader Haji Parvaiz, on the same evening their sons had been missing from their homes sparking fears of them having joined militant ranks.

We have registered missing reports in Police post Chanapora, they said.

Meanwhile, family members of both the missing persons have appealed to their sons to return back.

A police official said that we are verifying all the angles and nothing can't be ruled out at this time. More details will be followed.

Left Out Displaced Families Of 1947 Of PoJK J&K Govt Eases Process For Seeking Records

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Government today eased out the process for seeking records from Provincial Rehabilitation Officer (PRO), J&K, for the left out Displaced Families of 1947 of PoJK who have settled outside J&K.

Reportedly, around 5400 Displaced families from PoJK which settled in Delhi, UP, Punjab, Haryana and other parts were facing difficulties in getting proof/record of their migration from the PRO J&K, particularly after issuance of a government order No. 52-JK(DMRRR) of 2020

dated: 16.05.2020 that enabled the left out bonafide Kashmiri migrants and Displaced families to get Domicile Certificates.

The Government today notified three lists containing particulars of all recorded displaced persons from PoJK who have presently settled in the states of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi, at its website (www.jkmigrantrelief.nic.in).

It is pertinent to mention here that in May, 2020, in terms of the said government order all left out Displaced Families of 1947 of PoJK

who have settled outside J&K were allowed to get Domicile Certificate to avail the benefit but these Displaced Families were facing difficulties in getting their records from the office of the PRO, Jammu, in view of the distance and restrictions on account of Covid-19.

A unique ID has been allocated to each displaced family which shall be a sufficient proof of document to be mentioned before Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants) for the purpose of seeking registration and subsequently the domicile certificate.

DIAL-EMMA



- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092, 2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488, 2452222, 2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS



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

HIGHWAY STATUS



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

This Day in History

- 1638 - French and Swedish troops occupy Breisach on the Rhine
- 1788 Russian army of Grigory Potemkin occupies Ochakov
- 1790 - Aztec calendar stone discovered in Mexico City
- 1885 - France declares Madagascar a protectorate
- 1893 - Russia ratifies Double Alliance with France
- 1908 - In Turkey the new parliament convenes with reformist Young Turks as the majority
- 1912 - Albania's de facto independence from the Ottoman Empire is recognized at the London Conference of Ambassadors
- 1918 - A conference of workers' and soldiers' councils take control of German government in Berlin, until elections in January selects new national assembly
- 1920 - Japan receives League of Nations mandate over Pacific islands
- 1920 - South Africa receives League of Nations mandate over SW Africa
- 1922 - Last British troops leave Irish Free State
- 1925 - Soviet Union & Turkey sign non-aggression pact
- 1925 - Sultan Abdulaziz Ibn Saud conquers Jeddah, the last major stand of the Hashemites against the Saudis
- 1927 - US submarine S-4 sinks after collision killing all 34 aboard
- 1938 - Discovery of nuclear fission using uranium by Otto Hahn and his assistant Fritz Strassmann
- 1939 - German pocket battleship Graf Spee scuttled by its crew off Uruguay
- 1940 - British troops occupy Sollum, Egypt
- 1941 - Dutch & Australian troops land on Portuguese Timor
- 1941 - German submarine U-31 sunk
- 1941 - World War II: Beginning of the Siege of Sebastopol.
- 1942 - Allies in London sentence German war criminals
- 1944 - US Army announces end of excluding Japanese-Americans from West Coast, detainees released
- 1944 - US destroyers sink in storm off Philippines, 790 killed
- 1947 - British industrial company BTH receives a patent for holography, invented by Dennis Gabor in their development lab
- 1954 - 1st fully automated railroad freight yard (Gary, Indiana)
- 1957 - US successfully test-fires Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile



HIJRI
CALENDAR

01

JAMADI

-UL-

AWWAL

1442

PRAYERS

FAJR

5: 58

ZUHR

12: 25

ASR

3:46

MAGRIB

5:27

ISHA

6:52

From KO Archives

India, Pak Likely To Go War In 15 Years

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: India and Pakistan are the two nations most likely to go to war during next 15 years that will be deadly because of the lethality of their arms, the CIA has predicted in a re-port "Global Trends 2015", released on eve of transition of Bush administration. The report, which may be the part of international agencies propaganda just to destabilise the region, further says India and Pakistan will amass larger nuclear and missile arsenals, with India emerging as the unrivaled regional power with a large military-including naval and nuclear capabilities.

"In increasingly tumultuous Pakistan government control will by 2015 be limited to the Punjabi heartland and the commercial capital, Karachi the report predicts," claims the report. "Further domestic decline would benefit Islamic political activists, who may significantly increase their role in national politics" the report predicts while pointing out that nascent democratic reforms will produce little change in the face of opposition from an entrenched political elite and Islamic parties.

China, India to be new military powers: China and India will be the world's new military powers, based on sheer numbers, growing economic might and technological capabilities. The report offers the most specific insight ever provided an incoming administration about the forces shaping global change. CIA Director George J. Tenet Monday said the "Global Trends 2015" is being released to launch a "strategic dialogue within the government to deal with both the challenges and the opportunities ahead.

According to the report internal problems in South Asia will exacerbate regional instability. In India, more than half a billion people will live in dire poverty, as the gap between rich and poor widens and sparks domestic strife. Gaps between India and Pakistan: The widening strategic and economic gaps between India and Pakistan - and the dynamic interplay between their mutual hostility and the instability in Central Asia - will define the South Asia region in 2015. The widening India-Pakistan gap - destabilizing in its own right - will be accompanied by deep political, economic, and social disparities within both states. Pakistan will be more dependent on international financial assistance. Other

South Asian states-Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal-will be drawn closer to and more dependent on India and its economy. Afghanistan will likely remain weak and a destabilizing force in the region and the world. Wary of China, India will look increasingly to the West, but its need for oil and desire to balance Arab ties to Pakistan will lead to strengthened ties to Persian Gulf states as well. "Global Trends 2015," the result of an intensive yearlong study involving all branches of the intelligence community as well as many of America's top thinkers, offers sobering predictions about the "drivers," or major forces, that will determine the world of 2015 and beyond. The report was prepared by the National Intelligence Council, the most influential analytical arm of the US intelligence community. The council also produces classified "estimates" on dangers for all branches of the government.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 17 DECEMBER, 2000)

शोक संदेश एवं श्रद्धांजलि मैसेज



With deep grief we inform the sad demise of our beloved mother Smt Sudesh Rani Nagar left for heavenly abode of lord Vishnu on 11-12-2020 Friday. The loss is irreplaceable but we wish and pray for the peace of the departed soul.

Rasm Kriya-23-12-2020

Brahma Bhog- 12:00 PM

Shrdhanjali Samaroh- 2:00 PM at Braham Vichar Vatika, Ward No 10 Parliwand Kathua.

Grief Stricken

Sons and Daughters-in-Law

Renuka Nagar & Brij Bhushan Nagar

Sapna Sharma & Sanjeev Sharma and whole Nagar family.

Phone: 9417179549, 9086524199

Record Number Of Journalists Jailed Because Of Their Work

Agencies

New York: A record 274 journalists were in jail at the beginning of the month because of their work, nearly three dozen of them on charges of "false news," the Committee to Protect Journalists has said.

It has been five straight years where at least 250 journalists were in custody, which the committee says illustrates a crackdown by repressive governments. China is the top jailer, followed by Turkey and

by crossfire, said Courtney Radsch, the committee's advocacy director. Twenty of the journalists killed so far this year were murder victims.

No journalists in the United States were killed and none were imprisoned at the beginning of the month. But 110 journalists in the US were arrested and criminally charged in 2020, and around 300 were assaulted, many while covering protests in the wake of George Floyd's death, according to the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker.

The Committee to Protect Journalists has been concerned that President Donald Trump's criticism of "fake news" in the United States has influenced autocratic leaders in other countries. Jailings are up compared to several years past: the committee said there were 131 in 2005 and 92 in 2000.

The journalists' group hopes that President-elect Joe Biden can set a tone on the world stage by making a point of talking about press freedom.

Still, Radsch cautioned that "the world is not going to be undone all of a sudden just because we have a new U.S. president." The committee has increasingly turned to Congress for help in emphasizing press freedoms worldwide, Radsch said. She cited U.S. Sens. Ed Markey, D-Mass., and Marco Rubio, R-Florida, and California Democratic U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff as being supportive.



Cyclone Amphan battered India and Bangladesh in May. PTI file

Record Climate Disasters In Asia-Pacific Push Millions To 'Breaking Point'

Agencies

Kuala Lumpur: Asia-Pacific has faced a record number of climate-related disasters in 2020, affecting tens of millions of vulnerable people already hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Red Cross said on Wednesday.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said it had responded to 24 climate-linked crises this year in the world's most disaster-prone region - up from 18 in 2019 - including floods, typhoons, extreme cold and drought.

"COVID-19 has of course aggravated these impacts, with a taste of the compound shocks we're expecting in a changing climate," Maarten van Aalst, director of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"The pandemic has not only complicated evacuations and disaster response, but also aggravated the economic impact of disasters, especially for the poorest people," he added.

Southeast Asia was the IFRC's busiest region in 2020, with 15 emergency responses to disasters including severe

floods, storms and landslides in the Philippines and Vietnam that affected more than 31 million people.

Jess Letch, the IFRC's emergency operations manager, said the challenge had been to help communities with relief aid while also taking the steps needed to halt the spread of COVID-19.

Mary Joy Gonzales, a resilience project manager with CARE in the Philippines, said her aid agency had worked to provide additional shelter to enable social distancing after one person contracted COVID-19 in an evacuation centre it was supporting.

Women have suffered a triple blow, she added, with the pandemic fuelling violence at home just as many lost their jobs and had to look after out-of-school children and elderly relatives while the country was pummeled by destructive storms.

The agency expected that such impacts "will get worse due to climate change", she told journalists earlier this month.

"We have seen the trend in the past 10 years: typhoons have been becoming stronger and we have lost thousands of lives already," she said.

Last year, more than 94 million people in the Asia-Pacific region were hit by climate-related disasters, with the area experiencing twice as many emergencies as the Americas or Africa, according to the IFRC's latest World Disasters Report.

The total number of people affected in 2020 has not yet been released.

INCOMES SUFFER

Home to about 60% of the world's population, the Asia-Pacific region has borne the brunt of climate disasters, with many people living in vulnerable conditions due to poverty and poor urban planning.

Van Aalst said countries had become better prepared and equipped to save lives but were still failing to protect the livelihoods of vulnerable communities struck by disasters.

He cited the example of Cyclone Amphan that battered India and Bangladesh in May. Mass evacuations before the storm made landfall prevented a large number of deaths.

But the impact on economic well-being was harsh, especially for the poorest, he noted, with total damages estimated at more than \$13 billion.

A pandemic atlas: How COVID-19 took over the world in 2020

Agencies

Washington: The virus that first emerged a year ago in Wuhan, China, swept across the world in 2020, leaving havoc in its wake. More than any event in memory, the pandemic has been a global event. On every continent, households have felt its devastation — joblessness and lockdowns, infirmity and death. And an abiding, relentless fear.

But each nation has its own story of how it coped.

The story of COVID-19 in Brazil is the story of a president who insists the pandemic is no big deal. Jair Bolsonaro condemned COVID-19 quarantine, saying shutdowns would wreck the economy and punish the poor. He scoffed at the "little flu," then trumpeted the fatalistic claim nothing could stop 70 per cent of Brazilians from falling ill. And he refused to take responsibility when many died.

In many ways, normal life has resumed in China, the coun-

try where COVID-19 first appeared one year ago. China's ruling Communist Party has retracted some of the most sweeping anti-disease controls ever imposed. The challenge is jobs: The economy is growing again, but the recovery is uneven.

Germans enjoyed a largely relaxed summer with many restrictions lifted, the dividend of a rapid response to the initial coronavirus outbreak and a reliance on early and widespread testing that won wide praise.

It brought the number of daily COVID-19 cases down from a peak of more than 6,000 in late March to the few hundreds by the warmer months. But as people grew lax in following the rules the numbers began to climb to nearly quadruple the March daily record, and the country now finds itself in a new lockdown as it tries to bring the pandemic back under control.

A nation of 1.3 billion people, India is likely to emerge as the country with the world's highest

coronavirus tally. It responded to the pandemic early on with an abrupt nationwide lockdown, but the number of cases spiked as restrictions eased and its creaky public health system struggled to keep up.

Questions have been raised about its unusually low death rate. India's virus worries are also multiplied by its struggling economy that recorded its worst performance in at least two decades. It will be the worst-affected among the world's major economies even after the pandemic wanes.

At the start, Iranian officials downplayed COVID-19 — denying the mounting toll of infections, refusing to close mosques, making half-hearted gestures at locking down businesses. That was then. This is now: Even Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has worn disposable gloves while planting a tree for state media, and prayed in an empty mosque to mark the holy Shiite commemoration of Ashoura.

Iran not excited about Biden win, but happy with Trump departure: Rouhani

Agencies

Tehran: President Hassan Rouhani says Iran is not excited about the election of Joe Biden as US president, but is happy with the departure of Donald Trump, the "most rogue" and "law-breaking" American leader so far, who did not even abide by humanitarian principles in dealing with the Iranian nation.

"We are by no means excited about [Joe] Biden coming to power, but we are happy with Trump leaving as a terrorist and a person who even blocked Iran's access to [COVID-19] vaccines; we are happy because he failed to adhere to basic moral and human principles," Rouhani told a cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday.

He also stressed that today's situation is completely different from that of 2015, when long-running negotiations culminated in the nuclear deal, officially called the Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)/

"In 2015, when we were negotiating the JCPOA, the sword of six resolutions was above our head, but today this sword is broken. Back then, the PMD (Possible Military Dimensions in the nuclear case) was another threat that does not exist today," Rouhani said.

The JCPOA was signed between the Islamic Republic and the P5+1 group of countries, the US, the UK, France, Russia, and China plus Germany, and ratified in UNSC Resolution 2231.

However, Trump unilaterally



ally pulled his country out of the JCPOA in May 2018 and reinstated the anti-Iran sanctions that had been lifted by the deal.

The Trump administration also unleashed the so-called maximum pressure campaign and targeted the Iranian nation with the "toughest ever" restrictive measures.

Following Washington's exit from the deal, the remaining European parties failed to fulfill their end of the bargain under US pressure, prompting Iran to move in May 2019 to scale back its JCPOA commitments under Articles 26 and 36 of the accord covering Tehran's legal rights.

US president-elect Biden has, however, pledged to rejoin the accord, which was inked when he was vice president.

Rouhani further said, "In 2015, the world public opinion had been wrongly swayed to believe that Iran would not fulfill its commitments. However, we have proved in the JCPOA that we are the most committed country in the world. We negotiate hard and obsessively, but if we sign [a deal], we will honor our promise. This is while even the P4 + 1 countries failed to implement their obligations."

Japan's space agency finds ample soil, gas from asteroid



Agencies

TOKYO: Officials from Japan's space agency said on Tuesday they have found more than the anticipated amount of soil and gases inside a small capsule the country's Hayabusa2 spacecraft brought back from a distant asteroid this month, a mission they praised as a milestone in planetary research.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said its staff initially spotted some black particles sitting on the bottom of the capsule's sample catcher when they pulled out the container on Monday. By Tuesday, scientists found more of the soil and gas samples in a compartment that stored those from the first of Hayabusa's two touchdowns on the asteroid last year.

We have confirmed a good amount of sand apparently collected from the asteroid Ryugu, along with gases, JAXA Hayabusa2 project manager Yuichi Tsuda said in a video message during an online news conference. The samples from outside of our planet, which we have long dreamed of, are now in our hands.

Tsuda called the successful return of the asteroid soil and gas samples a major scientific milestone. The pan-shaped capsule, 40 centimeters (15 inches) in diameter, was dropped by Hayabusa2 from space to a predetermined spot in a sparsely populated Australian desert on Dec 6 at the end of its six-year round trip to Ryugu, more than 300 million kilometres (190 million miles) from Earth.

NEWS MAKERS

Washington, December 15
US President-elect Joe Biden has told election-weary Americans that it is time to "turn the page", after the Electoral College affirmed his triumph over President Donald Trump, who has refused to concede and filed a litany of legal challenges to overturn the poll result.

The 538-member Electoral College pushed Joe Biden past the 270-vote threshold to win the bitterly contested race for the White House.

The 538-member Electoral College pushed Biden past the 270-vote threshold to win the bitterly-contested race for the White House. It was one of the crucial steps required for the 78-year-old Democrat to take office on January 20 as the 46th US President.

Under the US system, voters actually cast their ballots for electors, who in turn,

Time to turn the page, says Joe Biden as Electoral College confirms win



formally vote for candidates weeks after the presidential election. Biden won the November 3 election with 306 electoral college votes to incumbent Republican President Trump's 232. The Electoral College votes will

now be sent to Congress to be counted formally next month. Though some House Republicans have indicated they will object to the results in key states, they can do little more than delay the process during a joint session of Congress on

January 6.

In a speech from his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware after the announcement of his victory in the election, Biden said the US democracy had been "pushed, tested and threatened" and "proved to be resilient, true and strong". He criticised Trump's attempts to overturn the result, saying the "will of the people prevailed".

"The rule of law, our Constitution and the will of the people prevailed" over Trump's efforts. The flame of democracy was lit in this nation a long time ago. And we now know nothing, not even a pandemic or an abuse of power, can extinguish that flame," Biden said. "In this battle for the soul of America, democracy prevailed. We the people voted. Faith in our institutions held. The integrity of our elections remains intact. And so, now it is time to turn the page," he said. — PTI

'Are we guinea pigs?' - France's seniors wary of COVID vaccine

French nursing home boss Yann Reboulleau was trying to persuade 92-year-old resident Madeleine Bonnet of the merits of taking the COVID-19 vaccine, and he was having a tough time.

"Are we guinea pigs?" asked Bonnet, who used to work as a pharmacist, as she sat across from Reboulleau in the television room of the "Mon Repos" home while cooks prepared a lunch of bulgur wheat and chicken.

Reboulleau pointed out that vaccines undergo extensive testing to ensure they are safe. Bonnet fired back: "But with how much certainty?"

Scientists say the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines—once the first of them receives regulatory approval for Europe in the coming weeks—will



play a huge role in knocking back a virus that in France alone has contributed to more than 58,000 deaths.

But the effectiveness of the vaccine could be compromised, scientists say, by a widespread reluctance of people in France to have it. More than half the population say they will not, or probably not, get inoculated, polls show.

That reluctance is shared at the "Mon Repos" home near

Paris, even though the residents, ranging in age from 87 to 100, are among the most vulnerable groups to getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19.

In the first wave of the virus earlier this year, the home had a cluster of infections during which four residents died.

Nationally, over 17,000 of the COVID-related deaths were in care homes and 93 per cent of all those who died with COVID-19 were 65 or over, public health figures showed.

Laurent Levasseur, chairman of Bluelinea, a company which helps care homes handle the virus, including "Mon Repos", said his company had surveyed residents by phone and those undecided or against having the vaccine outweighed those in favour.

Govt Decision To Compulsorily Retire Officer Vindicated, CAT Dismisses Bajaj's Appeal



The government's bold step of compulsorily retiring some black sheep in the tax administration last year had now got the seal of approval from the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT).

The principal bench of CAT has dismissed an application from former commissioner of Income Tax Pramod Kumar Bajaj challenging the government's decision to compulsorily retire officers of central services.

In one of the first such cases, the CAT Principal Bench headed by Justice L. Narasimha Reddy as Chairman and Aradhana Johri as Member (Admn) in its order pronounced through video conferencing dismissed Bajaj's application, who was one of the 85 officers compulsorily retired under Fundamental Rule 56(j).

"We do not find any merit in the OA (Original Application) and the same is accordingly dismissed. The MA (Miscellaneous Application) No.1931/2020 also stands disposed of. There shall be no order as to costs," the CAT principal bench said.

Agreeing with the government's contention that the scope of interference with the order passed by invoking FR 56 (j) is very limited and not warranted in the instant case, the Principal Bench has come out very straight on the face of complainant Bajaj, stating that the record of the applicant speaks for itself, and it was no longer in the interest of the department to continue the applicant in service, as "the personal life of the applicant was not only extraordinary but also dented the very reputation of the department. When such is the status, which the applicant has acquired for himself, the respondents (the government and the CBDT) are left with no other alternative except to invoke Rule 56 (j)."

Fundamental Rule 56 (j) provides for conditions under which central service officers can be retired from service prematurely.

The Principal Bench said in its order that "we examined the request in all its seriousness. But on perusing the material before us in the form of pleadings and annexures, we are of the view that there is no necessity to summon the record, having regard to the nature of judicial review, in matters of this nature. Fundamental Rule 56 (j) empowers the government to retire the employees, in

case of Group-A and B, who cross 50 years of age on compulsory basis, if it is found that their continuance is not in public interest."

CAT Principal Bench took cognizance of the fact that the Income Tax Department has undertaken "a comprehensive exercise" in 2019 "to identify the officers, whose continuance in service is not in the public interest. About 15 officers have been identified and the applicant was one among them. The background of each and every officer is mentioned in the note prepared for that purpose."

Citing the Supreme Court's decisions in the Union of India & Ors. vs. Dulal Dutt (1993) 2 SCC 179, and a catena of judgement in other cases, the Bench underlined that "an order of a compulsory retirement is not an order of punishment and ...no order of compulsory retirement is required to be a speaking order." Therefore, an order of compulsory retirement, even if amenable to judicial review, is the result of an administrative exercise undertaken by the concerned authority, and thus, has "restricted and limited" scope to review because the court does not have the expertise to correct the administrative decision and it does not sit as a court of appeal.

"For all practical purposes, the applicant has chosen to challenge the very authority of the department in every form and at every stage. No department of government, not to speak of a sensitive one like the Income Tax, can afford to function with such officers at senior positions," said the CAT Principal Bench Order dismissing the OA. The case on behalf of the Central Government was pleaded by counsel Ravi Prakash.

It may be recalled that PK Bajaj, the then CIT was compulsorily retired by the Government on 27.09.2019 under Fundamental Rules 56 (j) on various charges and complaints alleging demand of bribe and concern over the quality of orders passed by him, besides a large number of irregularities noticed during vigilance inspection. His name was included in the Agreed List for the year 2018 jointly by the CBDT and the CBI.

Besides several indiscipline and serious integrity issues, Bajaj was accused of bigamy by his ex-wife and also of amassing wealth disproportionate to his income. He allegedly purchased a flat in Ashok Vihar, Delhi and handed over the same to his estranged wife by way of alimony without furnishing any intimation as required under Conduct Rules.

Bajaj had allegedly married one Renu and then Rakhi without any judicial separation/divorce from Sapna, thereby committing bigamy.



Representative Image

Unable To Bear 'Farmers' Plight', Sikh Cleric Shoots Himself Dead

CHANDIGARH: A Sikh preacher supporting the farmers' agitation against the Centre's agriculture laws allegedly committed suicide near the Singhu border in Delhi on Wednesday, police said.

A handwritten note in Punjabi, purportedly left behind by the deceased, says he was unable to bear the 'pain of farmers'. The note is being verified by police.

An official of the Sonipat police said they had received a call that Sant Ram Singh (65), who hailed from Karnal, allegedly shot himself.

The deceased was rushed to a hospital in Panipat where doctors declared him brought dead. The official said the exact spot

where the incident took place is being verified and police are in the process of recording statements of the deceased's family members.

SAD spokesperson and Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa expressed grief over the incident and urged farmers to exercise restraint.

"A very sad news has been received that Sant Ram Singh, who dedicated his life to the service of humanity, committed suicide by shooting himself," he said on his Twitter handle.

According to Sirsa, the victim wrote in his suicide note that he was unable to bear the 'pain of the farmers'.

"It is a sin to suffer atrocity and witness it, which I cannot see," Sirsa said the cleric wrote in his suicide note.

Sirsa appealed to farmers to exercise restraint.

"It is a very grave time. I request you as the chief sewadar of the DSGMC to exercise restraint because anybody can do mischief in the farmers' agitation. It is a very sad incident for all of us but we need to be restrained," said Sirsa.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and other state have been protesting near the Delhi borders for the past three weeks, demanding that the Centre's farm laws be repealed. PTI

'EMPOWERMENT' Initiative Of Finance Department To Enable Public To Oversee Ongoing Works In Their Area

More Than 13000 Works Worth Rs11000 Crores Hosted On The Portal

JAMMU: In a major initiative to bring transparency and accountability in the execution of public works in furtherance of directions of Lieutenant Governor of J&K, Financial Commissioner, Finance, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta today launched a web based initiative to put details of all the ongoing capital works into the public domain.

On the occasion Principal Secretary Information Department, Rohit Kansal; Director General Budget, Mohammad Yaqoob Itoo; Deputy Director, Budget, Shafaat Yehya besides the IT professionals from the National Informatics Centre (NIC) were present.

The EMPOWERMENT (Enabling Monitoring of Public Overview of Works Being Executed & Resources for Meaningful Transparency) is a web portal hosting all the works being executed under the capex component of the UT budget. The same can be assessed through BEAMS website of Finance department.

The objective of this initiative, as described by Dr Mehta is that every citizen should be able to view every detail about the nature and extent of work under execution in his or her area or any part of the Union Territory.

The FC Finance also impressed that the initiative would be reviewed continuously

for incorporation of improvements based on the feedback of general public. He urged the people to utilize the information available on this portal to help government bring about greater responsiveness and accountability besides greater participation of stakeholders in the process of development happening in their area.

The portal is an interactive one as it offers public an opportunity to give their feedback about any of the works going on in J&K. Therefore this unique initiative taken by J&K government is the one made to enable the citizens to directly participate in the development of their area.

It was informed that any person can search for any of the work going on in UT or District sector in his village, block and district. The same will provide him/her all the relevant details of the work(s) going on there. The name, cost and position of funds released and expenditure incurred against the said work could be viewed by simply accessing the BEAMS website of the J&K Finance department. Thereafter every area specific, village specific work could be viewed along with the details pertaining to that work.

The portal currently hosts some 13264 works being executed in the Union Terri-

tory at a cumulative cost of Rs10968.52 crores. These include 10838 works under UT sector to be completed at a cost of more than Rs10550 crores and 2426 District sector works to be completed at a cost of Rs418.50 crores. It has also been revealed that against the same an amount of more than Rs6738.33 crores has been released by Finance department through BEAMS portal and Rs 3646 crores expended till date.

Moreover the portal offers links to view the works under execution under MGNREGA, PM Awas Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission Urban and Swachh Bharat Mission Rural. These works could be accessed from this portal itself and would include all the works executed throughout J&K under any scheme in the future, as was given out by the officers on the occasion.

FC Finance complimented the team of NIC for designing this portal in such a short period of time. He said that site had many of the significant details put forth lucidly. The portal has been designed by the IT experts from the local chapter of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) here at Moving Secretariat, Jammu and would be available for public usage from Thursday forenoon.

Trends Show LDF Ahead In Civic Polls In Kerala

With counting of votes for local body polls in Kerala underway on Wednesday, early trends showed that the ruling CPI(M) led Left Democratic Front was leading in 520 of the total of 941 panchayats.

The LDF was also leading in 10 out of the 14 district panchayats and 108 block panchayats of the total of 152, according to the State Election Commission figures.

The Congress led UDF was ahead in four district panchayats.

Out of the six corporations in the state, the LDF and the UDF were leading in three each.

BJP is ahead in 26 panchayats.

A total of 21,893 wards in 1,200 local self-governing bodies, including six corporations, 941 village panchayats, 14 district panchayats and 87 municipalities went to the polls in three phases on December 8, 10 and 14.

The first phase saw 73.12 per cent turnout, the second phase 76.78 and the third and final phase, 78.64 per cent.

Left leaders and workers claimed that the "hate campaign" against the CPI(M) through various issues raised by the Opposition Congress and BJP, including the gold smuggling



case and other matters, failed to resonate with the people.

"All the hate campaigns against the Left have been proven wrong," senior CPI(M) leader Kodiyaeri Balakrishnan told the media.

State Finance Minister T M Thomas Isaac in a tweet said LDF was heading towards a resounding victory in local body elections.

"LDF heading towards a resounding victory in the local body elections.

People reject the slander campaign of Congress and BJP and also the machinations of central agencies. It is a vote for left politics and development alternative of Kerala government," Isaac tweeted.

In 2015, the ruling LDF had nearly swept the civic polls by winning 549 village panchayats, 90 block panchayats, 44 municipalities and four corporations.

At the district panchayat level, both UDF and LDF had won seven seats each.

Delhi Riots: Not Given Medical Treatment In Jail For Toothache For Past 3 Days, Umar Khalid Alleges

NEW DELHI: Former JNU student leader Umar Khalid, arrested in a north east Delhi riots case, alleged before a court here on Wednesday that he has not been given any medical treatment by the Bihar jail authorities for his toothache for the last three days.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Dinesh Kumar directed the jail Superintendent to provide proper medical treatment to Khalid as per the prison rules.

The court directed the jail authorities to file a compliance report before it within two days.

It said if the dentist was not available in the jail for check up till next day, Khalid may be taken to a dentist outside the prison also for the check up and for the treatment, if required.

"Jail Superintendent concerned is directed to provide proper

medical treatment to the accused (Khalid) as per rules of Jail Manual. If the dentist is not available in the jail for check up till next day, the accused may be taken to a dentist outside the prison also for the check up and for the treatment, if required. A report of compliance be filed in the court within two days," the court said in its order.

Khalid alleged that he was having toothache for the last three days but he has not received any medical treatment yet.

He claimed that a dentist was supposed to visit the jail today but he has not visited.

Khalid said he was suffering from pain and it would be difficult for him to wait for another one week for the visit to the dentist.

The court extended the judicial custody of Khalid for 14 days in the case related to rioting in Khajuri Khas area.

Exhibition On Historical Manuscripts Held In Budgam



One day exhibition and talk on historical manuscripts was held at Mirza Emporio Budgam on Wednesday.

It was organized by Zaira Hassan in collaboration with EdRAAK managed by Dr Ilyass Rizvi, an oral historian.

On the occasion, Zaira, a Masters student in History, said heritage is the key stone of Kashmiri culture and its preservation is the

collective responsibility of all.

"What have been preserved for us needs to be preserved for our future generation, so that they know about the culture and tradition of the places they belong," Zaira, who is looking forward to do such more historical events in future, said.

The event was co-sponsored by Genesis Global Academy Budgam, Parsa's Budgam, and KBPS PVT LTD.

Whatsapp Pay Now Live With 4 Top Banks In India

WhatsApp Pay on Wednesday announced it is now live with State Bank of India, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank for its up to 20 million users in India.

After two years of waiting, Facebook-owned WhatsApp payment service received approval from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) in November to go live on Unified Payment Interface (UPI) with over 160 supported banks.

WhatsApp can expand its UPI user base in a graded manner starting with a maximum registered user base of 20 million.

"UPI is a transformative service and we jointly have the opportunity to bring the benefits of our digital economy and financial inclusion to a large number of users who have not had full access to them before," Abhijit Bose, Head of WhatsApp, India, said during the Facebook 'Fuel for India' virtual event.

The peer-to-peer (P2P) payment feature is available now in 10 Indian regional language versions of WhatsApp.

"We introduced banking services on WhatsApp in April. Over two million users have adopted banking services on WhatsApp in this short span. Now with WhatsApp Payments, there is a unique opportunity to scale essential financial services to people all over the country with ease," said Bijith Bhaskar, Head - Digital Channels & Partnership, ICICI Bank.

According to a latest report by Bengaluru-based research firm RedSeer, digital payments in India are expected to reach



\$94 trillion by the financial year 2025.

"We're excited and privileged to partner with State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and AXIS Bank to bring simple and secure digital payments to WhatsApp users across India," Bose said in a statement.

SBI now offers UPI services through the WhatsApp Payments, bringing the convenience of easy and instant mobile based payments.

Parag Rao, Country Head-Payments Business, Consumer Finance, Digital Banking & Marketing, HDFC Bank said that the partnership with WhatsApp Pay is yet another important step toward achieving financial inclusion and making affordable financial services available to Indians.

"Such partnerships will further fuel the economic growth and development of the nation," Rao added.

WhatsApp had said earlier that the payments feature is designed with a strong set of security and privacy principles, including entering a personal UPI PIN for each payment.

In India, the WhatsApp payment service competes against major players like Paytm, Google Pay and PhonePe, among others.

NEWS MAKERS

Shocking! Groom Stabbed To Death In UP For Not Providing More Liquor To Friends To Enjoy Wedding Celebrations

In a shocking incident, a groom was stabbed to death barely hours after his marriage by some of his friends in a village near Aligarh because he refused to provide them more liquor to enjoy the celebrations.

Police said the incident took place on Monday night in Palimukim Pur village when the 28-year-old Bablu went to meet his friends soon after his marriage.

His friends, already in an inebriated state, demanded more liquor from him, but the



victim expressed his inability to arrange it saying that they

already have enough of it, police said.

The main accused Ramkhiladi was arrested on Tuesday.

HIS FRIENDS, ALREADY IN AN inebriated state, demanded more liquor from him, but the victim expressed his inability to arrange it saying that they already have enough of it, police said.

This triggered arguments resulting in one of his friends stabbing him in a fit of rage, said police, adding the victim was rushed to a hospital, but he succumbed to his injuries.

Circle Officer Naresh Singh said on Wednesday.

Five other accused are yet to be arrested as they are absconding, Singh said, adding they too would be nabbed

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

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K O V I E W

Show by example

In an interview to a national daily, the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said that Kashmir and Jammu are the “two eyes” of the Union Territory of J&K, and for the overall progress both have to work together without one being favoured over the other. The LG has assured that the Assembly elections will not be deferred indefinitely and will follow shortly after the delimitation exercise is completed. Sinha also sought to allay fears about the demographic change following the extension of new land laws to J&K saying such apprehensions were “imagined”. The LG reiterated that the agricultural land in J&K that was around 90 per cent of the total land was not up for sale. “Nobody from outside J&K can buy agricultural land. Even within J&K, only agriculturists can buy such land,” he said.

Sinha has made such comments even earlier and his assurances will certainly go some way to address the deep anxiety in J&K, more so, in Kashmir about an impending demographic change following the issuance of the new domicile and the land laws. But for the people to take the LG at his word, the government would need to demonstrate its sincerity with actions. For example the ongoing eviction drive in parts of the Valley whereby the officials are forcibly retrieving the state land from its alleged occupants has been a source of deep concern.

It is the retrieval of the land, its alleged selectivity in targeting people in the Valley and the consequent politics that has made the drive controversial. Such eviction drives have followed the application of the new land laws and the overturning of the Roshni Act that conferred proprietary rights on the people in occupation of the state land in lieu of the payment to the government on existing market rates. Government has a target of retrieving the lakhs of kanals of such land from the people.

However, there has been some rethink in the administration about the feasibility of such a challenging task. The government has filed a review petition on Roshni Act in High Court which had earlier voided the Act. The government has urged the court to make a differentiation between the poor people and wealthy land grabbers. But there has been no let up in eviction drives. Here's hoping that the High Court reviews its earlier order and the evictions come to a stop.

As for the Assembly election, the democracy in J&K will be served well if not only the elections to the legislature are held in right earnest but also the statehood to J&K is restored. Actions like these will certainly inspire confidence in Kashmir and give people a reason to re-engage with the system.

OTHER OPINION

On India's COVID-19 vaccine policy

Fine theories and good policies are often frustrated in their encounter with facts and implementation processes in the field. India's COVID-19 vaccine policy, recently unveiled, must take care not to head that way, and make adequate allowances for ground realities that could render naught well-laid plans. With a definitive cure not yet available for COVID-19, vaccines present the world with the best strategy to slow the virus down in its tracks along with a measure of vested herd immunity, as SARS-CoV-2 rampages on. While it may not be the magic wand, vaccinating people will be the only known way of slowing the march of the virus, and every country, down to each county, must prepare for this massive exercise. As the U.K. and the U.S. began vaccinating their people, India has announced its plan and proposed line-up for COVID-19 vaccination, shortly after the Union Health Minister denied that the government had ever committed to COVID vaccination for all in the country. As per the government's strategy, the vaccination is to be given first to health-care workers and then to people over the age of 50, with those over 60 given priority, based on the situation. This will amount to about 30 crore people. The voters' list for the Lok Sabha and Assembly election polls has been set as the verifying document for the process. A new digital platform, Co-WIN, will be used for COVID-19 vaccination delivery, and about 1.54 lakh Auxiliary Nurse Midwives working on Universal Immunisation Programmes will be roped in as vaccinators, with more such field staff to be mobilised in collaboration with the States. Cold chain systems are to be strengthened across the country to deliver multiple doses.

As governments beef up the vaccination drive, they need to clear the fog on vaccine safety and efficacy among the people. With passing days, it will not be too much to expect from the government a detailed plan for vaccinating children and a break down of tasks down to the lowest governance rung, as counties in the U.S. have been doing. Unless the latter is done, a proper estimate of the true challenges of administering vaccines in the field will not be available, and being unprepared is a guarantee to coming undone. Vaccine hesitancy is a reality and the only way to counter that is to be open and honest about adverse effects and post-vaccination sequelae, if any, and make available relevant information in the public realm. In the past, in some States, vaccination programmes have suffered temporarily because of misinformation about adverse events following shots. In addition, in this case, long-term follow up of all who receive the vaccine is absolutely essential. For, therein lies the assurance that every one in the global line list is waiting for.

The Hindu



Too Much Democracy?

R. RAJ RAO

The reason why the farmers' protests have gained so much traction is because the farmers and their sympathizers are convinced that the government's ulterior motive in introducing the new farm laws, which it calls farm reforms, is to favour the Ambanis and Adanis.

Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant put his foot in his mouth when he said in an online talk recently that, “Tough reforms are very difficult in the Indian context, for we are too much of a democracy.” He added: “This government has demonstrated political will to carry out hard reforms.”

Kant was obviously speaking in the context of the ongoing farmer protests in Delhi. If his statements are deconstructed, what they shockingly imply is that India must shed some of its democratic values to opt for a more dictatorial approach, where the word of the government is gospel. Citizens, then, would have to forgo the right to question the government on contentious issues like, say, the Citizenship Amendment Act or the new farm laws. What this means is that once the government decides on something, there is no question of its retracting and bowing to the will of the people who have elected it.

When Amitabh Kant's statements went viral, he attempted damage control by facetiously arguing that he was speaking of India in comparison to a country like China. But this did not wash with the government's critics who felt that Kant was only honestly confessing what the ruling party at the centre has always ideologically believed.

In consonance with this thinking, the Government of India has resorted to every trick in the book to crush the farmers' protests. Some of their spokespersons have alleged on prime time news channels without proof that the protests are instigated by 'Khalistanis', and by China and Pakistan.

This is preposterous. As far as I know, the Sikh community's demand for an independent homeland known as 'Khalistan' has been lying in limbo for the past 36 years, since Operation Blue Star and the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Why would the plea of Indian farmers to repeal contentious farm laws suddenly resuscitate a

movement that is in cold storage for so long? If Sikhs in Canada and Britain have issued statements in support of our farmers, they have done so for reasons of solidarity, and not necessarily as 'Khalistanis', a term that has no locus standi.

As for China and Pakistan having a hand in the farmers' protests, no country, however inimical, is foolish enough to meddle in the internal affairs of a sovereign power. It smacks of a holier-than-thou attitude to assume that while India never interferes in the affairs of other countries; others habitually poke their noses in our matters.

The other baseless charge levelled against the farmers is that Maoists and Naxalites have infiltrated their protests and hijacked them. As evidence, the government cites the example of a lone farmer organization, BKU Ekta, headed by the 75-year-old Joginder Singh Ugrahan. Ugrahan, apparently, has spoken up against the arrest of those who attended the Bhima-Koregaon rally in Pune three years ago. They include Varavara Rao, Sudha Bharadwaj, Stan Swamy, Gautam Navlakha, and even Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, who are pejoratively referred to by the government and its TV channels as members of Jawaharlal Nehru University's Tukde Tukde Gang. This is another term that has no locus standi.

The other farmer organizations, however, have distanced themselves from Ugrahan, and have emphasized that their protests have nothing to do with any Bhima-Koregaon attendees referred to above. It is just as well that activists like Yogendra Yadav and Medha Patkar, who have joined the agitating farmers, haven't been called Urban Naxals by the government. At any rate, not as yet.

It beats me as to how those arrested for attending the Bhima-Koregaon rally can support the farmers' protests, even if they wish to, when they have been incarcerated in various jails without trial since January 2018. My co-translations

of Varavara Rao's poems cannot be published as I cannot meet the poet in prison to seek his permission.

At the end of the day, though, ideology is ideology. Foucault, French Philosopher and Historian, speaks of the concern of left-wing intellectuals with universal problems: the fight against multinational corporations; judicial and police apparatuses; property speculators. He describes the writer as a universal intellectual, and locates the university as the site of revolutionary change.

If right-wing governments can demonize intellectually sound left-wing ideologies and their proponents, the tables may be turned on them as well. As such, the ruling dispensation has come in for severe criticism for its partiality towards multinational corporations and the crony capitalists who head them. Two names that have assumed much notoriety in this context are those of Ambani and Adani. In fact, the reason why the farmers' protests have gained so much traction is because the farmers and their sympathizers are convinced that the government's ulterior motive in introducing the new farm laws, which it calls farm reforms, is to favour the Ambanis and Adanis. However, this is something that the government does not openly admit.

Does “too much democracy” then, mean validating not all ideologies, but only those that suit the government, and which it subscribes to?

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The views expressed in this article are author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer

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Career after 10th — What next?

Selecting the right subject stream is probably one of the most important decisions that children are going to make in their career. With so many changes happening across every career field, stream selection in Class XI has to be spot on.

But let us sit back and think for a moment.

With the explosion in the number and type of Career Options — should we really fret over stream selection in Class XI to such an extent?

The moment you ask students about their choice of stream after 10th, you will hear answers like: “I am focusing on my preparation now. Let the result come out, and I will decide after that”, “Of course science, all my friends are going to opt for the sciences”, “My parents want me to become a doctor or an engineer. So, I will opt for sciences”, “I am confused.. I would opt for a stream that has more demand in the job market”

Science is the most popular and

favourite career option for the majority of the parents and students. Science stream offers many lucrative career options such as engineering, medical, IT and you can even opt for research roles. The best advantage of taking science stream is, it keeps your options open.

Commerce is the second most popular career option after science. If you love numbers, finances, economics etc., then finance is the best option for you. It offers a wider variety of career options such as Chartered Accountants, MBA, investment in banking sectors etc.

Arts: Although, this stream is not so common among students, it holds many exciting career opportunities like journalism, literature, social works, teaching, etc. Arts offers you a huge list of options to select from like sociology, history, literature, psychology, political science, philosophy, economics etc

In class 10th, children tend to take the decision with a puzzled and ambig-

uous mind. Many times, they end up selecting a wrong stream, thereby opening the door to haywire career decisions later on in life. Sometimes, students start hating their subjects in 11th, quit midway or start feeling frustrated about their wrong move or decision.

Remember that if you give in to peer pressure, parental pressure or lack of the right knowledge, you tend to lose motivation to perform after a certain time. Hence, it is very important for any student to choose the stream carefully for better career prospects. But how would you decide if your choice of stream after 10th is correct or not?

Every child grows up having a role model in mind. It can either be a family member or even a famous personality or celebrity. More often than not, a student's aim in life will be based on their role model. It is important to identify this ambition in life for a student and judge which subject stream will be best suited for them. Whether you want to become

an engineer, doctor, chartered accountant, lawyer, and teacher or break free from the conventional career options, if you know exactly what you want to do, the choice becomes very clear.

Before choosing a stream in Class 11th, you should keep in mind the subjects you have always enjoyed studying and which you are good at. It's always wise for students to choose a stream for themselves that includes their 'favorite subject'.

There are instances when students take the wrong decisions due to lack of knowledge. So, guidance from experts and experienced people always matters. On many occasions, students ignore their passion and follow their parents' decision. So, a constructive discussion with parents or teachers and conveying to them where your happiness lies should not be missed out during this phase.

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Why Are Kashmiri Politicians Denying Interviews To Local Journalists?

AUQIB JAVEED

Journalists claim that PAGD leaders do not want to face local journalists, while only interviews lined up from Delhi are welcome. The reason for this, they believe, is that the mainstream political parties do not want to make themselves “uncomfortable” with the questions from a Kashmiri journalist.

Srinagar: In October, Srinagar-based independent journalist Adnan Bhat was commissioned a story by South China Morning Post (SCMP), a Hong Kong-based English-language newspaper, on the formation of Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) in Jammu and Kashmir and its “future course” of action.

Bhat wanted to be sure whether the vice president of the PAGD and president of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Mehbooba Mufti, would give an interview. He spoke to the spokesperson of the PDP for confirmation, who agreed to fix the interview. A few days later, Bhat was called to Mufti’s residence.

Upon reaching there, he saw many other journalists waiting on the lawns of Mufti’s Gupkar residence.

“I was told Mufti would be addressing a press conference. But I was wondering how I could get the interview,” Bhat told The Wire.

When Bhat asked the spokesperson regarding the interview, he was told, “It can’t happen now, as she spoke in the press conference.” However, Bhat was yet to get the answers to his questions he wanted to ask.

For over months, he tried to approach many others from PDP for the interview, but there was no positive response as such. A few days later, he approached the spokesperson of PAGD, Sajad Lone, a key member, who is also the president of People’s Conference (PC).

He was initially told that he would get an interview, but that did not happen. “I felt when Sajad Lone came to know through our conversation that I am Kashmiri, he stopped responding to my texts,” Bhat told The Wire.

Bhat shared the experience on social media on November 29 and posted that PAGD leaders do not want to face local journalists. Eventually, he had no option but to drop the story. Taking to Twitter, he said:

This is not an isolated incident where a Kashmiri journalist has been denied an interview. Several scribes from the Valley who work for the local, national, and international press that The Wire spoke to complained that they have been denied interviews and comments by regional parties, especially PAGD, despite multiple requests.

Interestingly, these three political parties came together to form an alliance a few months ago under the banner of PAGD – a “movement” that seeks to restore Article 370, which had been abrogated by the Central government on August 5, 2019.

Perturbed by tough questions?

Journalists claim that PAGD leaders do not want to face local journalists, while only interviews lined up from Delhi are welcome. The reason for this, they believe, is that the mainstream political parties do not want to make themselves “uncomfortable” with the questions from a Kashmiri journalist.

“The reason is simple, they (PAGD) don’t want to confront Kashmiri journalists because they know, they won’t pose any rosy questions. They will surely grill them for their politics,” another independent journalist Kaisar Andrabi, told The Wire.

Like Bhat, Andrabi has also approached PAGD leaders for interviews but has been avoided repeatedly.

Andrabi says there is a lot of ambiguity regarding the formation of PAGD, and the people of Kashmir want to clear their doubts. This, Andrabi says, can only happen when a Kashmiri journalist does the interview for his audience – that is a Kashmiri.

Fahad Shah an independent journalist based in Kashmir and editor-in-chief of the weekly newspaper The Kashmir Walla argues that PAGD has mostly remained silent because they have failed to tell people what is their plan, and what they claim to be doing.

“They talk about restoring [Article] 370 but how? They don’t talk about that, so so far it has only been political rhetoric,” Shah told The Wire.



Andrabi echoed the views of Shah that PAGD is yet to share their agenda and “future course” of action with the local population.

Shah says the reason regional leaders don’t want to face local media could be because they don’t want to give away too much of what they do.

He maintains that it all started after PAGD leaders were released from detention and their first interviews appeared in the national media rather than in the local publications.

“That is unfortunate because if these politicians are for Kashmiris then they should speak to them via the media they follow, which is local, and not Delhi and Mumbai media, which don’t even properly understand the ground situation,” he added.

Since the Gupkar Alliance leaders were released from detention, they hardly faced local journalists, except a few publications. All they have been doing is giving bytes after finishing their meetings.

The number of interviews after their release from detention to local journalists and newspapers have been less than what non-local journalists and television channels could get.

Sources say a few local journalists who happen to get interviews by mainstream leaders have been conducted via email and WhatsApp but not face to face.

Shortly after the PDP chief Mufti was released in the month of October, this author too approached PDP spokesperson, Suhail Bukhari, for the interview. He said they will inform me when they start giving interviews. After a few days, I approached him again, but he said that they had decided not to give any interviews. However, I was disappointed to see the PDP chief and one of the important members of PAGD on a New Delhi-based television channel, India Today.

I approached another PDP leader for an interview. His response was that they had received over 600 requests for an interview and that they were not sure whether they can give any interviews then. A few days later, I saw Mufti on television again. This time on Gulistan TV.

On November 13, I also approached the spokesperson of the Peoples Conference for an interview with Sajad Lone on the formation of PAGD among other things. He said he will get back to me after talking to Lone, however, to date I did not hear any response despite re-

peated reminders.

In the same month, I approached Dr. Farooq Abdullah, president of PAGD and National Conference, for an interview, he said, “Call me after dinner.” When I did call him again, he asked me to speak to his party’s spokesperson, Imran Nabi Dar.

The next morning I had asked Dar for an interview for a local newspaper. He said they had stopped giving interviews and that he will inform me when they resume.

Senior Journalist Hilal Mir argues that over the years, the regional parties in Kashmir have become comfortable with non-local journalists rather than speaking to the locals. The reason he cites is the same that the Kashmiri journalists pose questions.

“They (PAGD) leaders have been cautious of Kashmir journalists,” says Mir, who freelances for the Anadolu Agency, TRT World, and Huffington Post. He also recalls that Mehbooba Mufti, during her tenure as chief minister, had banned local newspaper Kashmir Reader for three months.

Mir believes that there is another reason why “so-called” mainstream political parties never bother about the local audience. “They always wanted to address New Delhi and its people, because it is where they derive their power from,” Mir adds.

Safwat Zargar, who reports for the Scroll, told The Wire that on 12 November, he too approached the public relations officer of Lone for an interview but has been told that he will check with the PAGD spokesmen and will get back to him.

“However he didn’t respond to my text or phone calls as well,” Zargar recalls.

The journalist says this phenomenon of “stonewalling” of the local press has hampered their work, impacting the production of balanced reportage from politically-fraught Kashmir.

They maintain that access to information, especially to politicians, has been severely impacted since August 5 last year, when Article 370 was made null and void.

I have tried to speak to Lone, the PAGD spokesperson, for his comments regarding the grievances of the local journalists, however, as usual he hasn’t responded to my calls.

The Wire

Muslim Pro: How tech capitalism turns prayer data into profit

ASAD DANDIA

Last month, a Vice Motherboard report revealed that the US military is collecting movement data on people all over the world by purchasing it through third-party applications, including Muslim Pro, a location-reliant app that informs Muslims of prayer times and the direction of Mecca. It has been downloaded more than 98 million times.

While these revelations shocked many, they were not surprising in the least. The revelations track with longstanding patterns of US government surveillance and targeting of Black and brown communities in the country and elsewhere.

But the story brought into sharp relief the newest dimension of the state surveillance apparatus, which is ordinarily at the nexus of the military-industrial complex, neoliberal capital accumulation and the “war on terror”: namely, smart technology.

Troubling history

The revelations come as the country prepares to transition to the presidency of Joe Biden, whose role as vice president in the Obama administration saw an expansion of domestic surveillance and global drone warfare, both of which have overwhelmingly targeted Muslims. The rank disregard for the civilian costs of drone warfare in particular was clear in Obama’s recent memoir, which blithely glossed over the disastrous consequences of his policies.

Given this troubling history, the US military having access to the prayer data of around 100 million Muslims from all over the world should be cause for alarm. But how did we get here?

With increasing deregulation came a boon in weapons manufacturing and trade, and with the war on terror came unending rationalisations for American forever wars

The term “military-industrial complex” was coined by former US president Dwight D Eisenhower - who was a five-star general and hardly an antiwar activist - in

his farewell speech in 1961, as he warned that “we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex,” and that “the potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist”.

Eisenhower gave this speech during the Vietnam War and against the backdrop of rising anti-communist sentiment and a civil rights movement (in which Martin Luther King Jr would give one of his most famous speeches against the war). Thereafter, the rapid economic privatisation of Reaganite neoliberalism and the post-9/11 war on terror would produce exactly the ominous results Eisenhower portended.

With increasing deregulation came a boon in weapons manufacturing and trade, and with the war on terror came unending rationalisations for American forever wars. Now, two decades into the 21st century, we are witnessing the cynical use of smart technology to further expand the war’s reach through powerful tech companies.

Discriminatory policies

Why would the US military want the prayer data of 100 million Muslims? Because racialised and discriminatory logic equating Muslim practices with a propensity for violence has long driven state suspicion of Muslims, both domestically and abroad.

Take the New York Police Department, which in 2007 released a report entitled “Radicalization in the West: The Home-grown Threat”. It claimed to identify social and behavioural patterns among Mus-

lims that could predict acts of terrorism. These included wearing clothing that typified “Islamic” attire, regularly attending mosque, and abstaining from drugs and alcohol, all of which encapsulate everyday Muslim religious practices.

Despite the report being debunked and subsequently terminated through a lawsuit (full disclosure: I was a co-plaintiff), its logic continues to undergird local, state and national efforts at counterterrorism through “Countering Violent Extremism” (CVE) policies, as part of a larger structural ecosystem that scholar Junaid Rana calls the “terror-industrial complex”.

In the post-9/11 world, we are seeing the outsourcing of surveillance from the state to private entities through CVE policies, corporations and contractors, and even individuals (“If you see something, say something”).

While CVE methods outsource Muslim surveillance to mental health counsellors and teachers, seeking to modify behaviour through personal interventions, the methods of surveillance capitalism may aim to do the same through tech applications.

As scholar Shoshana Zuboff argues, “surveillance capitalism” is the next stage of capitalist development, where instead of dominating and commodifying the natural world for market growth, the human becomes the commodity. In this case, the raw data of our everyday choices is collected from major applications and then sold to the highest bidder - often the state. This aggregate data is then manipulated to influence and modify behavioural patterns in

the service of profit, through what Zuboff calls “instrumentarian power”.

21st-century material realities

If the very observance of Islam and its potency as a source of global solidarity have been deemed a threat by the US empire, it should not be surprising that tracing the movements of Muslims and aiming to reshape their behaviours through discriminatory interventions would be the ultimate policy goal.

Surveillance capitalism, like industrial capitalism, has a racialised dimension, which makes Black and brown communities particularly vulnerable to being targeted. As Rana writes, we must pay attention to “the larger systems of structural violence that are normalized through the workings of concepts such as race and permanent war that create an unprecedented flexibility in the workings of social domination and capital accumulation”.

Given the centrality of capital as an engine in world-making, no critique of Islamophobia is complete without a critique of capitalist modernity and its attendant structures of violence. Surveillance capitalism is just its newest weapon.

It is crucial, then, to advance an analysis of Islamophobia and the war on terror that is historically rooted, but also accounts for 21st-century material realities. Major tech corporations such as Facebook and Twitter, and apps such as Muslim Pro, are not neutral conduits for registering and conveying information. They are products of human beings who make conscious decisions about what gets censored

and what does not, what gets sold to the military and what does not.

Whether it be inciting genocide against Muslims or spreading hate campaigns against them, choices are made every day as to whether or not these should be performed.

Rethinking our relationship with tech

The tech corporations that facilitate this violence must be held accountable through transparency and oversight mechanisms - drawn from a larger framework of collective and individual digital rights - that are produced through consensus-based democratic methods, led by concerned citizens and legislators. Since the theatre of the war on terror has expanded to the digital realm, an antiwar movement for the 21st century must also work to protect the rights of those targeted on the digital front.

One of the most chilling qualities of capitalism is how it manages to devour, manipulate and mould anything that comes its way - even the sacred

One of the most chilling qualities of capitalism is how it manages to devour, manipulate and mould anything that comes its way - even the sacred - at the expense of human dignity. And when capitalism is inextricably intertwined with structures of racialised violence that function as an instrument of war, the consequences are most devastating for those at the margins: in this case, Muslims.

But the structures we inhabit are a product of human endeavours, and can be undone and rebuilt differently through human endeavours. It is not sustainable to ask everyone to unplug, so developing strategies to protect data is crucial in the short term.

Ultimately, in the long term, we must rethink our relationship with tech and capital, so that we may flourish freely in an increasingly digital and digitised world.

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Middle East Eye

FROM FRONT PAGE

Srinagar

Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 7.4 degrees Celsius, the officials said. They said Qazigund, the gateway town to the valley, recorded the minimum of minus 3.3 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara, in the north, registered a low of minus 4.8 degrees Celsius and Kokernag, in the south, minus 5.2 degrees Celsius, they said.

The Meteorological Office has said the weather is likely to remain mainly dry till December 22 with the possibility of a further decrease in the night temperature.

6 Employees ...

The orders by the DPEO followed perusal of a representation by Sub Divisional Magistrate Mendhar who has submitted contesting candidates namely Parveen Sarwar Khan, Advocate Nazir Hussain, Ghulam Nabi, Tahir Mirza, Aqib, Haji Mir Mohd and Shaista Zaid have alleged that the six employees actively participated in political activities including booth capturing, tampering of votes and man-handling of INC candidates.

The employees who have been placed under suspension include Afzal Bashir, Medical Assistant, Health Department, Mendhar; Amjit Bashir, Physical Education Teacher, Uraki Mankote; Shahid Bashir, Forest Protection Force; Mohd Mushtaq, Teacher, Middle School Bhatakas Mendhar; Sarfraz Khan, Gang Coolie, PWD Department, Mendhar and Murtaza Ali Mumtaz, Agriculture Assistant Mendhar.

"As per Employee Conduct Rules/ Civil Service Rules, no government servant shall take part in politics or any political movement or activity. The active participation of government employee in political activities is against Model Code of Conduct and Representation of People Act."

The employees have been attached in DC Office Poonch with immediate effect.

Meanwhile, additional District Development Commissioner, Poonch has been appointed as enquiry officer to enquire into the allegations levelled against these officials and submit a report within a week's time "positively". (GNS)

57 % Polling ...

Similarly, in Jammu division, he said, poll percentage of 74.38% was recorded in Samba, 72.85 in Kathua, 67.75% in Ramban, 73.10 in Rajouri, 69.89 per cent in Kishtwar and 68.66% in Jammu district.

The SEC further said that counting of votes for Sarpanch and Panch constituencies which went to poll in the seventh phase is being conducted.

5 More ...

Among the fresh cases with ten travellers, 181 are from Jammu Division and 151 from Kashmir Valley, the officials said.

Giving district-wise details, they said, Srinagar reported 53, Baramulla 19, Budgam 19, Kupwara 13, Pulwama 12, Anantnag 15, Bandipora 9, Ganderbal 10, Kulgam 0, Shopian 1, Jammu 96, Udhampur 14, Rajouri 12, Doda 12, Kathua 14, Kishtwar 8, Samba 11, Poonch 2, Ramban 7 and Reasi 5. Moreover, they said, 415 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals— 239 from Jammu Division and 176 from Kashmir Valley, they added. (With GNS inputs).

Avalanche Blocks ...

According to the reports, the Srinagar- Leh highway was thrown open for one-way traffic on Wednesday; however, an avalanche at Dayal Zojila prompted the officials to halt the movement of vehicles again.

"Today road was thrown open but the fresh avalanche prompted authorities to close the highway once again," an official told news agency KNT

DSP Traffic Rural, Faem Ali said that only army convoy was allowed to move towards Srinagar. However, the traffic, he said, was again suspended after an avalanche hit a site at Dayal Zojila pass.

SDM Drass, Asghar Hussain said that efforts were on to clear the snow near avalanche site. He said he was hopeful that the traffic will shortly be allowed on the highway.

Pertinently, the crucial road link between Leh and Srinagar was closed by the administration following heavy snowfall last week.

Hospital Details ...

According to her family from Srinagar's Aali Kadal area, they had taken little Zikra to the ASG clinic — which is a dedicated eye hospital — after she experienced watering and regular accumulation of debris in her eye in April 2020.

"They initially asked us to carry out certain exercises," Feroq Ahmad Bhat, father of the child, said.

"Then we carried out certain tests and ultimately, we were told that there is a need for carrying out a procedure which needs to

be conducted after giving her local anaesthesia."

After one and a half month, when the family approached Dr. Adil, "he said that she will be administered some drugs through injection for which anaesthesia was mandatory. He said it's a short procedure and the process would only take 15-30 minutes," the father said.

Accordingly, Bhat said, the little girl was taken for the treatment where "overdose of anaesthesia" was given to her at the theatre "following which the doctors claimed she is alright and asked us to take her to home," he said.

Instead of 15-30 minutes, Zikra was taken out from theatre after one and half hour, the father said.

"And when her mother carried her daughter in her lap, she found her overweight and cold."

A technician repeatedly sought medical attention, but the doctor kept on repeating that it was all right, the father said.

"On our insistence they told us to take the child to LalDed Hospital's Neonatology department, but we refused and told them we will take the child to GB Pant or SKIMS," Bhat said.

At SKIMS, he said, Zikra was directly admitted in the ICU, where she was treated for 26 days.

"But her condition was going from bad to worse," he lamented.

After that, the family said, the baby was also taken to PGI Chandigarh where the doctors informed them that such incidents could happen and that she should have been taken to nearby tertiary care hospital for treatment as soon as she had complications.

The family's demanding that the action should be taken against those who are responsible for the negligence.

Clinical Take

A day after triggering an online rage for "mistreatment", the management of ASG Hospital came out with their version of the story.

The baby, the hospital said in a statement, was anesthetized for a minor therapeutic procedure at the hospital by a qualified team of experts after taking due written consent from the father of the child with all possible anesthetic risks explained.

"Patient was anesthetized and the procedure was completed smoothly and shifted to the recovery as per standards with stable vitals," the hospital said.

In the postoperative period, patients developed doubtful seizures in the recovery area as a post-anesthetic complication.

"In the interest of better patient care by pediatric intensivists, PICU unit of SKIMS Soura was contacted by the doctors of ASG Hospital and bed kept ready for the baby," the hospital said.

"Baby was soon shifted to SKIMS PICU in an ambulance accompanied by an anesthesiologist and technologist. Baby was immediately diagnosed as a case of postoperative seizures and managed as per protocol at SKIMS Soura."

After discharge from SKIMS, the ASG management said, attendants of patient intended to shift patient for further management at PGI Chandigarh and asked hospital to sponsor travel, boarding and treatment costs on "humanitarian grounds" which was accepted by hospital and even hospital staff member accompanied them to PGI in order to facilitate treatment of baby without hardships.

"It is a known fact that complications are possible during and after every anaesthesia and surgery, more so in extremes of age and they being unpredictable can't be avoided every time, a proper written consent explaining all possible complications is always taken before such procedures. In spite of all this, the hospital and its staff always cooperated with the family in the interest of baby's health," it said.

According to them, a few weeks back the family approached hospital for "undue compensation" which was not acceptable, the hospital said.

"In response to this the family members of said baby are trying to pressurize hospital authorities by all other possible means which are improper and unacceptable," the ASG management said.

Leopard Caught ...

While the injured man was rushed to the nearby hospital for treatment, the leopard took shelter in the cowshed of another villager identified as Abdul Aziz Lone.

Reports said that it took police and wildlife department officials three hours to capture the leopard.

Political Worker ...

However, the doctors there referred him to government Medical College Rajouri for advanced treatment.

SSP Rajouri Chandan Kohli confirmed the incident and said that a case has been registered and investigations have been started.

"His condition is stable now," the police officer said.

LG Pays ...

"I salute our gallant soldiers for their exemplary courage and supreme sacrifice to gain a decisive victory for our Nation in the 1971 war", said the LG.

Justice Mithal To Be Next CJ Of J&K HC

NEW DELHI: Justice Pankaj Mithal of the Allahabad High Court will be the next Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir High Court.

The Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India SA Bobde has also recommended Calcutta High Court's Justice Sanjib Banerjee for appointment as Chief Justice of the Madras High Court. Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia of the Uttarakhand High Court has been recommended for appointment as the new Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court.

Justice S Muralidhar of the Punjab and Haryana High Court has been elevated as the next Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court while Justice Hima Kohli of the Delhi High Court as the new Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court. Justice Rajesh Bindal – the Acting Chief Justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court – has been transferred to the Calcutta High Court.

In a major reshuffle, the Collegium in its December 14 meeting also recommended transfer of Chief Justices of high courts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Sikkim and Odisha.

Sikkim High Court Chief Justice AK Goswami has been recommended to be transferred as the new Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court which was seen as being at loggerheads with state Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy who had alleged that the High Court was being used by political opponents to destabilize his government.

While Andhra Pradesh High Court Chief Justice JK Maheswari is being sent to the Sikkim High Court, Chief Justice RS Chauhan of the Telangana High Court has been recommended to be appointed as the new Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court.

Orissa High Court Chief Justice Mohammad Rafiq has been recommended to be transferred as the new Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court. Justice Sanjay Yadav, who has been functioning as the acting Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court who, has been recommended to be transferred to the Allahabad High Court. Another Justice of the Madhya Pradesh HC, Justice Satish Chandra Sharma is being transferred to the Karnataka HC.

Justice Vineet Kothari of the Madras HC has been recommended to be transferred to the Gujarat HC while Justice Joyimalya Bagchi of the Calcutta HC has been shifted to the Andhra Pradesh HC.

LG Reviews Implementation Of PMDP Projects

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday reviewed the progress of Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) projects and directed the officials to speed up their implementation.

During a meeting, the Lt Governor sought a comprehensive report of the sector-wise implementation of 54 projects sanctioned under the PMDP with an outlay of Rs 58,627 crore and reviewed the financial and physical progress achieved so far, an official spokesperson said.

"Sectoral progress should be monitored regularly to avoid unnecessary delay," Sinha said, chairing the high-level meeting at the Civil Secretariat here.

The spokesperson said Chief Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam, Financial Commissioner (Finance) Arun Kumar Mehta, Financial Commissioner (Health) Atal Dulloo, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor Nitishwar Kumar, Administrative Secretaries of various departments besides senior officers from the National Highways Authority of India, Border Roads Organisation and various government departments were present in the meeting.

The meeting was informed

AICTE To Release Rs 20K Per Month For J&K, Ladakh Students

SRINAGAR: All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has decided to release the instalment of Rs 20,000 per month as maintenance allowance under Prime Minister's Special Scholarship Scheme (PMSSS) for the students of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, NDTV reported Wednesday.

The report said that the decision has been taken to support and empower students for completing their online studies.

According to the report, the amount shall be released to all the beneficiaries pursuing classes in Odd Semester (July-December 2020). The subsequent instalments shall be released once the students shall join physically at their respective institutions based on the verification of continuation certificate issued by the Institution, the

report adds. Under the PMSSS Scheme, the youths of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are supported by way of scholarship in two parts namely the academic fee and maintenance allowance. AICTE has already released the entire academic fee for the year 2020-21 to all the institutions.

"The maintenance allowance had been fully released as per scheme guidelines till the end of the last academic year 2019-20. Subsequently, due to COVID-19, the academic institutions across India were closed and only online classes are going on. Since there is no hostel and mess expenditure involved, the maintenance allowance was suspended, till such time students physically join the institutes," the report added.

No element in Bajrang Dal's content that necessitates ban: Facebook India head

NEW DELHI, DEC 16 (PTI): Facebook's fact-checking team has not found any content that necessitates a ban on the Bajrang Dal, the social media giant's India head Ajit Mohan told a parliamentary panel on Wednesday, sources said.

Mohan deposed before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology, chaired by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor. The panel had called him on the issue of the citizens' data safety. Mohan was accompanied by Shivnath Thukral, the public

policy director of Facebook.

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram, along with Tharoor, questioned Mohan about a recent Wall Street Journal (WSJ) report suggesting that the social media giant is reluctant on banning the Bajrang Dal on its platform due to financial reasons and concerns over the safety of its staff, the sources said.

The WSJ report suggested that despite an internal assessment calling for a ban on the Bajrang Dal, Facebook has not cracked down on the Hindu

nationalist group due to these reasons.

Replying to queries, Mohan suggested to the panel members that the Facebook fact team consultant has so far not found any such element in the content posted by the Bajrang Dal that is violative of its social media policies.

Further quizzing him, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey asked if the Bajrang Dal content was not found to be violative of its social media policies, then why did the Facebook not deny the WSJ report and termed it as fake.

Unable to bear 'farmers' plight', Sikh cleric shoots himself dead

CHANDIGARH, DEC 16 (PTI): A Sikh preacher supporting the farmers' agitation against the Centre's agriculture laws allegedly committed suicide near the Singhu border in Delhi on Wednesday, police said.

A handwritten note in Punjabi, purportedly left behind by the deceased, says he was unable to bear the "pain of farmers". The note is being verified by police.

An official of the Sonapat police said they had received a call that Sant Ram Singh (65), who hailed from Singhra village in Nissing area of Karnal district, allegedly shot himself.

He was rushed to a hospital in Panipat where doctors declared him brought dead. Police said as per preliminary reports, the cleric shot himself in his car near the protest site. Police are in the process of recording statements of the deceased's family members.

The body was taken to Karnal for a postmortem examination in an ambulance. His followers raised slogans against the Union government.

Later, the body will be taken to the Nanaksar Gurdwara in Singhra village, where a large number of his followers have gathered. Karnal SP Ganga Ram

Punia told PTI that police have been deployed in the area. The situation is peaceful and under control, he said.

Reacting to the incident, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said the Modi government should quit its "stubbornness" and withdraw the laws.

"Sant Baba Ram Singh Ji of Karnal committed suicide after seeing the plight of farmers on the Kundli border. My condolences and tribute in this hour of grief. Many farmers have sacrificed their lives. The brutality of the Modi government has crossed all limits. Quit stubbornness and immediately withdraw the anti-agricultural law," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala also blamed the government for the incident.

Modi ji, amid winter chill, stop playing with sentiments of farmers, Surjewala tweeted.

Why is PM Modi so arrogant? Why is the BJP so obstinate? Why are they treating the farmers in such an insensitive fashion? In the last 20 days, 16 farmers have died. Lakhs of farmers are sitting at Delhi borders. Yet, this government fails to listen to their grievances,

he said in another tweet.

Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal too said he was anguished to hear that the cleric committed suicide. Sant ji's sacrifice won't be allowed to go in vain. I urge GOI not to let the situation deteriorate any further & repeal the 3 agri laws, he said.

SAD spokesperson and Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa urged farmers to exercise restraint.

A very sad news has been received that Sant Ram Singh, who dedicated his life to the service of humanity, committed suicide by shooting himself, he said on his Twitter handle.

According to Sirsa, the victim wrote in his suicide note that he was unable to bear the "pain of the farmers".

It is a sin to suffer atrocity and witness it, which I cannot see, Sirsa said the cleric wrote in his suicide note. Sirsa appealed to farmers to exercise restraint.

It is a very grave time. I request you as the chief sewadar of the DSGMC to exercise restraint because anybody can do mischief in the farmers' agitation. It is a very sad incident for all of us but we need to be restrained, said Sirsa.

As 50th Anniversary Celebrations Of 1971 War Begin, Rahul Plays Up Indira's Image



A COLLAGE SHOWING General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, Anil Chouhan laying a wreath and meeting war veterans in Kolkata.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday lit the 'Swarnim Vijay Mashaal' from the eternal flame of the National War Memorial in Delhi, marking the beginning of the 50th anniversary year celebrations of India's victory over Pakistan in 1971.

Modi was joined by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, the chief of defence staff and tri-service chiefs as he laid a wreath and paid homage to the soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice for the country.

Four victory mashaals (flaming torches) will be carried to various parts of India, including to the villages of Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra awardees of the 1971 war, the defence ministry has said.

"Soil from the villages of these awardees and from areas where major battles were fought in 1971 is being brought to the National War Memorial (NWM)," it said.

India celebrates December 16 as Vijay Diwas to commemorate its victory over Pakistan during the 1971 war that led to the creation of Bangladesh.

As December 16 marks the anniversary of the military victory, the nation will celebrate Swarnim Vijay Varsh (golden victory year) through several events across the

country, and it will continue for a year.

Various commemorative events will be conducted pan-India wherein war veterans will be felicitated, the statement said, adding that band displays, seminars, exhibitions, equipment displays, film festivals, conclaves and adventure activities will also be held.

Rajnath message



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the sacrifice made by soldiers during the 1971 war is a source of inspiration for all Indians and the nation will always remember them. "Today, on the occasion of Vijay Diwas, I salute the tradition of courage and valour of the Indian Army. I remember the bravery of those courageous soldiers who wrote a new tale of valour during the 1971 war," Singh tweeted.

"Their sacrifice is a source of inspiration for all Indians. This

country will always remember them," he stated.

Rahul's jibe



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday greeted people on the 50th anniversary of India's victory over Pakistan in 1971, noting it took place at a time when neighbouring countries used to recognise the mettle of the Indian prime minister and feared violating our borders.

"Greetings to people of the country on the celebration of India's historic victory over Pakistan in 1971 and salutations to the valour of our armed forces," Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

"It took place at a time when India's neighbouring countries used to recognise the mettle of the Indian prime minister and feared violating the borders of our country," he said. Indira Gandhi, Rahul's grandmother, was the prime minister of India when this war took place. —PTI

Rahul Gandhi walks out of Parliamentary panel meeting on defence; calls it 'waste of time'

Wanted To Raise The Issues Of Chinese Aggression And Better Equipping The Soldiers

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other members of his party on Wednesday walked out of a meeting of the parliamentary committee on defence, alleging that the panel's time was being wasted in discussing armed forces' uniform instead of the crucial issue of national security, sources said.

Gandhi was disallowed to speak at the meeting by the panel chairman

Jual Oram (BJP) when he sought to raise the issues of Chinese aggression and better equipping the soldiers at the border in Ladakh, they said.

The sources said the issue of uniforms of the Army, Navy and Air Force was being discussed in the presence of the Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat when Gandhi intervened to say that instead of discussing this, the political

leadership should discuss the issues of national security and how to strengthen the forces who are fighting the Chinese in Ladakh.

The Committee chairman did not allow Gandhi to speak, following which the Congress leader decided to walk out, they said, adding Congress members Rajeev Satav and Revanth Reddy also left the meeting along with their leader.

Workshop On Export Registration For Craft Entrepreneurs On Dec 22

SRINAGAR: The Directorate of Handicrafts & Handloom, Kashmir, has urged the principal stakeholders associated with various famed handicraft products made in Kashmir to participate in a virtual workshop being jointly organized by Jammu & Kashmir Trade Promotion Organization (JKTPO) and Director General Foreign Trade (DGFT) on December 22.

In a press statement issued here today, the Director, Handicrafts & Handloom, Kashmir, Mussarat Islam has advised the entrepreneurs, artisans, weavers and other stakeholders associated with craft business to register themselves with JKTPO on its official website - www.jktpo.

in for participation in the workshop being held in digital mode. "The handicrafts and handloom sector of Kashmir has a strong production base and offers ample opportunities for building entrepreneurship to venture into the global export arena," he added.

Export registration shall provide the craft entrepreneurs access to various benefits under the foreign trade policy and enable them to become part of a worldwide network of exporters in the international market.

During the workshop, the craft entrepreneurs shall be provided an overview of export documentation and procedures for export registration with DGFT.

Health Dept Launches Portal For Registration, Validation Of Pharmacies

JAMMU: Financial Commissioner, Health and Medical Education Department, Atal Dulloo, formally launched portal for online registrations/validation of Pharmacies under Pharmacy Act, 1948.

As many as, 3 candidates who had uploaded their documents were handed over certificates as Registered Pharmacist on spot.

Financial Commissioner, while appreciating functioning of Pharmacy Council of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, expressed hope that all stakeholders shall get immensely benefitted by this initiative. He said that Pharmacists play a pivotal role in the healthcare system and their contribution is critical towards mitigating sufferings of ailing masses. He expressed hope that the Pharmacy Council shall strive hard to ensure that the practice and profession of Pharmacy in the Union Territory of J&K is regulated in an efficient manner and this body continues to uphold the sanctity of moral ethics, code and conduct among Pharmacy professionals.

He appreciated the Jammu & Kashmir Pharmacy Council for eliminating physical interface in various services offered by it. He said that a transparent, accountable and time bound system is always required to address the problems being faced by candidates aspiring to acquire grant/renewal of their Pharmacist Registration certificates. He said in the past these applicants had to run from pillar to post to get their bonafide claims settled. He however expressed hope that Pharmacy Council shall secure due diligence to ensure that the Web Portal designed for the purpose is subjected to periodic reviews and updated as per requirements of beneficiaries.

He lauded the Central Government for considering a one-time exemption of considering all those Registered Pharmacists who were registered under the repealed State Law, i.e. J&K Pharmacy Act, Samvat, 2011 (1955 A.D.) by incorporating a proviso 32C in the Pharmacy Act, 1948.

J&K Bank Conducts DLRC In Srinagar

SRINAGAR: District Development Commissioner Srinagar Dr. Shahid Iqbal Chaudhary (IAS) hailed J&K Bank's overall performance in Srinagar while chairing a District Consultative Committee/District Level Review Committee (DCC/DLRC) meeting to review the progress made during the quarter ended September, 2020 under Annual Credit Plan 2020-21.

The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer Srinagar, DDM NABARD, senior functionaries of line departments and banks operating in the district.

J&K Bank was represented by Zonal Head Kashmir Central 1 Syed Rais Maqbool, LDM Srinagar Abdul Majid Bhat, Cluster Heads Shabir Ahmad Bhat and Riaz Ahmad Wani and Director RSETI Mahjabeen Mir.

While highlighting the overall performance for the period under review LDM informed the committee that banks operating in the district have provided a total credit of Rs 2459.60 Cr benefiting as many as 64461 borrowers under Priority and Non-priority Sectors. He stated that an achievement of 46% in physical terms and 40% in financial terms was registered against annual targets.



He added that Credit Deposit Ratio in the district stood at 53% at the end of the second quarter.

"Rs 329.32 Cr have been disbursed by the banks amongst 14823 beneficiaries under PM Mudra Yojana scheme with J&K bank being the main contributor with 94% credit disbursement," he said adding that 1187 street vendors availed Rs. 118.70 lacs loan facility under PM Svanidhi scheme with 1092 facilitated by J&K Bank.

On the occasion, the DDC also advised Banks and line departments to make the general public aware of the various employment generation schemes besides lending their necessary support in providing hassle free loans under Mudra, Housing, Education, PMEGP etc. He also instructed Banks and concerned line departments to work in a coordinated manner to ensure smooth implementation of schemes and achievement of targets.



JKI Tied Up With Amazon For Marketing Of Local Made Products

JAMMU: Jammu Kashmir Industries (JKI) has established a mega sale outlet in the heart of Jammu town and has set up a target to purchase 1.30 lakh Kgs of cocoon from the local breeders for the year 2021-22.

As per the details available, JKI one of the oldest PSU in J&K is on a path of revival and reestablishment.

The official sources said that the Government appreciating the importance of rescuing the livelihood of a very large segment of population which is directly or indirectly linked with JKI activities took several decisive initiatives to introduce all possible measures that have put the Organization on a path of revival and rid itself from the continuous accrual of losses.

"A well thought out strategy was put in place to garner adequate resource for putting in implementation various schemes/projects" the sources told added that a comprehensive and in depth analysis of exploring the possibility of reviving closed units of JKI and also establishing new units that possess the potential of working on viable basis was undertaken. Emphasis was also laid on creating such credible infrastructure in the Government sector that could effectively provide benefit to the local population.

After lots of study, a view emerged that the J&K was considerably lagging behind in promoting the textile sector despite the fact that it provided for huge business opportunities particularly because of availability of adequate raw material required in the wool and silk sector.

One of the estimates suggests that around 40 thousand families each are associated with rearing of sheep and cocoons. In ab-

sence of any reliable consumption centre for value addition of this raw material within the J&K, the farming community was exposed to exploitation and the material would find its way outside the state in the raw form.

Further in order to safeguard the interests of the farming community and also create a viable economic cycle, the units associated with these sectors have

A WELL THOUGHT
out strategy was put in place to garner adequate resource for putting in implementation various schemes/projects"

been revived/established.

In the period of last 3 years the organisation has set up Silk Filatures and Silk Weaving units in Jammu and modernised its Joinery Unit in Jammu. Similarly, in the Kashmir Division Woollen Spinning Plants at Solina and Nowshera and Silk Filatures at Solina have been modernised and the upgradation of Silk Weaving Factory at Rajbagh and Woollen Mills Bemina is being taken under the World Bank funded Jehlum Tawi Flood Recovery Project.

This revival plan which has been keenly supported at the highest Administrative level has the active support and the guidance of the Commissioner Secretary Industries and Commerce Department MK Dwivedi.

The effects of revival are already visible as JKI has procured around 66,740 kgs Cocoon worth 5.77 crore which has resulted in economic benefits to around 5140 Cocoon rearing families of J&K. This

intervention has resulted in direct monetary benefit of 11250 approx. per family. This intervention has also become more significant due to the fact that because of the COVID 19 lockdown few outside buyers could participate in the auction of the cocoons conducted by the Sericulture Department and the procurement of cocoons by JKI has come as a huge economic relief for them. The establishment of the Silk related infrastructure by JKI has also led to the stability of Cocoon Prices as the rearers of cocoon have an assured market with J&K and are thus likely to resort to distress sales.

JKI plans to procure around 1,30,000 kgs Cocoon worth 11.24 crore in the year 2021-22 thus benefiting to around 10000 Cocoon rearing families.

Similarly in the current year JKI has procured around 20000 kgs of local wool worth 0.30 crore which has benefitted around 200 sheep rearing families with a direct monetary benefit of around Rs.15000 per family.

As with cocoons JKI intends to procure around 1 lakh kgs of wool worth 1.50 crore to benefit around 500 sheep rearing families in the year 2021-22

In order to strengthen the marketing of its products JKI has tied up with AMAZON for marketing of its products and its products especially furniture and Joinery would also be available on GeM.

Further in order to increase the market visibility and boost the sales of the Furniture and Joinery items, Silk and Woollen products being manufactured by Jammu Kashmir Industries Ltd. an Experience Centre has been constructed at Shaheedi Chowk Jammu.

Jio Fastest Network In 4G Download Speed; Vodafone In Upload In Nov: Trai

NEW DELHI: Reliance Jio topped the 4G speed chart with a data download rate of 20.8 megabits per second (Mbps), while Vodafone was ahead of others in upload speed at 6.5 Mbps in November, according to the latest data update of telecom regulator Trai.

Jio recorded more than double the download speed of its closest competitor Vodafone.

Though Vodafone and Idea Cellular have merged their mobile business as Vodafone Idea Limited, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Tri) is still releasing separate network speed data of both the en-



tities.

Vodafone recorded a download speed of 9.8 Mbps in November, according to Trai's data updated on December 10. It was followed by Idea and Bharti Airtel with a download speed of 8.8 Mbps and

8 Mbps, respectively.

Vodafone topped the chart in the upload segment with a network speed of 6.5 Mbps. It was followed by Idea with an upload speed of 5.8 Mbps, Airtel 4 Mbps and Jio 3.7 Mbps.

The download speed helps consumers in accessing content from the internet while upload speed helps them in sending or sharing pictures, video etc to their contacts.

The average speed is computed by Trai based on the data it collects across India with the help of its MySpeed application on a real-time basis. PTI

Payments To SSIs To Be Made Within 45 Days Of Receiving The Supply

JAMMU: In a meeting called to discuss the issue of pending payments to SSIs from various departments it has been decided to release these within a period of 45 days.

The meeting was chaired by Financial Commissioner, Finance, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta and attended by Principal Secretary PDD & Information departments, Rohit Kansal; Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce Department, Manoj Kumar Diwedi, Secretary Jal Shakti Department, M Raju, Director Industries, Jammu, Anoo Malhotra; MD, J&K SICOP, Atul Sharma and many other officers of many other departments.

The Financial Commissioner, Finance directed all the concerned departments to take immediate steps and clear the liabilities immediately failing which action against the DDO concerned will be taken.

Moreover the Director Finance of each Department has been nominated as Nodal Officer for weekly report to the Finance Department on progress made after getting details from respective departments.

Dr Mehta gave a target of 15 days to departments to clear 50% of outstandings by ending December and by 30th January, 2021 whole outstandings should be cleared, for which weekly review should be done by the Commissioner/Secretary to Government, Industries and Commerce Department.

In the onset of the meeting Commissioner Secretary Industries & Commerce Department, through a Power Point Presentation, briefed about the outstanding payments of SSI Units with various government departments on account of supply of raw material and marketing items. The Commissioner/Secretary also briefed the meeting about the MSME Development Act, 2006.

Director, Industries and Commerce Department, Jammu was also directed to collect details of cases pending with Micro and Small Enterprises Facilitation Council (MSEFC) from the concerned departments. She was asked to compile a report regarding the same for sending it to the Lieutenant Governor.

Budgam Has Huge Scope For Iconic Developmental Projects: Div Com

BUDGAM/PULWAMA: The Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole today said that Budgam as a nearest district to Srinagar and for its topography has huge scope for launch of various iconic developmental projects.

The Div Com said this during an extensive tour to Budgam and Pulwama districts to take stock of progress of various developmental projects in these districts.

He was accompanied by DC Budgam, DC Pulwama, MD J&K SIDCO, CE I&FC, CE Transmission, Ex. Er State Sports Council, Ex. Er CPWD and other concerned officers.

During his visit to Budgam, the Div Com took stock of progress made in the construction work of Academic cum Administrative Block, Auditorium Incubation, Canteen, Boys and Girls hostels, Guest House, site development and other construction works of NIFT Srinagar presently under construction at SIDCO Ompora.

The Div Com was apprised that 55 percent of work has been already completed under first -3 packages so far. He instructed the concerned to expedite the work process and submit month wise progress to ensure the project is completed within the stipulated time frame.

The Div Com also visited the Multipurpose Indoor Sports Stadium Budgam and 50 MVA Grid Sub Station Chadoora.

He directed concerned to ensure both interior and exterior work on Indoor Stadium is completed by March-end or action shall be taken against the work executing agency. Instructions for submitting DPR for the development of Sports Stadium Budgam were also issued on the occasion.

At Grid Station Nowbugh, Div Com issued instructions for shifting and vacating of CRPF from the station premises and identifying alternate land site for the CRPF camp on war footing besides construction work on Grid Station is carried out in full swing.

The Div Com said that the Union Government has launched 100 iconic

projects in J&K UT out of which 5-6 are also coming up in Budgam. He said Budgam being near to Srinagar and safe from floods for its topography has huge scope for launching various centrally-sponsored developmental projects here.

He also took stock of Flood protection and anti erosion works on Doodhganganallahin Chadoora.

Later, the Div Com inspected the work process on AILMS Awantipora, Trail Lift Irrigation Scheme, Multipurpose Indoor Stadium, twin under construction Sports grounds at Bajwani Trail. He took detailed review of the site development, availability of essential services, road development, public utilities and other allied works at AILMS.

Stressing on work expeditions on the project, the Div Com directed concerned departments to ensure all essential services including electricity and water facility is made available to the concerned to ensure no hindrance in the execution of work process.

He emphasized on making both available bore wells functional at an earliest while work on others is also carried out on war footing. The concerned were directed to maintain the work calendar on the project.

He also said that various areas in Trail and rest of the Pulwama district have tourism potential and said that Shikargarh and other areas shall be developed to bring these places on the tourist map.

The Div Com further emphasized on the speedy development of twin sports stadiums including staircases and pavilions to make sports facilities available to the local youth. He also inspected the indoor stadium and laid emphasis on availability of equipment there.

While taking stock of work on Lift Irrigation Scheme, the Div Com directed concerned to ensure the project is completed by March-end to facilitate irrigation supply to orchards and other crops in areas facing water shortages.

NEWS MAKERS

Application For WFL/ SP To Go Online From Jan-2021

SRINAGAR: Joint Director Agriculture Extension, Chowdhary Mohammad Iqbal who is also Deputy Controller Fertilizers Kashmir Division today informed that the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare shall start the processing of applications for Wholesale Fertilizer License (WFL)/ Sales Permission (SP) through on-line mode from 01 January, 2021 onwards.

He said that afterwards no offline applications for such services will be accepted by the department. He also directed the fertilizer dealers (Wholesale/Retailers) to apply for renewal of license one month before the date of expiry, through online mode only.

The Joint Director said this during a meeting convened here to

review the stocks/availability and monitoring of Digital Mode of Chemical Fertilizers in Kashmir Valley.

The meeting focused on updating of POS by 3.1 version and finalizing the details of availability, supply, requirement and quality control of different fertilizers for Kashmir division during the upcoming agriculture season.

The Joint Director directed the officers to complete updating of POS devices by 3.1 versions and instructed that no supply of material should be delivered to retailers having versions below 3.1, and warned that the wholesalers who will supply the material to the retailers having below 3.1 versions will be strictly dealt under law.

He said that the licenses which

are not functional from last one year (below 3.0 version) will be cancelled and the machines shall be recovered by the concerned fertilizer companies.

Joint Director directed all Law Enforcement Inspector of the valley to increase the visits to the different warehouse premises dealing with the fertilizers to check the present status and other business formalities in contravention of fertilizer control order 1985.

Among others, Deputy Director Agriculture Central, Deputy Director Law Enforcement, Chief Agriculture Officers of all districts, Assistant Director Law Enforcement Srinagar, BDT Coordinator J&K, Representatives of various fertilizer companies and other concerned officers attended the meeting.

Govt Invites Proposals For Setting Up Electronic Chip Plants In India, Acquisition Abroad

The government has invited proposals from entities to set up electronic chip manufacturing units in the country and even acquire any company making semiconductors overseas. The expression of interest floated by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity) on Tuesday said that the government is keen to incentivise and attract investment in setting up semiconductor fabrication units in India.

"The Meity invites expression of interest (Eoi) from companies/consortia desirous of setting up expansion of existing Semiconductor wafer/device fabrication (FAB) facilities in India or acquisition of Semiconductor FABs outside India," the Eoi document said.



Meity has fixed January 31, 2021 as the last date for submitting the proposal.

The government plans to use the proposals to formulate a scheme for setting up or expansion of existing semiconductor plants in the country, according to the document.

Meity said the need to set up semi-

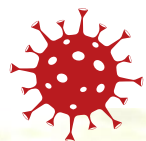
conducting by the year 2025.

The government had approved two semiconductor units in 2013 with an investment of around Rs 63,000 crore. However, both the units could not be set-up due to lack of electronics manufacturing ecosystem in the country and policy-linked market support.

Along with the production linked incentive scheme for electronics manufacturing, Meity had announced the scheme for promotion of manufacturing of electronic components and semiconductors (SPECES) as well with a budget outlay of Rs 3,285 crore spread over a period of eight years but no electronic chip manufacturer has shown interest in the scheme yet.

conductor plants assumes significance in view of the fact that India is poised to increase its share in global manufacturing of mobile phones, IT hardware, automotive electronics, industrial electronics, medical electronics, IoT and other devices in the near future as it aspires to have \$400 billion of electronics

In pandemic, people are turning to nature, women especially



People in the study, ranged from stuck at home to stressed in essential worker jobs, reported significant increases in outdoor activity during Covid-19, especially among women.



Outdoor activities seeing the largest increases were: watching wildlife (up 64%), gardening (57%), taking photos or doing other art in nature (54%), relaxing alone outside (58%), and, yes, making their masked and distanced way on walks (70%).

People also experienced a shift in why they value nature. During the pandemic, respondents said in nature they cherished a greater sense of mental health and wellbeing (59%), exercise (29%), appreciating nature's beauty (29%), sense of identity (23%) and spirituality (22%), along with other less common values.

The Vermont research is one of the first published studies to explore how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected Americans' relationship with nature.

"These data are like a treasure chest of the pandemic moment: a record of how people have been thinking about their relationship with the rest of the world in a time of great upheaval," says Rachelle Gould of the University of Vermont, the study's senior author.

The research is the first of two UVM studies being published this week by PLOS ONE on nature and Covid-19.

Key differences across groups
Not everyone experienced more nature equally. Differences were tied to factors including gender, income

and employment, and whether people lived in urban or rural areas.

Women increased their nature use in more ways than men. Across the six most common nature activities in the study, women were 1.7 (gardening) to 2.9 (walking) times more likely to report increasing their engagement than men. Men were not more likely than women to report increased engagement in any activities.

While the study advances our understanding of gender differences during Covid-19, the researchers plan to inspect this finding further. They wonder if women had a greater need for stress relief during the pandemic, and are potentially more likely than men to turn to nature for that.

"More research is needed, but our preliminary analysis suggests that, during the pandemic, women are more likely than men to report increased importance of values that includes mental well-being, beauty, exercise, familiarity with landscape, and fun," says Gould. "Our next step is to explore the qualitative data to explore this result deeper."

Those who lost their jobs during the pandemic also had higher odds of reporting increased gardening, relaxing socially, walking, and wildlife watching. "This suggests that Covid-19 is overturning the idea that nature and

its benefits—from stress reduction to social connection—are becoming 'luxury goods,'" says Diana Hackenburg, a PhD candidate at the Rubenstein School, and a Gund Graduate Fellow.

Some groups valued tradition or food more and expressed those thoughts. With different results from urban and rural respondents, the researchers say there is more to learn behind the numbers, and plan future studies.

The first wave of Covid-19 research.

Very few peer-reviewed studies have been published on the issue of Americans visiting nature during the pandemic, despite media reports and personal experience that suggest it is happening. This study, plus a UVM study that finds a large increase in new nature users, join recent study from Rice et al. and another from Norway among the first, globally. The study is further unique because it explores not only changes in activities, but also people's values towards nature.

The team hopes decision-makers can learn more about which populations are using nature more or less during the pandemic, "and focus on removing barriers to nature access, to increase equity," says Joshua Morse, lead author, a PhD candidate at the Rubenstein School, and a Gund Graduate Fellow.

While many studies have explored

how natural disasters (volcanoes, tornadoes, fires) impact human values, UVM researchers wanted to investigate a different type of crisis—a pandemic, which differs in key ways from other "natural disasters."

Of the 15 outdoor activities studied, some went down in frequency - including camping - while other activities stayed relatively constant, including biking, boating, and fishing.

"Our work catalogues a part of this pandemic that might otherwise be under-discussed or hard to provide evidence for," says Gould, an assistant professor in UVM's Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources and faculty fellow in the Gund Institute for Environment.

In addition to Prof. Gould and Morse, study authors include PhD candidates Diana Hackenburg and Tatiana Gladkikh, both Gund Graduate Fellows in the Rubenstein School. This research is one of six Covid projects launched by the Gund Institute for the Environment.

"This study is a timely snapshot of the central role nature plays in our well-being, and how important access to nature is during challenging, uncertain times like this pandemic," says Gladkikh. "I hope the results help inform future land management decisions." - Agencies

Positive Messages Encourage Safer Driver Behaviour Than Fear Tactics



A new study has shown that films demonstrating responsible behaviour could lead to young drivers taking fewer risks on the road than if they only saw videos aimed at provoking fear of accidents. The study lead by the University of Southampton researchers was published in the journal Risk Analysis.

Over one million people are killed in road accidents each year and drivers below the age of 25 account for nearly half of road deaths.

Dr Yaniv Hanoch, Associate Professor of Risk Management at the University of Southampton said, "Governments around the world have adopted a plethora of interventions aimed at encouraging safer driving, the majority of which use fear-based content, such as graphic depictions of sudden car crashes. We are all familiar with the UK Government's "Think" campaign, especially at this time of year.

"However, previous research has suggested that such messages can be counter-productive, possibly because the emotive content can trigger defensive reactions and message rejection."

In this latest research, led by Dr Cutello of the University of Antwerp in partnership with the University of Southampton and the University of Warwick, 146 young drivers undertook tests to compare the difference in their attitudes to risky driving.

Half of the group viewed a six-minute video aimed at instilling fear through a crash caused by a reckless driver, distracted by his passengers. The other half saw a video showing a positive scene with a careful driver asking the passengers not to distract him and successfully reaching their destination. Both road safety

films were developed specifically for, and used by, the Fire and Rescue Services across the United Kingdom

The study also tested whether watching the videos in an immersive setting on a Virtual Reality (VR) headset made a difference in watching the videos on a two-dimensional (2D) TV screen.

Each participant took a questionnaire to assess his or her attitude to



risk-taking on the road before and after the trial. At the end of the trial, they also took a second test, the Vienna Risk-Taking Test-Traffic. In this test, they watched video clips of driving situations that require a driver reaction (for example, considering whether to overtake in icy conditions) and asked to indicate if, and when, they regarded the

manoeuvre as too risky.

The findings indicate that the positively framed films significantly decreased risky driving after being seen in on a 2D screen, and even more so when viewed in VR format. In contrast, the fear film shown in VR failed to reduce risky driving behaviours, and in fact, increased young drivers' risk-taking.

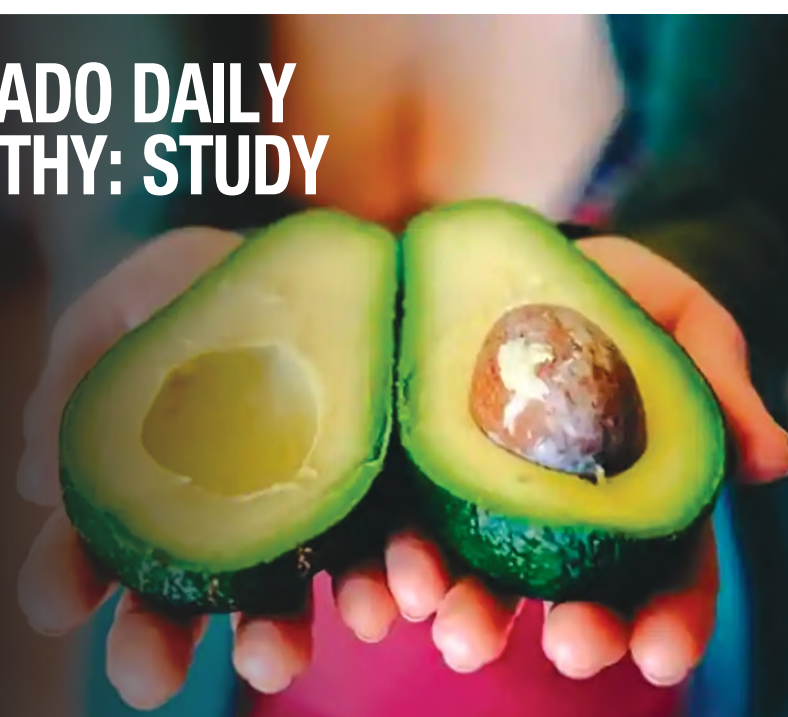
Dr Hanoch continued, "Finding the best means to tackle this issue is of paramount importance.

"By studying driver safety interventions currently used by the Fire and Rescue service across the United Kingdom, this research provides the first examination of the effects of both message content and mode of delivery on risky driving behaviour among young drivers."

Dr Cutello added, "Our results provide key insights into the role of positive versus fear-framed messages in tackling risky driving among young drivers. On the one hand, they build on previous work showing the effectiveness of positively framed messages in promoting road safety through the portrayal of driving safely and the positive consequences. They also show that allowing the participants to experience what proactive behaviours can lead to, and giving them the illusions that the events occurring are authentic through VR, can encourage the creation of positive role models and strategies to be safer on the roads." -Agencies

EATING AN AVOCADO DAILY KEEPS GUT HEALTHY: STUDY

A study at the University of Illinois College of Agriculture, consumer and environmental sciences has revealed that including avocado in your daily diet can help improve gut health.



Avocados are a healthy food that is rich in dietary fibre and monounsaturated fat which impacts the microbes in the gastrointestinal system or 'gut'.

Sharon Thompson, a graduate student in the Division of Nutritional Sciences at U of I and lead author on the paper, published in the Journal of Nutrition said, "We know eating avocados helps you feel full and reduces blood cholesterol concentration, but we did not know how it influences the gut microbes, and the metabolites the microbes produce."

The researchers found that people who ate avocado every day as part of a meal had a greater abundance of gut microbes that break down fibre and produce metabolites that support gut health. They also had greater microbial diversity compared to people who did not receive the avocado meals, says the study.

Thompson told, "Avocado consumption reduced bile acids and increased short-chain fatty acids. These changes correlate with beneficial health outcomes."

The study included 163 adults between 25 and 45 years of age with overweight or obesity - defined as a BMI of at least 25 kg/m² - but otherwise healthy. They received one meal per day to consume as a replacement for either breakfast, lunch, or dinner. One group consumed an avocado with each meal, while the control group consumed a similar meal but without the avocado. The participants

provided blood, urine, and faecal samples throughout the 12-week study. They also reported how much of the provided meals they consumed, and every four weeks recorded everything they ate.

While other research on avocado consumption has focused on weight loss, participants in this study were not advised to restrict or change what they ate. Instead, they consumed their normal diets with the exception of replacing one meal per day with the meal the researchers provided.

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of avocado consumption on the gastrointestinal microbiota. Assistant professor of nutrition in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition at U of I and senior author of the study said, "Our goal was to test the hypothesis that the fats and the fibre in avocados positively affect the gut microbiota. We also wanted to explore the relationships between gut microbes and health outcomes."

The researchers found that while the avocado group consumed slightly more calories than the control group, slightly more fat was excreted in their stool.

"Greater fat excretion means the research participants were absorbing less energy from the foods that they were eating. This was likely because of reductions in bile acids, which are molecules our digestion system secretes that allow us to absorb fat. We found that the

number of bile acids in stool was lower and the amount of fat in the stool was higher in the avocado group," Holscher explains.

Different types of fats have differential effects on the microbiome. The fats in avocados are monounsaturated, which are heart-healthy fats.

A medium avocado provides around 12 grams of fibre, which goes a long way toward meeting the recommended amount of 28 to 34 grams of fibre per day, says study.

Eating fibre isn't just good for us; it's important for the microbiome, too, Holscher stated. "We can't break down dietary fibres, but certain gut microbes can. When we consume dietary fibre, it's a win-win for gut microbes and for us."

Holscher's research lab specializes in dietary modulation of the microbiome and its connections to health. "Just like we think about heart-healthy meals, we need to also be thinking about gut healthy meals and how to feed the microbiota," she explained.

Avocado being an energy-dense food also, is nutrient-dense, and it contains important micronutrients that Americans don't eat enough of, like potassium and fibre.

"It's just a really nicely packaged fruit that contains nutrients that are important for health. Our work shows we can add benefits to gut health to that list," Holscher added. - Agencies

'Bacteria can travel from one continent to another in atmospheric dust'

The research, published in the journal Atmospheric Research, deciphered the mystery of the transport of microorganisms across continents via 'giant' atmospheric particles called iberulites that could be inhaled by humans.

According to scientists, including those from the University of Granada (UGR) in Spain, these aerosols act like a "launch vehicle" for bacteria and may pose a risk of disease transmission across continents.

They explained that iberulites are giant atmospheric bioaerosols made of multiple minerals, measuring on average one hundred microns approximately.

While these bioaerosols were discovered

in 2008, the scientists said the mechanism by which bacteria are involved in the formation of atmospheric iberulites remained unknown.

In the current study, the researchers analysed atmospheric dust deposits in the city of Granada in Spain. They found that the composition of these deposits was heterogeneous, comprising predominantly clay, quartz, and carbonate minerals and, iron oxides to a lesser extent.

In addition to these minerals, the scientists said bacteria, silicon-rich algae called diatoms, and other single-celled organisms made up the biological component.

They said the aerosols also contained bronchoscopes which are microscopic granules secreted by insects such as grasshoppers.

According to the study, the dust originated from the Sahara Desert in north-northeast Africa and local soils with evidence of atmospheric interactions between these components and clouds.

Analysing the iberulites, the researchers found that they formed as a result of chemical and physical interactions between dust grains, the microorganisms from Saharan soils which initiate the aerosol formation, and water-vapour molecules from clouds.

The droplet of water agglutinates dust particles of different sizes in its interior together with bacteria in suspension, the study noted.

"Bacteria can survive in iberulites because these provide a nutritious medium, a microhabitat rich in nutrients, and they protect the bacteria

from ultraviolet radiation," said Alberto Molinero Garcia, a co-author of the study from UGR.

"This is demonstrated by the bacterial polymeric exudates that, rather like mucilaginous mucus, act as a 'glue' between the mineral particles, preventing their disaggregation and increasing their resistance to the fragility in the turbulent phenomena of the atmosphere," Garcia added.

According to the researchers, the iberulites aid microorganisms to travel great intercontinental distances on atmospheric currents such as the Saharan Air Layer (SAL). They believe these aerosols may exist throughout the world, primarily in those regions where dust is carried in from desert regions. -PTI

Some bacteria can travel from one continent to another 'hidden' in atmospheric dust, according to a new study which says these microbes may not only affect human and animal health but also impact climate and ecosystems.



India Face Aussie Might In Pink Ball Test

ADELAIDE: A peerless Virat Kohli and his "fearless" India would look to unleash their might on an Australian team which is ready for revenge but not exactly in 'pink of health' ahead of the first Day/Night Test starting here on Thursday. Media mogul Kerry Packer, while promoting his path-breaking 'World Series Day/Night Test matches' on Channel 9 back in late 1970s, had an unforgettable caption "Big Boys Play at Night".

Even in 2020, there couldn't have been a more appropriate catch-line for a series where Kohli's magnificence meets its match in Steve Smith's manic consistency, Cheteshwar Pujara's doggedness challenged by a much younger Marnus Labuschagne, ready to show the world that he isn't a one-season wonder. All this would be under lights at the Adelaide Oval.

And then there are those mean fast men on both sides aiming to instill the fear of pink ball in twilight zone, creating all sorts of doubts in the batsmen's minds.

A Josh Hazlewood versus

Mohammed Shami will be as enticing a sub-plot as Jasprit Bumrah bowling those yorkers in reply to Pat Cummins' barrage of bouncers.

With a workhorse like Ishant Sharma missing from Indian ranks and the enforcer David Warner absent in the Australian line-up, the teams are evenly placed in terms of strength.

However, there will certainly be some distinct home advantage for Australia along with the experience of playing more Day/Night Tests.

A Day/Night Test match has its own little grammar where batsmen are expected to attack in the first session while bowlers are at their peak once the sun sets, allowing the pink kookaburra to pick its pace up.

Never has an Indian team been so spoilt for choices with multiple options in place for various positions.

But Indian skipper Virat Kohli made it clear that Shubman Gill and KL Rahul will have to wait for their chances with the management deciding to stick to an out-of-form Prithvi Shaw in the



opening slot.

"Shubman hasn't got opportunities at this level yet in Test

cricket, so as and when he gets an opportunity it will be great to see how he goes about things,

because he is a very, very confident young man," Kohli said on the eve of the game.

"Prithvi has performed at the Test level, but he will be playing in Australia for the first time. So, I think it is very exciting to see his progress as well."

Can Rahul be fitted in the team at some stage?

"KL is obviously a quality player and hence he has been included back into the Test squad and you know we have to see what combination suits the balance of the team best," skipper's statement stressed that Hanuma Vihari, with his part-time off-breaks, is the choice for now. For the much-speculated wicketkeeper's slot, Wriddhiman Saha was preferred over the explosive but erratic Rishabh Pant.

In the build-up to the series, Saha's fifty in the red-ball First-Class match was achieved in a tougher setting than Pant's 73-ball 100 under lights against a second string Australia A attack.

Also, Umesh Yadav predictably, after his good show in the practice game, got his place in the side as the third pacer.

On Tuesday, India's top batsmen were being troubled by

Thangarasu Natarajan's incoming deliveries with pink kookaburra at the Adelaide nets.

If Natarajan, at 130-plus, can trouble them so much, then Mitchell Starc, the world's top wicket-taker in pink ball Tests, can be menacing.

At times, less options make it easier to choose and Kohli would hope that he has made the right choices so that Ajinkya Rahane can help India do an encore once he takes a break.

Squads

India (Playing XI): Virat Kohli (C), Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane (VC), Hanuma Vihari, Wriddhiman Saha (WK), Ravichandran Ashwin, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Umesh Yadav.

Australia: Tim Paine (C/WK), Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Moises Henriques, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Michael Nester, James Pattinson, Steven Smith, Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson, Matthew Wade.

Match Starts at 9:30 am IST. PTI

ATK Mohun Bagan Return To Winning Ways, Down FC Goa 1-0



Press Trust Of India

MARGAO- Roy Krishna struck a late goal from a penalty as ATK Mohun Bagan beat FC Goa by a solitary goal to return to winning ways in the Indian Super League here on Wednesday.

All the action centred around the last 10 minutes in the intriguing clash and it was the Fijian star forward who found the back of the net from a penalty in the 85th minute to seal three points for the Mariners in a dramatic fashion.

It was FC Goa's inexperienced substitute Aiban Dohling who conceded the soft penalty, bringing down Krishna inside the box, which changed the fate of the match.

This happened just five minutes after Carl McHugh brought down Jorge Mendoza with a nudge but referee Rahul Kumar Gupta waved away FC Goa players' appeals for a penalty.

Credit should also be given to ATK-MB goalkeeper Arindam Bhattacharya who stood tall with some delightful saves to ensure a clean slate.

The win took ATKMB to second spot with 13 points from six matches, level with Mumbai City FC who are ahead on goal difference.

This was ATKMB's first win in three matches as they had slipped behind following their

loss to Jamshedpur FC and a draw against Hyderabad FC after they had started off with three back-to-back wins.

It was an intense, cagey and tactical first-half of football from both the sides but neither could break the deadlock.

The Mariners looked the better side and had the best chance of the first-half in the 40th minute but Williams' powerful left-footer rattled off the upright.

The Gaurs, on the other hand, were unable to breach ATKMB's defence and test Bhattacharya.

After the break, FC Goa had their first chance in the 57th minute when Alberto Noguera came close inside the box but his header was denied by Bhattacharya diving to his left.

The Juan Ferrando-coached side stepped up the intensity, pressing ISL's all-time top Indian assist provider Brandon Fernandes into the attack in the 65th minute.

But the Mariners' defence stayed compact and parried all the attacks before the penalty in favour of ATKMB which broke the deadlock.

FC Goa nearly scored an equaliser in the dying moments of the stoppage time when youngster Saviour Gama's powerful 35-

yard shot was tipped over the bar by Bhattacharya.

West Indies Set To Tour Bangladesh For 3 ODIs, 2 Tests In Jan, Feb

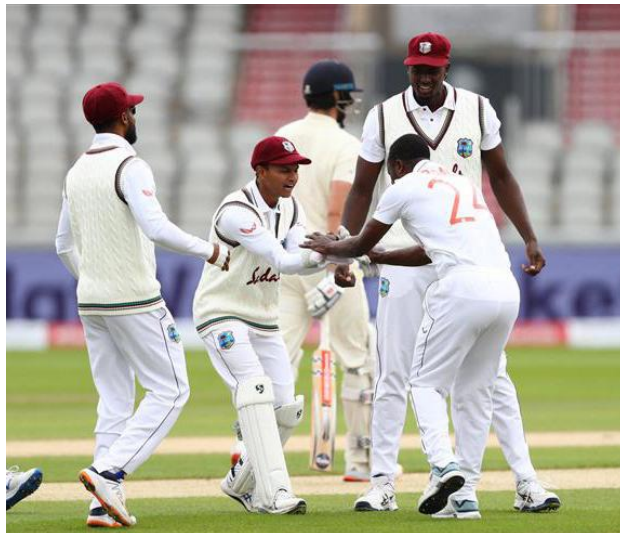
ST JOHNS (ANTIGUA): West Indies are set to play three ODIs and two Test during their tour of Bangladesh next month, Cricket West Indies (CWI) has confirmed.

As per the draft schedule, the ODI series will start on January 20 and the first two matches will be played in Dhaka before the final match in Chattogram on January 25. The first Test in Chattogram will start from February 3 while the second Test will be played in Dhaka from February 11.

The West Indies cricket board has approved in principle the tour of Bangladesh, subject to the finalisation of medical and logistical details.

"The approval in principle was made following a recommendation from CWI's Medical Advisory Committee (MAC), having received a detailed report from the pre-tour visit of Bangladesh by CWI Director and Member of the CWI and ICC MAC, Dr Mansingh and Security Manager, Paul Slowe," stated a statement from CWI.

"CWI will continue discus-



sions with the Bangladesh

Cricket Board (BCB) and the West Indies Players' Association (WIPA) to fine-tune the various arrangements in order to ensure the health and safety of the players and team management unit," it added.

The series, if it goes ahead, will mark Bangladesh's first international cricket since Zimbabwe toured the country in February and March earlier this year before the outbreak

of coronavirus.

Draft tour schedule:
January 20: 1st ODI, SBNCS, Dhaka

January 22: 2nd ODI, SBNCS, Dhaka

January 25: 3rd ODI, ZACS, Chattogram

January 28-31: Four-Day warm-up, M.A. Aziz Stadium, Chattogram
February 3-7: 1st Test Match, ZACS, Chattogram
February 11-15: 2nd Test Match, SBNCS, Dhaka—IANS

Old Container Promises Treasure Trove Of Maradona Memorabilia

BUENOS AIRES: A long-forgotten container with hundreds of items of memorabilia from the career of late Argentine soccer star Diego Maradona could provide a treasure trove for collectors — and open a new front in the contest over his estate.

Shirts signed by Sergio Aguero, Ronaldo Nazario, Harry Kane and Hristo Stoichkov are among the memorabilia in the container, which had been in storage on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, along with balls from Barce-

from the late Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

"You have overcome the most difficult of tests for an athlete and a young man of humble origins," Castro wrote to the soccer player, who spent several years in Cuba recovering from drug and alcohol addiction.

Maradona died last month from a heart attack, aged 60.

The existence of the container with hundreds of items inside was brought to the attention of judicial authorities and the contents have

\$10 million and \$40 million.

Maradona has five recognised children and six others with claims to be his offspring. They, along with former partners and business associates, are among those with claims to part of his fortune.

The value of the pieces is impossible to gauge but the sports memorabilia business is a booming one and Maradona, who is widely held to be one of the greatest soccer players of all time, one of the world's most iconic names.

An American expert last month told Reuters the shirt worn by the Argentine when he scored his famous "Hand Of God" goal against England at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico could be worth up to \$2 million.

Maradona is also known to have left real estate, luxury cars and jewels accrued during time spent playing and coaching in Argentina, Spain, Italy, the UAE, Belarus and Mexico.

"Inside the container there are historic boots and shirts, a letter signed by Fidel Castro, a guitar from (singer) Andres Calamaro and two safes," Mario Baudry, the lawyer representing Maradona's son Diego Fernando, told Reuters.

"Diego asked me to find the container and said that everything in it was for Dieguito," he added.

"But there's nothing written down officially, so it corresponds to all the children equally," — Reuters



lona, Napoli and Boca Juniors and a plaque given to him by soccer's governing body FIFA.

There are also shirts worn by Maradona himself, as well as political momentos received as gifts from the leftist leaders he so admired.

One Brazil shirt has the name Lula on the back, in reference to the former Brazilian president, and there is a letter

been catalogued by officials, a source close to Maradona's family told Reuters.

"There is only one key to the container and it is with judicial officials," the source said.

The booty could turbocharge the legal battles under way over the spoils of an estate that Forbes magazine estimated was worth between

New Zealand's Ferguson Out For Up To Six Weeks With Stress Fracture

New Zealand fast bowler Lockie Ferguson will be out of action for between four and six weeks with a partial stress fracture to his back but does not need surgery, the country's cricket board said on Wednesday.

Ferguson's injury came to light after the recent Twenty20 series against West Indies and the 29-year-old has already been ruled out of the upcoming T20 test series against Pakistan, which starts in Auckland on Friday.

"We're all really feeling for Lockie," New Zealand coach Gary Stead said in a statement. "Injuries are certainly part of our sport, but to get something like this when you're at the very top of your game is especially disappointing."

"The pace and skill he's been able to consistently produce has made him one of the very best white ball bowlers in the world and a huge asset."

"Lockie has a great attitude and I know he's up for the fight so he'll get stuck into the rehab and we're still hopeful he may



get back on the park at the back end of summer."

New Zealand will play three T20s and two tests against Pakistan, after which they face Australia at home in a five-match T20 series starting in late February.

The 'Black Caps' then host Bangladesh in a limited-overs series comprising three one-day internationals and three T20s that ends on March 28.

Chelsea Lose For 2nd Time In 4 Days, Man City Draws Again

Two losses in four days has stalled Chelsea's serene progress in the Premier League, turning the spotlight onto its expensively assembled attack that remains a work in progress.

Two drab draws for Manchester City in the same period is raising even more questions — notably, what has happened to what was once the most entertaining team in England?

It was an evening to forget for two of the league's supposed title contenders on Tuesday, with Chelsea's 2-1 loss at Wolverhampton — sealed by a winning goal in stoppage time — followed by City's 1-1 draw at home to West Bromwich Albion, one of the fa-

Portugal international, Pedro Neto, broke forward on the counterattack and drove home the winner in the fifth minute of stoppage time.

Chelsea manager Frank Lampard remodeled his attack as part of an off-season spending spree, but Timo Werner is now without a goal in eight games, Kai Havertz has underwhelmed, and another of the new signings, Ziyech, has had spells out injured.

Meanwhile, U.S. winger Christian Pulisic is feeling his way back to match sharpness after a run of injuries.

Lampard has plenty to ponder. As does Pep Guardiola, with City languishing in sixth place after a tepid display against West Brom, which grabbed a point thanks to an unfortunate own-goal by City defender Ruben Dias in the 43rd.

City had gone ahead through Ilkay Gundogan in the 30th but struggled for imagination in attempting to break down a deep-lying visiting defense.

Guardiola's team had similar problems in attack in a 0-0 draw at Manchester United on Saturday.

With 18 goals, City is the lowest scorer of the league's top nine teams. Guardiola has been playing two defensive midfielders since the off-season departure of long-time playmaker David Silva in an effort to give more protection to his defense, but it is robbing the team of creativity.



Qatar To Host 2030 Asian Games, Saudi Arabia In 2034

MUSCAT (OMAN): The 2030 Asian Games were awarded to Doha on Wednesday and the 2034 event went to Riyadh after a deal was struck between the rival nations.

The Qatari capital of Doha beat Saudi Arabian counterpart Riyadh for the 2030 Games in the vote at the Olympic Council of Asia's general assembly.

The vote took place amid a bitter and long-running political dispute between Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Saudi Arabia is one of four countries which has imposed a trade and travel boycott on Qatar since 2017, though there have recently been indications the dispute could be resolved.

The OCA reached a deal to vote on the 2030 host but to give the other candidate the 2034 event.

"That means no winner, no loser," OCA president Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahad al-Sabah of Kuwait said, thanking the Saudi and Qatari foreign ministers and conference host Oman for helping to broker the agreement.

"Thank you, Asia, for solidarity and coordination."

Qatari bid officials wore masks and waved flags as they celebrated together. Vote totals were not immediately announced.

Qatar will also host the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

The vote on Wednesday was repeatedly delayed by problems with the electronic voting system with many delegates taking part remotely amid the coronavirus pandemic.

In the hall, 26 delegates were given paper ballots and 19 voted remotely. AP

India Ranks 131 In UN's Human Development Index

HDI Is Measure Of Nation's Health, Education And Standards Of Living



NEW DELHI, DEC 16: India dropped one spot to 131 among 189 countries in the 2020 human development index, according to a report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Human Development Index is the measure of a nation's health, education and standards of living.

Life expectancy of Indians at birth in 2019 was 69.7 years while Bangladesh has a life expectancy of 72.6 years and Pakistan 67.3 years, the 2020 Human Development Report said. India, Bhutan (129), Bangladesh (133), Nepal (142), and Pakistan (154) were ranked among countries with medium human development, the report said.

India's HDI value for 2019 is 0.645 which put it in the medium human development category. India has been positioned at 131 out of 189 countries and territories, according to the report. India had ranked 130 in 2018 in the index.

Norway topped the index, followed by Ireland, Switzerland, Hong Kong and Iceland, the report showed. Talking to reporters, UNDP Resident Representative Shoko Noda said the drop in India's ranking doesn't mean "India didn't do well but other countries did better".

Noda said India can help other countries too and lauded its commitment to reduce carbon emissions. According to the report published

by the United Nations Development Programme on Tuesday, India's gross national income per capita fell to USD 6,681 in 2019 from USD 6,829 in 2018 on purchasing power parity (PPP) basis.

Purchasing power parity or PPP is a measurement of prices in different countries that uses the prices of specific goods to compare the absolute purchasing power of the countries' currencies.

The report said evidence from Colombia to India indicates that financial security and ownership of land improve women's security and reduce the risk of gender-based violence, clearly indicating that owning land can empower women.

It further said indigenous children in Cambodia, India and Thailand show more malnutrition-related issues such as stunting and wasting.

"In India different responses in parent behaviour as well as some disinvestment in girls' health and education have led to higher malnutrition among girls than among boys as a consequence of shocks likely linked to climate change," the report said.

The report said under the Paris Agreement, India pledged to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP from the 2005 level by 33-35 percent by 2030 and to obtain 40 percent of electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.

"As part of the plan, the National Solar Mission aims to promote solar energy for power generation and other uses to make solar energy competitive with fossil fuel-based options. Solar capacity in India increased from 2.6 gigawatts in March 2014 to 30 gigawatts in July 2019, achieving its target of 20 gigawatts four years ahead of schedule. In 2019, India ranked fifth for installed solar capacity," the report said. PTI



An official marks a voter's finger with ink after he cast his ballot during the phase VII of DDC polls in Bandipora on Wednesday.— KO Photo: Abid Bhat

Owaisi Seeks To Gain Foothold In Uttar Pradesh; Meets SBSP Chief OP Rajbhar

After his party's good showing in the recently-concluded Bihar assembly polls, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi is looking to gain a foothold in the politically crucial state of Uttar Pradesh. Owaisi met Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief Om Prakash Rajbhar, a former BJP ally, in Lucknow on Wednesday.

"We got a lot of confidence from our success in Bihar, and we will continue that momentum," Owaisi told reporters after their meeting in Lucknow.

Rajbhar said, "Till yesterday, people used to say that O.P. Rajbhar is all alone, and what can he do? Now, why are they feeling the pain? Now, Owaisiji has come, we will show our power to the heavyweight," he said.

Referring to the Bhaagdaari

Sankalp Morcha, a front of smaller parties in the state formed about a year ago, Rajbhar said, "we will contest the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections together."

Besides SBSP, the Bhaagdaari Sankalp Morcha, former BSP leader Babu Singh Kushwaha's Jan Adhikar Party, Babu Ram Pal-led Rashtra Uday Party, Anil Singh Chauhan-led Janta Kranti Party and Premchand Prajapati-led Rashtriya Upekshit Samaj Party are part of the front.

The meeting between the two leaders comes a day after the Aam Aadmi Party announced that it will contest the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls in 2022. In the recently concluded Bihar elections, the AIMIM won five seats (it contested 20) in the Muslim-dominated Seemanchal region on

the border of West Bengal.

"Rajbhar ji too has a role in the success we got in Bihar. We are part of the Grand Democratic Secular Alliance. We got a lot of confidence from the success in Bihar, and we will continue that momentum," Owaisi said.

When asked if it is necessary for smaller parties to come together to take on the BJP, Rajbhar said, "We have formed the Bhaagdaari Sankalp Morcha to ensure our victory. We are fighting for education, health and jobs."

Asked about rivals' constant attack on the Owaisi-led party by calling it a vote-splitter, Rajbhar said, "We want that Owaisiji splits the votes of his community, Rajbhar splits those of his, and Krishna Patel (of Apna Dal) of her community. Let these all votes get

accumulated and ensure our win."

Meanwhile, Owaisi also hit out at Trinamool Congress supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over her comments on Tuesday that the BJP was allegedly trying to import the AIMIM to that state to sharpen the communal polarisation and divide the Hindu-Muslim votes among themselves.

He said Banerjee was part of the BJP-led NDA when the 2002 Gujarat riots happened.

"Till now Mamata Banerjee has only met obedient Mir Jaffers (who betrayed Nawab Siraj-ud-Daullah) and Mir Sadiqs (who allegedly betrayed Tipu Sultan during the Siege of Seringapatam, paving the way for a British victory). She is yet to come face-to-face with a good Muslim, and it will happen," Owaisi said.

JEE-Mains to be held four times a year starting 2021, first round in Feb

Will Be Followed By Rounds In March, April And May

NEW DELHI, DEC 16: The JEE-Mains exam for admission to engineering colleges will be held four times a year starting 2021 to offer flexibility to students and a chance to improve their scores, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank announced on Wednesday.

The first edition of the exam will be held from February 23 to 26, followed by rounds in March, April and May.

"We have examined the suggestions received from students and various quarters and it has been decided that JEE-Mains will be held in four sessions in February, March, April and May," Nishank said. "The first session will be held from February 23-26 and the results will be declared within five days from the last date of exams," he said.

"The move will ensure that students don't miss out on opportunities due to clash of exams or due to the COVID-19 situation at present," he added.

Nishank also said students will be given a choice to answer 75 questions (25 each in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics) out of 90 (30 each in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics)—PTI

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