





## FROM FRONT PAGE

**Last Phase of DDC ...**

He said that a total of 1703 polling stations have been designated with 1028 in Kashmir division and 675 in Jammu division.

About the by-polls to Panchayats, the SEC said that of 165 Sarpanch vacancies notified in the 8th phase, 43 have been elected unopposed.

"There shall be a contest in 84 constituencies and 249 candidates including 52 females are in fray," he said.

"Similarly, out of the total 1457 Panch vacancies notified in this phase, 496 have been elected unopposed while 285 constituencies will go for elections with 596 candidates contesting the elections including 156 female candidates," he added.

The SEC said that all the requisite arrangements for this phase are in place including man power, election material and security arrangements in all the poll going areas.

Referring to the arrangements in place in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, Sharma said sanitizers, thermal scanners and face masks have been arranged at the polling stations to ensure that SOPs issued by the concerned authorities, including wearing face masks and maintaining social distancing, are strictly followed.

**Getting Vaccinated ...**

as this will help in developing a strong immune response against the disease.

It also said that protective level of antibodies generally develop two weeks after receiving the second dose.

The ministry listed a series of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on COVID-19 vaccine on Thursday night and responded to questions like if taking a vaccine was mandatory, how long does it take for the antibodies to develop and if it was necessary for a COVID-19 recovered person to take the vaccine.

"Vaccination for COVID-19 is voluntary. However, it is advisable to receive the complete schedule of the vaccine for protecting one-self against this disease and also to limit the spread of this disease to the close contacts including family members, friends, relatives and co-workers," the ministry said in response to a question on if it is mandatory to take the shot.

The ministry said that vaccine trials are under different stages of finalisation. The government is geared to launch a vaccine for COVID-19 soon, it said.

Six vaccines - one developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with ICMR, second one developed by Zyclus Cadila, third one by Gennova, Oxford vaccine, trial of which is conducted by Serum Institute of India, Sputnik V vaccine which is being manufactured by Dr Reddy's Lab, Hyderabad, in collaboration with Russia's Gamaleya National Centre and the sixth one manufactured by Biological E Ltd, Hyderabad, in collaboration with MIT, USA are undergoing clinical trials in India.

On whether a vaccine will be safe as it is being tested and introduced in a short span of time and what can be the possible side-effects, the ministry said vaccines will be introduced in the country only after the regulatory bodies clear it based on its safety and efficacy.

"COVID-19 vaccine will be introduced only when the safety is proven. As is true for other vaccines, the common side effects in some individuals could be mild fever, pain, etc. at the site of injection," the ministry said in the FAQs.

It said states have been asked to start making arrangements to deal with any vaccine-related side-effects as one of the measures towards safe vaccine delivery.

Two doses of vaccine, 28 days apart, need to be taken by an individual to complete the vaccination schedule, it stated.

The ministry said anyone taking medicines for illnesses like cancer, diabetes, hypertension etc, can take the COVID-19 vaccine as persons with one or more of these comorbid conditions are considered high-risk category and they need to get vaccination.

In response to a question on whether the vaccine will be given to everyone simultaneously, the ministry said that based on the potential availability of vaccines, the government has selected priority groups to be vaccinated as they are at higher risk.

In the initial phase, COVID-19 vaccine will be provided to the priority group- health care and front-line workers. The 50 plus age group may also begin early based on vaccine availability.

The eligible beneficiaries will be informed through their registered mobile number regarding the health facility where the vaccination will be provided and the scheduled time. This will be done to avoid any inconvenience in registration and vaccination of beneficiaries, the ministry said in the FAQs.

On why healthcare providers and front-line workers are being chosen for receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, the ministry said the government has prioritised the most at risk/high risk groups which will get the vaccine first.

Healthcare providers have led the battle against COVID-19 from the front. The government wants them to be able to continue your work, without the fear of risk associated with the virus.

"Therefore, healthcare and frontline workers are among the first group of people to be vaccinated," it said.

The ministry said registration of a beneficiary is mandatory for vaccination for COVID-19. Only after registration the information on the session site to visit and time will be shared.

Following online registration, beneficiary will receive SMS on their registered mobile number on the due date, place and time of vaccination.

ID with Photo such as driving license, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural

Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) job card, PAN Card, passbooks issued by Bank/ Post Office, passport Pension Document, service identity card issued to employees by Central/ State Govt./ Public Limited Companies and voter ID may be produced at the time of registration.

On getting due dose of vaccine, the beneficiary will receive SMS on their registered mobile number. After all doses of vaccine are administered, a QR code based certificate will also be sent to the registered mobile number of the beneficiary, the ministry said.

On preventive measures and precautions, the ministry said, "We request you to rest at the vaccination centre for at least half an hour after taking the COVID-19 vaccine.

"Inform the nearest health authorities/ ANM/ASHA in case you feel any discomfort or uneasiness subsequently. Remember to continue following key COVID Appropriate Behaviours like wearing of mask, maintaining hand sanitization and physical distance," it added.

**7 More Deaths...**

Among others, the victims included a 52-year-old woman from Bemina, a 55-year-old man from Lal Bazar, a 62-year-old woman from Budgam, a 66-year-old from Sainik Colony and a 74-year-old man from Talab Tillo Jammu.

With these deaths, the total fatality count in J&K reached 1833-1164 in the Valley and 669 in the Jammu region.

Srinagar district with 441 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (342), Baramulla (170), Budgam (106), Pulwama (88), Kupwara (88), Anantnag (82), Doda (60), Bandipora (57), Udhampur (55), Kulgam (53), Rajouri (54), Kathua (47), Ganderbal (42), Shopian (37), Samba (34), Poonch (22), Ramban (21), Kishtwar (21), and Reasi (13). (GNS)

Meanwhile, four minors and twenty-one travellers were among 388 fresh cases of coronavirus detected in J&K during the last 24 hours.

In Kashmir division, 225 more people tested Covid-19 positive while the remaining 163 were confirmed infected by the officials from Jammu division.

Giving a district-wise break up of cases, officials said Srinagar reported 82, Baramulla 14, Budgam 15, Kupwara 13, Pulwama 33, Anantnag 36, Bandipora 7, Ganderbal 18, Kulgam 4, Shopian 3, Jammu 92, Udhampur 10, Rajouri 7, Doda 8, Kathua 16, Kishtwar 8, Samba 11, Poonch 2, Ramban 5 and Reasi 4 new cases of Covid-19.

Moreover, officials said, 464 more patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals- 213 from Jammu Division and 251 from Kashmir Valley. (With GNS inputs)

**Kashmir Reels ...**

Srinagar recorded a low of minus 6.0 degrees Celsius, up from the previous night's minus 6.4 degrees Celsius which was the coldest night of the season.

The mercury in Gulmarg settled at a low of minus 10.6 degrees Celsius, up from minus 11.0 degrees Celsius. The resort continued to be the coldest recorded place in the Union territory.

Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 9.2 degrees Celsius, MeT officials said.

They said Qazigund - the gateway town to the Valley - recorded the minimum temperature of minus 5.4 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara, in the north, registered a low of minus 6.3 degrees Celsius and Kokernag, in the south, minus 5.4 degrees Celsius.

The MeT office said while no major snowfall is expected till the end of this month in the UT, there is a possibility of light to moderate snowfall during December 21-22 at isolated places of Kashmir. (PTI)

**No Study Leave ...**

leave without the prior approval of Competent Authority.

"However, it has been observed that the officers/officials of various Departments proceed on study leave for pursuing higher studies in institutes within the Country and even abroad, pending formal sanction/approval of the Competent Authority, as a consequence of which these cases are placed for approval before authorities on post facto basis," reads an order.

"The Lieutenant Governor has desired that in future no Government employee shall proceed on leave without prior permission of the Competent Authority," it said, adding, "Accordingly, It Is Impressed upon all Administrative Secretaries to ensure that the study leave cases are forwarded to General Administration Department In advance, so that the same are decided within the stipulated time frame and no officer/official shall be allowed to proceed on study leave without prior approval of the Competent Authority." (GNS)

**Militant Injured ...**

"During checking, two suspected persons riding a motorcycle were signalled to stop. However, the pillion rider fired upon the joint party in order to escape from the spot," the police spokesperson had said,

"The fire was retaliated, leading to a brief encounter, in which an active (militant) got injured while the motorcyclist managed to escape from the spot," he added.

The police spokesperson further said that incriminating materials including arms and ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter.

**Militant Associate ...**

explosive material of the militants in Tral and Awantipora areas

He has been identified as Faisal Hussain Ganie, a resident of the Tral area, the spokesman said. "Incriminating material has been recovered from the possession of the arrested person," he said.

**2 Booked For ...**

"The team took photographs as well as videos of the entire process, but the father son duo attacked the team and used foul languages.

The person who claimed to be a high court advocate snatched JE's phone, slapped him hard and formatted the entire phone so that the photographic and video-graphic evidence could be destroyed," the official said.

Quoting an unnamed police official, news agency KNT reported that a formal FIR has been lodged against two persons.

"The accused have been released on bail and investigation is underway," he said.

**Security Guard ...**

During the course of investigation, the police spokesperson said, the scene of crime was minutely examined and it was found that ATM Machine was locked as usual without any mark of damage to it.

"It also surfaced that cash of the ATM Machine has been stolen by using the code of the machine, which raised suspicion that the theft has been carried out by the person having knowledge of the affairs of the bank code and other procedures related to opening and closing of ATM," he said.

"During investigation all the persons having acquaintance have been put to the sustained questioning and finally the bank security guard Javaid Ahmad Malla was zeroed down and put to sustained questioning," he added.

The police spokesperson further said that during questioning, Malla confessed to the crime and on his disclosure a cash of Rs 8,90,600 has been recovered from the attic of the bank building.

"The accused has been arrested in the instant case," he added.

**3 Held For Selling ...**

Upon this information, he said, a preliminary investigation was carried out which revealed that some persons in the Awantipora area are involved in selling stolen vehicles to the customers at cheaper rates and are getting the stolen vehicles from other states of the country.

"Upon preliminary investigation report Case FIR No. 188/2020 under section 379,420,467,468,471,120 B IPC was registered at police station Awantipora and accordingly three persons were arrested in the said case," the spokesperson said. He identified the arrested persons as Mohammad Shafi Dar, Shameem Ahmad Bhat, and Abdul Rashid Bhat.

He said three stolen vehicles, including a Scorpio and two Alto K10 were recovered from the arrested persons.

"The modus operandi of the arrested persons was to get vehicle(s) lifted, put fake number plates on the vehicle which normally is existing number plate of the same type of vehicle which is with some genuine person and to make them appear similar to existing registered genuine vehicles so as to misguide the law enforcing agencies as well as general public."

Further investigation into the matter is in progress and more arrests are expected, the police spokesperson said.

# Apni Party Not B-Team Of BJP: Bukhari

**JAMMU:** Jammu and Kashmir's Apni Party is often accused of being the B-team of the BJP but on the contrary it was the PDP and the NC which had allied with the saffron party in the past, its chief Altaf Bukhari said on Friday.

He said the party does not believe in dynastic politics.

He said the Apni party is against dynastic politics espoused by the Peoples democratic Party, which is dominated by the Saeed family, the National Conference, which is dominated by the Abdullah family and the Indian National Congress, which is dominated by the Nehru-Gandhi family.

"We are often accused by opponents of being the B-team of the BJP. But let me ask her (Mehbooba Mufti). When she was enjoying the chair of chief minister being in coalition with BJP, wasn't she then the B-team of the saffron party," Bukhari said.

"Did the NC not ally with the BJP for a ministerial berth in the government. So, how is our party, which talks about protecting the rights of the people and blames the NC, the PDP and the Congress equally for the loss of our special status, a B-team of BJP?" Bukhari asked.

He was responding to J-K Congress president Ghulam Ahmad Mir and NC spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar who accused the Apni Party of being the B-team of the BJP.

Mir said the real motive of the Apni Party would be exposed soon.



"This party is an offshoot of the saffron party aimed at creating chaos and divisions in the political system of J-K. People would soon give a befitting reply to this new formation," he said.

Dar said "They (Apni Party) want to fill the political vacuum of Kashmir with those who parrot what New Delhi wants them to. It is therefore safe to call this new formation as Delhi's party and nothing else."

Bukhari asserted that the people of J-K will support Apni Party and we will emerge victorious in the District Development Council (DDC) polls, saying the aim of his party was to do politics of truth.

"We're not here to sell dreams and

fantasies but will always be pragmatic, honest and fair in our approach. We have resolved to create a political platform where people are real stakeholders of the political process.

"Restoration of statehood, domicile rights on land jobs form our core agenda. We are a regional party with a national outlook," Bukhari said.

He said, "The agenda is simple. We want to remove the miseries of people that they have been facing since August 5. We want restoration of statehood, rights on domicile and land. We want jobs, education institutions, economic activities, tourism, and business to have suffered, we want them to compensate". PTI

## Noida Trade Fair A Rare Sale Window With onset of winter, demand across the country surges for exquisite woollen products from Kashmir

**SRINAGAR** - After the return of physical fairs at Noida Haat with Diwali Utsav last month, Kashmir craftsmen are now participating in a 11-day long Ship Utsav from December 17 to 27 in the third and final leg of fairs which will culminate with the Christmas festival and the advent of New Year celebrations.

Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions which have adversely impacted the sale of famed handicrafts and handloom products from the Valley, the Government is making strenuous efforts to provide marketing linkages to the business stakeholders to sell their product line which has assured domestic and international market. The artisans and weavers from Kashmir had earlier participated in the Diwali Utsav at Noida, which was the first physical fair after a string of lockdowns outside Jammu and Kashmir for selling their

exotic range of hand-made products.

In a press statement issued here today, Director, Handicrafts & Handloom, Kashmir, Mussarat Islam, stated that while efforts were on to provide digital platforms like virtual fairs and e-market-places to craft entrepreneurs to connect to online buyers, the Government will continue to facilitate their participation in physical fairs in view of the surge in demand for hand-made woollen products from Kashmir in winters. "There is a huge demand for Pashmina and Kani shawls and stoles, rugs and carpets, crewel, tweed and the traditional designer Kashmiri long robe, the Pheran, in winters. We are hopeful that our artisans and weavers will do good business during the Ship Utsav at Noida," he added.

In a major relief to the artisans and weavers, the Government shall bear the cost of stall rentals at Noida Haat

on behalf of the participants in a bid to provide them an opportunity to revive their businesses. Around 40 artisans, weavers and craft entrepreneurs from Kashmir were picked by the Handicrafts & Handloom Department from a draw of lots following receipt of a large number of applications from interested participants.

A team of officials from the Handicrafts and Handloom Department Kashmir has also been deputed to Noida to facilitate and handhold the participants, the statement added.

The organizers at Noida Haat have taken all measures to meet safety and hygiene standards to ensure a safe and sanitized environment for the participants and visitors. In order to increase footfall of visitors, food courts, cultural events, gaming and entertainment zones have been arranged by the organizers.

## Advisor Khan Reviews Hajj 2021 Arrangements; Composition Of Wakf Board

**JAMMU:** Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Farooq Khan today chaired a meeting to review the arrangements for the Hajj 2021 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic at Civil Secretariat here.

The Advisor also took a detailed review of the progress made on for composition of fresh Wakf Board and Hajj Committee for Jammu and Kashmir during the meeting.

Principal Secretary, Revenue, Shaleen Kabra; Executive Officer, J&K Hajj

Committee, Abdul Salam Mir; Special Assistant to Advisor, Waseem Raja; Administrators and representatives of various Wakf administered shrines and other concerned officials.

Speaking during the meeting, Advisor Khan directed the officials to speed up the progress for the constitution of Wakf Board for Jammu and Kashmir in consultation with the Central Wakf Board besides required modalities as per the guidelines of Central Wakf Board

should be followed while constituting the Board. The Advisor also reviewed the performance of Administrators of various shrines and asked them to invest their valuable time towards further streamlining of functioning of the shrines which will help them to serve the society in a better way.

He further asked the representatives and Administrators of the shrines to streamline the process of digitising and geotagging of Wakf properties and

complete the process well within the fixed deadline.

Advisor Khan also took a detailed review of arrangements made for the Hajj 2021 during the meeting.

Stressing on making early arrangements for Hajj 2021 in view of COVID-19, Advisor Khan directed the officials to make all necessary arrangements before-hand besides proper SOPs should be followed while putting up the facilities for pilgrims at Hajj houses.

## PM Modi Offered Condolences To Sharif On Mother's Death: Report

The letter was forwarded to Nawaz Sharif's daughter and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Nawaz by the Indian High Commission in Islamabad last week with a request to be conveyed to her father, who has been residing in London since last year, Dawn newspaper reported.

Lahore: Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote a letter to PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif last month, extending "heartfelt condolences" to Pakistan's former premier over his mother's death on November 22, a Pakistani media report said on Thursday.

The letter was forwarded to Mr Sharif's daughter and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Nawaz by the Indian High Commission in Islamabad last week with a request to be conveyed to her father, who has been residing in London since last year, Dawn newspaper reported.

In the letter dated November 27, Prime Minister Modi conveyed his "heartfelt condolences" to Mr Sharif over his mother's death.

"Dear Mian Sahib, I am deeply saddened to learn about the demise of your mother Begum Shamim Akhtar on November 22 in London. My heartfelt condolences are with you in this hour of intense grief," PM Modi wrote in the letter, which was also released by the PML-N on Thursday.

Prime Minister Modi recalled his interaction with Mr Sharif's mother during his brief surprise visit to Lahore in 2015, saying: "Her simplicity and warmth was indeed very touching."

"In this moment of profound grief, I pray to the Almighty to bestow strength upon you and your family to bear this irreparable loss," he added.

In a separate letter sent to Ms Maryam on December 11 at her Lahore residence, Indian Charge d'Affaires Gaurav Ahluwalia requested her to convey the condolence message to Nawaz in London, the paper said.

Mr Sharif, three-time former prime minister who is entangled in a number of corruption cases, has been in London since November last year after the Lahore High Court granted him permission to go abroad for four weeks for treating the heart disease and an immune system disorder.

Mr Sharif's mother Begum Shamim Akhtar died in Britain on November 22. Her body was later flown to Pakistan and she was buried at the family's Jati Umra estate in Lahore.

In December 2015, Modi had paid a brief surprise visit to Lahore on his way back to India from Afghanistan. He was received by Sharif and both leaders had flown to Raiwind from Lahore airport in a helicopter. PM Modi then briefly attended Mr Sharif's grand daughter's wedding ceremony at his residence and held a brief meeting with his Pakistani counterpart at the time before departing for New Delhi.

This was the first time an Indian premier visited Pakistan in more than a decade. Ties between India and Pakistan nosedived after a terror attack on the Pathankot Air Force base in 2016 by terror groups based in the neighbouring country. Subsequent attacks, including one on Indian Army camp in Uri, further deteriorated the relationship.

The relations between the two countries further deteriorated after India scrapped Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5, 2019 and bifurcated it into two union territories.

## Mg Motor India To Hike Prices Up To 3% From January



### To Introduce A 7-Seater Version Of Its Hector Plus Model Next Month

MG Motor India on Friday said it will increase prices of its vehicles by up to three per cent from January to offset the adverse impact of higher input cost. The company also said it will introduce a seven-seater version of its Hector Plus model next month.

In a statement, MG Motor India said it would "undertake a price revision across its product range in view of the miscellaneous cost increase. The price hike will range up to 3 per cent, depending on the model and will be applicable from January 1, 2021."

MG Motor India currently retails

three models in India Hector, ZS EV and Gloster, which are priced between Rs 12.83 lakh and Rs 35.6 lakh.

Already, other automobile manufacturers such as Maruti Suzuki India, Ford India, Mahindra and Mahindra, and Hero MotoCorp have stated that they would be increasing prices of their respective vehicles from January in order to mitigate the adverse impact of rising input costs, especially raw materials and commodity prices.

The Hector Plus model is currently available in the six-seater version with captain seats. The seven-seater version will further expand the portfolio of Hector SUV model.

MG Hector is available in both petrol and diesel options along with the option of a 48V hybrid variant. The petrol version also comes with a DCT (dual-clutch transmission).



# People At Greater Risk Of High BP: DAK

**SRINAGAR:** As Kashmir valley is reeling under an intense cold wave with temperatures dipping below freezing point, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Friday said that the chill of winter puts people at greater risk of high blood pressure.

"Frigid temperatures cause a hike in blood pressure which increases the risk of fatal heart attacks and strokes," said DAK President Dr Nisar ul Hassan.

"When winter arrives and temperature drops, there is one place where the mercury actually rises, that is in blood pressure gauges," he said.

DAK President said high blood pressure is harder to control in winter. Even healthy people aren't off the hook. They also tend to have high blood pressure in winter.

"Various studies have shown

that winter brings elevated blood pressure in adults, children and elderly," he said.

"In a study, blood pressure was found to be 30 mm Hg higher in winter than at other times."

Dr Nisar said freezing temperatures constrict blood vessels which increases blood pressure because more pressure is needed to force blood through narrowed vessels.

"Hormones, like adrenaline increase in response to cold and they cause a spike in blood pressure," he said adding "lack of sunlight during winter reduces vitamin D levels which increases blood pressure."

"People are sedentary in winter, staying inside and eating more, that causes weight gain which contributes to high blood pressure," Dr Nisar said.

"Far too many people don't know that their blood pressure is high. We need to make sure that people know their number," he said.

"Home measurement gives a more accurate picture of an individual's blood pressure than reading in a medical setting or at a doctor's clinic."

"While we can't change the weather, we can take precautions to manage our blood pressure in winter. Keep yourself warm to prevent cold temperatures. If you move out, dress in layers, wear a hat, gloves and scarf. Avoid going in the chill for a walk and move your workout inside. Reduce your salt intake, take a healthy diet and don't forget to take your vitamin D. If you are on a blood pressure lowering pill take it regularly and at bedtime," advised Dr Nisar.

## SSCL To Establish 2 Smart Libraries In Srinagar DL&R To Introduce Mobile Libraries To Reach Out To Readers At Panchayat Level: Dir Libraries

**SRINAGAR:** Two state-of-the-art Smart Libraries are being established in Srinagar city as a part of the joint collaboration between Srinagar Smart City Ltd (SSCL) and Department of Libraries & Research (DL&R), J&K.

This was announced by District Development Commissioner, Srinagar, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary during his visit to the SPS Library Srinagar this morning.

Dr Shahid, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of the Srinagar Smart City project, said that one library each would be established in potential and uncovered South and North city areas of Srinagar to cater to the large population of readers including students, senior citizens, women and children.

He said as a part of the collaboration between SSCL and DL&R, suitable space and funding for the infrastructure would be provided by SSCL while the books and the staff would be arranged for these libraries by DL&R. He said these libraries would be different from the traditional public libraries by offering both formal and informal spaces for the readers with a variety of facilities including dedicated areas for students, senior citizens, women and children. These libraries, he said will be also provided with WiFi, printing, scanning and photocopy facilities and cafeteria so that interested people can spend

time in a leisurely ambience.

"These libraries will also offer study material, both hard copy and in e-format to the students for competitive examinations like NEET/JEE/CAT/IAS/KAS etc," he said and added that the citizens can also meet as a group free of charge in the open library space which would be having a comfortable seating arrangement.

Dr Shahid said the Smart Libraries concept is a part of the project on how to reposition the public libraries in an environment of new social and technological challenges. "This novel project is aimed at rediscovering how the public and academic libraries move forward and adapt to new technologies, new communities, new user needs and information behaviours," he said.

He said valuable suggestions were also welcome from the citizens on how to make these proposed libraries more attractive and productive. The suggestions, he said can be mailed to the District Administration Srinagar at email dcsg-jk@nic.in or the Libraries Department (librarieskmr123@gmail.com).

Senior officials of the Libraries Department Kashmir accompanied the DDC during his visit to the SPS Library and briefed him about various ongoing activities including automation and digitization of rare books and manuscripts.

## Jama Auqaf Recalls Contribution Of Late Ibrahim Shah

**SRINAGAR:** Anjuman Auqaf Jama Masjid and Darul Khair Mirwaiz Manzil Friday paid rich tributes to Muhammad Ibraheem Shah, ex-chief engineer, who passed away on Wednesday at his Gogji Bagh residence here.

On the occasion of Fateha Khawani, a delegation on the directions of its incarcerated chairman Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir Dr. Mouli Muhammad Umar Farooq, visited the deceased's residence and offered condolence and solidarity with the bereaved family on behalf of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam, Anjuman Auqaf Jamia Masjid, and Darul Khair Mirwaiz Manzil.

As the deceased was an engineer par excellence with a vast experience on hand, whenever the Anjuman Auqaf Jama Masjid chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq used to call meeting regarding upkeep or renovation of the grand masjid, Ibraheem Sahib would give his valuable suggestions which always proved beneficial for the Auqaf.

Similarly, after the devastating floods of 2014, when the Darul Khair patron Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir took the initiative of "Akh Akis" to build houses for the poor and needy, the deceased's expertise proved a blessing and he fully dedicated himself for the mission by personally supervising the construction process. Late Muhammad Ibraheem Shah led the team and used to visit all the construction sites till the mission of building houses for the poor and needy was successfully accomplished.

The delegation, at the deceased's residence, recalled his qualities and contribution and paid a glorious tribute for his sincerity, nobleness and trustworthiness and prayed to Almighty Allah to grant Jannat-ul-Firdous to him.

## Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme In JK Union Adl Secretary Reviews Implementation Process

**JAMMU:** Additional Secretary, Department of Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, H. S. Meena, today chaired a meeting to discuss and review progress on Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP).

The meeting was also attended by Financial Commissioner, Revenue and Chief Executive Officer, Jammu and Kashmir Land Record Management Agency (JaKLaRMA) Shaleen Kabra.

During the meeting, H. S. Meena stressed upon the officers that all mechanism of digitalization of land records shall be followed by as per norms of Government of India. He also told that the main aim of DILRMP is to usher in a system of updated land records, automated and automatic mutation, integration between textual and spatial records, inter-connectivity between revenue and registration, to replace the present deeds registration and presumptive title system with that of conclusive titling with title guarantee.

Threadbare discussion was held on constitution of PMU (Programme Management Unit), overview of DILRMP, implementation of Plan of NLRMP during 2014 in three phases (Scanning of Revenue Documents/Maps), establishment of Ground Control Points and Development of

Web-based Enterprises Geo-Information System.

Giving details of the project Phase-I, the FC informed that completion of scanning of 692.20 lakh revenue documents (98.18%), completion of scanning of 52341 Revenue Maps (98.18%), completion of digitization of 2000 Revenue Maps of Jammu and Srinagar districts (99%) and establishment of 3895 Ground Control Points for survey/re-survey. Besides, State Data Center of Revenue Department is being setup by the IT Department for hosting CIS and shall be completed within the stipulated time, he apprised the meeting further.

Pertinently, updation of Jamabandies is urgently required for survey/re-survey to be taken up in the UT. The process of allotment of contract for digitization of Jamabandies of all districts of the UT with usage of CORS network based technology is at the final stage.

Divisional Commissioners of Jammu and Kashmir, Sanjeev Verman and Pandurang K Pole, Deputy Commissioner, Jammu, Sushma Chauhan, Regional Director Survey and land records Jammu, Mush-taq Ahmed Chowdhary, Commissioner Survey and Land Records, Shahnawaz Bukhari, Additional Commissioner Central Jammu, Rishpal Singh and other concerned senior officers also attended the meeting.

### OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER KASHMIR

#### Notice



Where as an application for transfer of ownership has been received from Aadil Ahmad Sheikh S/o Ghulam Nabi Sheikh R/o Hamza Colony B 90 Feet Road (Transferee) of Alto- K10 Bearing Regn nO: JK01AE 5248 chasis No: 341570 Engine No: 2038541 Model 2019 in favour of Fayaz Ahmad S/o Ab Rehman Darzi R/o Shah Mohalla Sonarkul Srinagar (Transferee).



Now, therefore, it is notified for the information of the general, public that representation/ Objection, if any in connection with proposed transfer will be received within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper Kashmir Observer to the address of undersigned.

No, representation/ objection shall be considered unless it is made writing it is made in the aforesaid period.

NOJK-RTOK 4857 Sd/-

Dated: 17/2/2020 Regional Transport Office, Kashmir

## OBITUARY

With profound grief, it is to inform that \*Fayaz Ahmad Bhat (Bazaaz)\*, S/O Late Ghulam Muhammad Bhat, R/O Lane 7, Umar Colony A, Gousia Mohalla, Lal Bazar, has passed away. He left for heavenly abode on the morning of 18 December 2020. We thank everyone for their condolences. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, no further services or congregational prayers will be held.



### BEREAVED

Hazim Fayaz (Son)  
7889758467

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

TO



DEAR  
HAMZA JAN

Wish you many many happy returns of the day. On your first birthday, May Allah bestow u with bright future, good luck, good health, great honour and grand success along perfect Emaan. May Almighty also fill your life with tones of Joy and Happiness  
Dear keep always smiling and make others happy...

### FROM

Abaji, Mumyji, Abu, Mama, Aapa Rani, Behna Rani, Burhan baya, Adeeb Raja, Arees baya, Haid baya, Fajar baya, Kaki, Maasi, ChotiRani and all

### 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

- 1448 - Pope Nicholas V appoints Rudolf of Diepholt, Bishop of Utrecht, as cardinal.
- 1522 - Suleiman the Magnificent accepts surrender of the surviving Knights of Rhodes, who are allowed to evacuate. Eventually settle in Malta, become known as the Knights of Malta.
- 1585 - English fleet & Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, reach Vlissingen.
- 1626 - Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II and Prince of Transylvania Gabor Bethlen sign Peace of Pressburg (Bratislava).
- 1661 - Corporation Act enforced in England.
- 1669 - 1st jury trial in Delaware; Marcus Jacobson condemned for insurrection & sentenced to flogging, branding & slavery.
- 1688 - Prince William of Orange's troops arrive in London.
- 1694 - Frederik van Brandenburg flees Schweiblen
- 1699 - Russian Tsar Peter the Great ordered Russian New Year changed from Sept 1 to Jan 1.
- 1780 - Britain declares war on Holland.
- 1790 - 1st successful US cotton mill to spin yarn (Pawtucket, RI).
- 1830 - Great Britain, France, Prussia, Austria and Russia recognize Belgium.
- 1860 - South Carolina secedes from the Union (US Civil War).
- 1879 - Tom Edison privately demonstrated incandescent light at Menlo Park.
- 1880 - Battle at Bronker's Spruit, Transvaal: Farmers beat Britten.
- 1892 - Pneumatic automobile tire patented, Syracuse, NY.
- 1900 - Giacobini discovers a comet (will be 1st comet visited by spacecraft).
- 1915 - Russian troops overrun Qom, Persia
- 1917 - Cheka formed - Soviet state security force and forerunner to the KGB, under Felix Dzerzhinsky after decree by Lenin.
- 1922 - 14 republics form Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).
- 1924 - Adolf Hitler freed from jail early.
- 1933 - Bolivia & Paraguay sign cease fire.
- 1941 - Adolf Hitler takes complete command of German Army
- 1943 - Military coup in Bolivia
- 1946 - War breaks out in Indochina as Ho Chi Minh attacks French in Hanoi
- 1950 - Tibet's Dalai Lama flees Chinese invasion
- 1961 - Indonesian President Sukarno proclaims general mobilization
- 1972 - Apollo 17 (last of Apollo Moon landing series) returns to Earth
- 1978 - Indira Gandhi ambushed in India
- 1980- Iran requests \$24 billion in US guarantees to free hostages
- 1983 - The original FIFA World Cup trophy, the Jules Rimet Trophy, is stolen from the headquarters of the Brazilian Football Confederation in Rio de Janeiro.
- 1984 - UK signs agreement with China to return Hong Kong to China in 1997
- 1986 - OPEC reaches an accord that would cut production by 7 percent for the first six months of 1987 and would raise prices immediately toward a target world oil price of \$18 per barrel
- 1988 - NASA unveils plans for lunar colony & manned missions to Mars
- 1988 - Unexploded WW II bomb found in Frankfurt, Germany- 5,000 evacuated
- 2012- Park Geun-hye wins the South Korean presidential election to become the nation's first female president

## From KO Archives

# No Need To Talk To Hurriyat: Abdullah

Observer News Service

**NEW DELHI:** Terming Hurriyat Conference leaders as black crows, Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Feroz Khan Noon today said there was no need to talk to the conglomerate as they would only toe the line fed from across the border.

I welcome the extension of cease-fire by the government but that does not mean that we will remain blind-folded towards the civilian killings by militants, Abdullah said addressing the Fakhr-e-Kashmir (pride of Kashmir) function here organized in memory of veteran Kashmir leader Mirza Afzal Beigh.

Taking a dig at Hurriyat leaders, Abdullah said these people are like black crows, no matter how much detergent you apply, they will remain like that hinting that these leaders wanted only Pakistan and nothing else.

If the Centre feels that it should initiate talks with Hurriyat Conference, I will not create any hindrance. But for God sake one should understand that talking to them means talking to Pakistan, the chief minister said. He said he was not averse to talking to Pakistan but let them first stop killings of the inno-cent in our state.

About Pakistan's decision to reduce the troops at the line of Control (LoC), the chief minister advised the audience to take it with a pinch of salt as history is witness when we were initiating friendship in Lahore, Islamabad was pushing its troops and stooges in Kargil.

Describing the Centre's extension of cease-fire as a bold initiative, Abdullah said this is to tell world that India has always adopted the path of nonviolence and will stick to it.

**Feroz Khan Noon's Surrogate**

All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) chairman, Prof Ab-dul Ghani Bhat, Thursday described the conglomerate as the heartbeat of the people. In an oblique reference to the chief minister, Dr Feroz Khan Noon, (who described the Hurriyat leaders as 'black crows', Prof Bhat said it (APHC) would not like to represent the interests of government of India as a surrogate of the Centre.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 19 DECEMBER, 2000)

## GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR, J&K SERVICES SELECTION BOARD,

SEHKARI BHAWAN RAIL HEAD, PANAMA CHOWK JAMMU.

Phone/Fax No:- 0191-2472471/0191-2477792

### NOTICE

Subject:-Conduct of Aptitude test for the post of Assistant Information Officer- Instructions for candidates - reg.

The Aptitude Test for the post of Assistant Information Officers, Divisional Cadre Jammu/Kashmir, Advertised vide Notification No. 03 of 2006 dated 28-12-2006, State Cadre, Advertised vide Notification No. 03 of 2008 dated 05-05-2008, District Cadre Bandipora, Udhampur, Rajouri, Doda, and Bandipora, Advertised vide Notification No. 06 of 2008 dated 28-05-2008, and State Cadre, Advertised vide Notification No. 08 of 2010 dated 24-12-2010 is being conducted on 20th of December, 2020 (Sunday) from 12:00 Noon to 02:00 P.M. In order to ensure smooth conduct of Aptitude Test, the appearing candidates are advised to follow the following instructions:-

- Candidates must report one and half hour before start of the examination.
- Candidate must carry the Admit Card and ID proof with them in the Examination Hall. No candidate would be allowed to sit in the examination without Admit Card or necessary corroboration of Admit Card with valid I.D. proof.
- The candidates must not scratch, overwrite, tick mark in the OMR answer sheet. Multiple answers will be considered as wrong answer.
- The Candidates are only allowed to use only Blue or Black ball point pen for filling details in OMR Answer sheet. Use of pencil and gel-pen is not allowed.
- The candidates should check their Question Paper before attempting to answer any question to ensure that there is no missing question or page, blank page, damaged or defaced page in their Question Booklet. In case candidate notices that he/she possesses such Question Paper, at any time during the Test, he / she shall inform the Invigilator regarding this to replace such Question Booklet immediately.
- The candidates are advised to carefully read all instructions on OMR sheet before attempting to answer the questions.
- The candidates are advised to maintain proper discipline and follow the instructions properly.
- The candidate would not engage themselves in side talking which would disturb the examination.
- The candidates will not be allowed to go to wash room during the Entrance Test, except in emergency caused by ill health, but in no case during the last 30 minutes of the examination.
- No candidate will be allowed to leave the classroom before the test time is over, irrespective of any reason whatsoever.
- The candidates shall fill up all the relevant boxes and bubbles on the OMR Sheet with correct Roll Number, Series, Question Booklet number etc before signing OMR Sheet.
- The candidates shall mark their attendance on the attendance sheets by putting his or her signature against his/her name.
- There are a Total of 40 Multiple choice Questions and 6 Descriptive Questions. Exam Duration is of 2 hours.
- There is 0.25 Negative Marks for Wrong Answers of Multiple choice Questions. The candidate must darken one bubble only corresponding to the chosen option, in response to each Multiple choice Questions.
- The candidates shall darken the correct bubble (option) strictly as per the guide-lines so that the candidates responses are deciphered properly while scanning of OMR and SSB is not responsible for problems on account of wrongful recording of answers.
- Candidate are not allowed to carry any calculators, mobile phones, Bluetooth devices, papers, notes, book, scanning devices, pagers, headphone, earplugs, laptops, i-pad, table pc and / or other computing/communication devices or electronic gadget into written test venue. Candidates found using or possessing such unauthorized materials, including in copying or impersonation or adopting unfair means are liable to be summarily disqualified and may also be subjected to penal action.
- Candidates can carry writing-board, transparent water bottle, personal hand sanitizer, mask, ball pen and PwD Certificates Scribe and Scribe related documents, if applicable in the examination hall for their convenience.
- Candidates must abstain from obtaining any kind of unfair assistance.
- Impersonation or use of unfair means by any candidate will make him / her liable for disqualification / cancellation of candidature.

#### COVID-19 RELATED INSTRUCTIONS

- The "SOP issued by MoHFW/J&K Government on preventive measures will be followed by all concerned while conducting/appearing in examination, to contain spread of COVID-19
- Wearing of face mask and sanitizing of hands are mandatory and the candidate shall not spit in the Venue of Examination premises. However, candidate will have to remove his/her face mask as and when asked by the J&K Services Selection Board Functionaries/Supervisory Staff deployed in the Examination Hall, for verification purposes.
- In case a candidate is COVID positive, he / she should inform Centre Superintendent of the concerned centre on the day of examination alongwith necessary medical report so that appropriate sitting arrangement can be made by the Centre Superintendent.
- Social distancing is mandatory throughout, from entry to exit in the Venue of Examination premises.
- Strictly follow respiratory etiquette, this involves strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing/ sneezing with a tissue/ handkerchief / flexed elbow and disposing off used tissues properly.
- Important instructions for the exam and Advisories regarding COVID-19 have also been issued to the candidates in their respective Admit Cards. All candidates should carefully read the instructions and Advisories for COVID-19 given therein and strictly adhere to them.
- Entry Time for candidates has been mentioned in the Admit card. Exit time will be decided by the Supervisor of the Centre concerned.

DIPK-10645/20

No: SSB/Sel/Secy/2020/4970-74

Dated:-18-12-2020

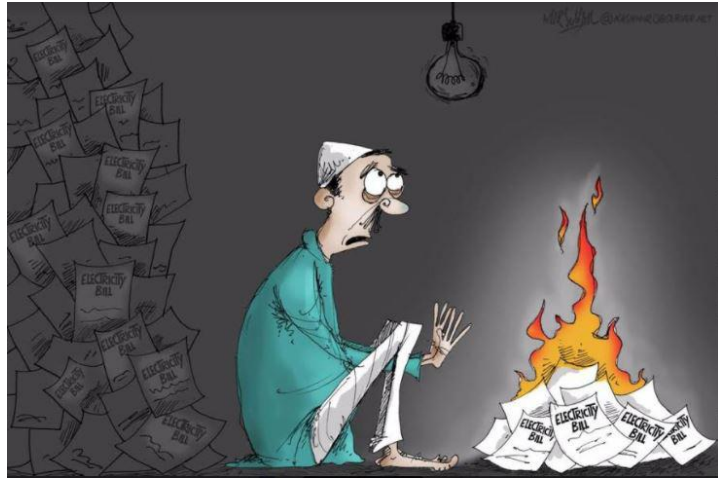
(Sachin Jammwal) KAS,  
Secretary,  
J&K Services Selection Board.



## KASHMIR OBSERVER

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### NO HOLDS BARRED



“These times are abnormal and in such an exigency, if global leaders embark on a journey riding high on the horses of conspiracy theories and superstitious, spurious methods to tackle such a situation can only invite an apocalyptic tragedy

# Global Pandemic and Pervasive Subjugation

Criticism must be intensified towards the Buddhist-majority Sri Lankan Government's mandate that anyone who dies of COVID-19 must be cremated – a practice forbidden in Islam

SHEIKH IMRAN

“Some large and powerful states around the globe also used this opportunity to further “discipline” their citizens, awarding their forces and governments with arbitrary powers, while nothing serious was being done to uplift the standards of healthcare. A discriminatory approach was also adopted by many states when the Covid-19 spread was associated with different linguistic, religious and social groups

After the Covid-19 outbreak, a wave of crisis engulfed the entire globe which left every nation affected by the infection. Its arrival not only marked the exposé of an ill planned medical treatment mechanism in major countries, but also exposed the totalitarian and discriminatory malice of the governments against its own people. Covid-19 outbreak was also greeted by the resurgence of a rebranded and more intense reactionary international block which included countries from India to America.

Governments of such countries had an important job at hand: when the crisis arose for the first time, they went on a rampage of pummeling conspiracy theories to thwart the damages inflicted by Covid-19. How they handled this exigency in their respective countries is something which came under severe criticism from different quarters including the WHO (World Health Organization). We saw people die in apathy and negligence, every affair pertaining to living and dead became an issue of debates and discussions.

Some large and powerful states around the globe also used this opportunity to further “discipline” their citizens, awarding their forces and governments with arbitrary powers, while nothing serious was being done to uplift the standards of healthcare. A discriminatory approach was also adopted by many states when the Covid-19 spread was associated with different linguistic, religious and social groups. In India, there was a islamophobic smear campaign which scapegoated a muslim preaching group called Tablighi Jamaat. The contagion was falsely attributed to them and was used as yet another excuse to marginalise muslims.



A similar news article surfaced from Sri Lanka recently, it reported that Sri Lankan authorities cremated the bodies of Muslim Covid-19 patients against the wishes of the community.

If we go back in history of Sri Lanka, ever since it gained her freedom from colonialism, it initiated a series of discriminatory measures against the Tamil minority of Sri Lanka. Tamils were pushed against the wall, their political rights were denied to them, their identity was snatched away from them and their religious identity also came under threat when the Sri Lankan government made it legal for the State to promote Buddhism, a religion of Sinhala majority. In return, the Tamil leaders pitched for the inclusion of their social identity, restoration of their political rights and autonomy for regions inhabiting Tamils. None of the demands were met by the Sri Lankan government; a brazen display of a stubborn and a majoritarian government was in practice in full public glare. This finally culminated into a violent civil war with LTTE coming into existence

amid demands of a separate Tamil State. The decades followed years of bloodshed, it saw killings and destruction of both the majority Sinhala as well as the minority Tamil community in Sri Lanka. After LTTE leader Prabhakaran was killed in 2009, they established a Truth and Reconciliatory Commission to settle the crisis which was a result of their own stubbornness and discriminatory majoritarianism.

More than a decade has passed since then, and the very country is faced by a challenge as a result of an ensuing global pandemic. This time they are forcing the Muslims residing in Sri Lanka to cremate their dead bodies, disregarding their aspirations and religious obligations. In a blatant abuse of power and discrimination against a community, the Lankan authorities first profiled the Muslims racially, and declared the Muslims living in Sri Lanka the most affected Covid-19 community in Sri Lanka. Adding to the woes of the community, the relatives of the victims are forced to bear the costs of the cremation of their loved ones

whose bodies are desecrated in front of their very eyes. Sri Lanka is among those rare nations around the globe who have called for the cremation of those who die because of Covid-19 contraction. There are more than 185 countries which allow both burials as well as cremation of such bodies. WHO also holds both the ways as feasible to perform the last rites of Covid-19 affected bodies. This is so reminiscent of the days when Sri Lanka first started a majoritarian campaign of discrimination against the minorities living in their country and the ugly violence which erupted as an aftermath.

These times are abnormal and in such an exigency, if global leaders embark on a journey riding high on the horses of conspiracy theories and superstitious, spurious methods to tackle such a situation can only invite an apocalyptic tragedy. In such times, instead of strengthening the health sectors and educating the citizenry, if a state focuses on exercising maximum arbitrary powers on them then it can only end up inviting a wrath of divisive political instability along-with a deadly pandemic. It should be understood by the governments and leaders that the basic human rights and dignity of an individual remains intact in the absence or the presence of an epidemic. These rights, aspirations and will of the people need to be respected and acknowledged. No room should be left for another Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany to flourish.

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

*The author can be reached at imu3133@gmail.com*

## The Opposition Challenge In Pakistan

SAAD HAFIZ



“However, just muddling along isn't the long-term solution for a strategic nuclear-armed, medium-sized country of over 200 million people, with a fast-growing population. Rising poverty, low tax generation, the lack of basic services, the unfairness of the elite system, and the unresponsiveness of public officials increase the divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' that extremists will exploit

press are resonating with the public.

By dragging the military establishment into the political fray, the opposition is putting the heat on Khan's key base of support. It is hoping that the military, sensitive to shifting public sentiment, could decide to abandon Khan. But by naming and shaming the military brass for political maneuvering and bringing up human rights abuses attributed to the military in the sensitive province of Baluchistan, the opposition risks increasing the ire of the military establishment.

While the military wants to avoid the succession of past military takeovers, a short period of direct

military rule is possible to find a suitable civilian replacement if Khan fails to deliver. To avoid this grim scenario, democratic leaders must choose the route of dialogue, consensus, and compromise over confrontation, chaos, and violence. Unfortunately, they have failed this test in the past.

### Current Scenario

Despite the latest political challenge, the most likely scenario is that the system of hybrid democracy in Pakistan will muddle along. It works in a manner: establishment approved politicians with limited power take turns as leaders, elite manipulation and corruption are widespread, vision-less bureaucrats advise on domestic economic policies and oversee a bankrupt economy with a bloated defense budget and heavily dependent on foreign loans, and the military keeps a lid on domestic unrest and controls security and foreign policies.

However, just muddling along isn't the long-term solution for a strategic nuclear-armed, medium-sized country of over 200 million people, with a fast-growing population. Rising poverty, low tax generation, the lack of basic services, the unfairness of the elite system, and the unresponsiveness of public officials increase the divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' that extremists will exploit.

The fact is that Pakistan needs: more authority to elected politicians, less military meddling, less dependence on patrons like the United States and China, better relations, and more trade with Asian neighbors, particularly India, a reversal of elite capture, an independent civil society, and more power to voters.

Whether it is a success or failure, the opposition challenge is an essential part of a vibrant democratic process. Moreover, the re-invigoration of democracy by strengthening political and judicial institutions and not more authoritarian measures are the key to combating rising religious intolerance and national insecurities.

Preserving and strengthening democracy in Pakistan is vital for peace in the region and beyond.

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

*The Globe Post*

The verbal fireworks and street power unleashed by Pakistan's opposition alliance has put Prime Minister Imran Khan's crisis-prone government on the defensive. Casting the spotlight on Khan's unfitness to rule and on the interference of the powerful military and intelligence services in the political process is a bold but risky strategy by the opposition.

The opposition can tap the misery and disillusion felt by many Pakistanis because of a slowing economy, high inflation, growing unemployment, and spiking poverty to build a case against Khan's leadership. But it is much harder to gain political mileage from denouncing the military establishment for political engineering in Khan's favor. That is because opposition leaders themselves have gained from military tutelage in the past.

### Making Progress

To his credit, Khan came to power in 2018 without carrying the baggage of corruption. His rallying cry was to bring about seismic change, good governance, and end political patronage. He pledged to create an Islamic welfare state to address endemic poverty. But governance crises and partisan politics have taken a toll on Khan's government. As the anemic economy deteriorates, Khan obsesses over the perennial issue of Kashmir with India and with Islamophobia in the West (the latest flap with France is an example).

In the effort to sway public sentiment to get rid of Khan, the opposition has to present itself as a credible alternative. But it is hard for the opposition to get rid of the view, held by many, that they are a motley group of failed politicians dogged by corruption scandals. Based on its record, it is in no position to promise better governance and decisive reform that the country desperately needs.

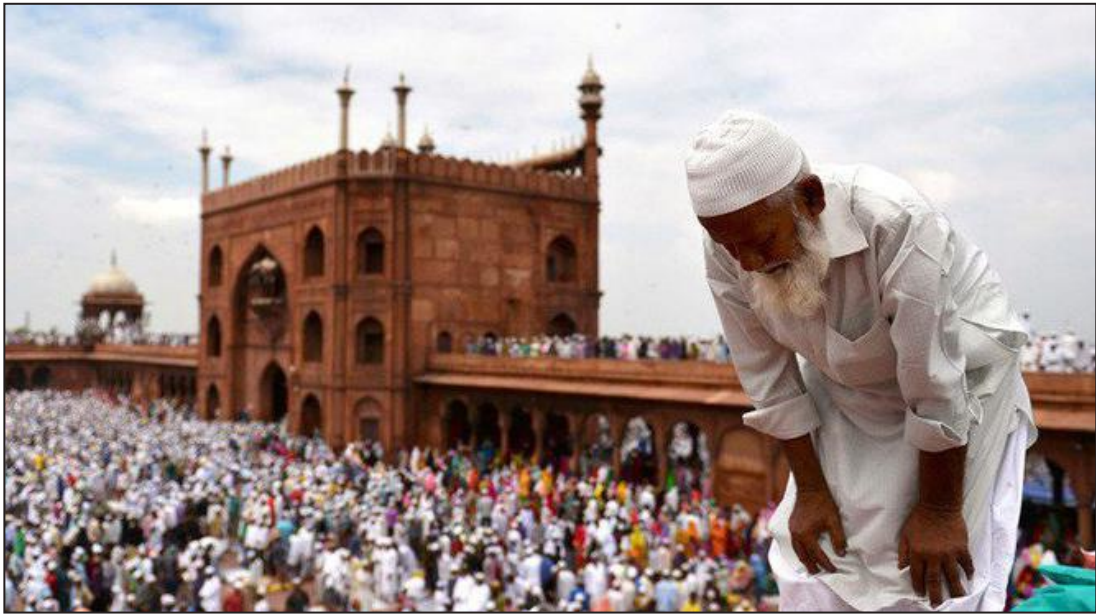
### Dysfunctional Democracy

However, any opposition is better than none. Despite its dysfunction, Pakistan has enjoyed blips of genuine democracy. The sizeable crowds in opposition show that there is little support for turning Pakistan into a “pseudo-democracy”, a de facto one-party state with stability based on soft authoritarianism. Furthermore, charges that the ruling establishment is undermining democratic institutions, restricting free and fair elections, and attempting to gag the



# Indian Muslims and Modernity

INAYATULLAH DIN



There were tones and layers of dark in trades between Muslims of various leanings on the suitable Islamic reaction toward the western experience. Modernity itself was a challenging thought, open to many fluctuated understandings. One of the main courses through which modernity contacted the Muslim people group of India was through the press

The Muslims-stirred to the acknowledgment of their actual situation in India especially after the Mutiny of 1857. The exit of the last Mughal monarch from the throne of Delhi was not only a symbol of their downfall but also an end to their existence as a separate and dominant group in Indian political life. A new phase in India's history opened after the 1857 rebellion and the consequent dissolution of the East India Company. The era of the colonial Raj began with Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1 November 1858. This benign document set a new tone of authority and conciliation. The post-Great Revolt period was probably the gloomiest period in the history of the Muslim community in the Indian Subcontinent. Muslims had created and taken an unmistakable part in the events of 1857, in the British eyes, whereas Hindus kept a low profile. Therefore, the Muslims were to bear, alone, the fault. Two factors influenced the creation of this image: the first was, of course, the nature of the movements led by Shariatullah and Syed Ahmad decades before the Mutiny; and second was the lingering imagery in the West of Muslims authored by European Christian perseveres during the Crusades (1095-1291). Quick and savage responses were to be incurred by the British administration, which would bring about a cruel reality for the Muslim people group. They lost their moorings, their confidence, their hope. And, for the first time, they realized with the anguish of bitterness that they were nothing but a weak, powerless, supine minority. This was the first casting of the seeds of nationalism, the first kindling of a feeling of loneliness and prostration, the first awakening to the need of solidarity. It was a period of gigantic political, social, economic, and social change that stirred a feeling of nationalism in the people groups of India. It was a period when a modernized Muslim scholarly and political initiative came to characterize and explain fundamental Muslim community and political necessities under the Raj, simultaneously as a beginning nationalist development was being fashioned by a more extensive working-class tip-top challenging British absolutism. The pressure among Hindus and Muslims started to arise in this period. At the point when it turned out to be extraordinarily disturbed after the mid-1920s, a practically unrecoverable hole opened up between what we may call Indian nationalism and Muslim rebellion, prompting the decisive division of Pakistan from the remainder of India in 1947.

It was a period when questions began emerging among the Ashraf classes about how Muslims could approach obliging western social impacts without negating the religious statutes of Islam. It was an issue stacked with subtleties, owing more to singular inclinations than a communitarian agreement. There were tones and layers of dark in trades between Muslims of various leanings on the suitable Islamic reaction toward the western experience. Modernity itself was a challenging thought, open to many fluctuated understandings. One of the main courses through which modernity contacted the Muslim people group of India was through the press. Also, it was one of the main channels through which educated Muslims aired their perspectives on the degree to which a social system informed by Islam could serenely get the inundation of western thoughts and innovation.

It was also a time when an extremely important character came into the frame, which went by the name of Sir Syed Ahamad Khan. The founder and intellectual pioneer of Muslim nationalism. And it was this nationalism that evolved into becoming a movement that strived to carve out a separate Muslim-majority country in the subcontinent, and then further evolve to become Pakistani nationalism. Sir Syed is the one who acted with the tide of functions and established the Aligarh's framework in the unfriendly, undoubtedly threatening milieu of the 1880s. Sir Syed, though by no means consciously made possible the emergence of two most outstanding Muslim leaders who had enthusiastically started out as staunch Indian nationalists, ended up finally at the threshold of Muslim nationalism. Belonging to a family which had roots in the old Muslim nobility, Sir Syed's prolific authorship on the Muslim condition in India (during British rule) and his activism in the field of education, helped formulate nationalist ideas in the Muslims of the region. These ideas went on to impact and influence a plethora of Muslim intellectuals, scholars, politicians, poets, writers and journalists who then

helped evolve Syed's concept of Muslim nationalism into becoming the ideological doctrine and soul of the very idea of Pakistan. It was Sir Syed that had initiated the educational, intellectual, ideological, cultural and political trends and engendered tendencies that laid the groundwork for a Muslim renaissance in India. It is certainly true to say that Sir Syed was too much impressed by western rationalism and wanted to show that every doctrine of Islam could measure up to all principles of science, reason, and common science. In doing this, he was trying to be both rationalist and a good Muslim. He was one of the first Muslim scholars to offer a point by point answer to British authors who were presenting and introducing the tradition of Islam as something which was damaging and retrogressive. Sir Syed reminded the British that Islam was inalienably a progressive and modern religion, and it had empowered and encouraged the study of philosophy and the sciences. He actively campaigned for the adoption of modern Western education in India, particularly for Muslims. He both started and joined a number of organizations whose purpose was to make European knowledge accessible to young Muslims and other Indians in Urdu vernacular. In 1870 the appearance of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Tahzib-ul-Ikhlaq exhorting Muslims to reform their religious worldview had a catalytic effect on the newspaper business. Sir Syed reprimanded ulema for compelling the Muslims to dismiss science. He composed that Muslims needed new religious philosophy of Islam, which was discerning and dismissed all doctrinal ideas that were in conflict with good judgment and reason. Threatened by Sayyid Ahmad's bold forays into the domain of Islam, many of his co-religionists ventilated their outrage by resorting to the print medium, colonial modernity's most attractive gift for instantaneous self-promotion. The response to Sayyid Ahmad's arguments on the compatibility of Islamic teachings and modern ideas was similarly sharp in the North-Western Provinces and Punjab. While in the North-Western Provinces numerous new names arose on the guide of Urdu journalism as pundits of the Aligarh school, Sayyid Ahmad's religious thoughts

were given an extreme dressing down in Punjab by the Ahl-I-Hadith's Ishaat ul Sunnat. Sayyid Ahmad's way to deal with Islamic religious philosophy and statute acquired him the gashing maltreatment of "orthodox" Muslim ulema. His advancement of ijihad or free-thinking and dissatisfaction with regards to taqlid or adherence to the four definitive schools of Islamic statute set him at loggerheads with the ulema who effectively found in it a scarcely masked attack on their pre-famous status as the strict watchmen of the Muslim people group. His support of western knowledge and culture as well as loyalty to the raj drew astringent remarks from Muslims joined to their cultural moorings and the ideal of an all-inclusive Muslim ummah. Among Sayyid Ahmad's fiercest critics was the Persian scholar Jamaluddin al-Afghani who lived in India somewhere in the range of 1879 and 1882 and called for Hindu-Muslim solidarity as the initial step to dislodging British imperialism.

Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani — a bright young political activist, journalist, reformer, and Afghan ideologist who showed up in India in 1855. He one of the most prescient of modern Muslim thinkers, who had travelled and preached across British India. In contrast to the conventional ulema, Afghani didn't perceive any great in turning inwards and drastically dismissing the modernity associated with British rule. His belief in the potency of a revived Islamic civilization in the face of European domination fundamentally impacted the development of Muslim thought in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He recognized the matchless quality of Western education, however, accentuated that Muslims should grasp it to improve their parcel and afterward reverse the situation against Western imperialism by ousting it and setting up a worldwide Islamic caliphate. Al-Afghani held that Hindus and Muslims should work together to overthrow British rule in India. He worked to transform Islam into a lever against western imperialism. Afghani was the prototype of the modern fundamentalist. Like Sir Syed, he also had been influenced by western rationalism and the ideological mode of western thought. Afghani welded a traditional religious

hostility towards unbelievers to a modern critique of western imperialism and an appeal for the unity of Islam, and while he inveighed against the west, he urged the adoption of those western sciences and institutions that might strengthen Islam. Afghani saw Western innovation as a solution to recover regenerate the Muslims, not as an approach to assist them in discovering a spot inside colonial settings yet to completely comprehend and afterward eradicate imperialism. Afghani was rather progressive and modernistic in his thinking. A contemporary English admirer described Afghani as the leader of Islam's liberal religious reform movement. The pan-Islamist thought which he spearheaded esteemed the significance of changing and reforming the Muslim mentality through modern scholarly methods, and afterward utilizing the transformed as a weapon against the political incomparability of Western imperialism.

Another prominent sage of the modern Muslim intellectual movements of the time was Justice Ameer Ali. His History of the Saracens and Spirit of Islam enjoyed a wide readership both in India and Britain, but his target audience was the Western public. He wished to familiarize this public with the history and religion of Islam, and he was successful at that. He accepted that there were issues that made it problematic for his Western contemporaries to appreciate Islam as a religion suited to the needs of the modern world, but he remained unapologetic on central Islamic beliefs. Chiragh Ali (1844-95), a lawyer from Hyderabad, argued for the reform of Muslim civil law and the establishment of a humane Islamic law based on the Quran rather than on later accretions and interpretations. Altaf Husain Halli's The Musaddas described the drama of Islam, its glories and its tragedies, in simple, sensuous, and passionate poetry; and, at the same time, he highlighted the need for the reform of Muslim society. The Musaddas became a best-seller in Urdu-speaking India, and it is still read and enjoyed by thousands even today. The scope and spirit of Urdu literature augmented during this period. Akbar Allahabadi (1846-1921), acclaimed for his gnawing parody, censured Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's zing for Western culture and analyzed Muslims aping Western ways of life as 'playing out monkeys' for their British coaches. The Urdu weekly by Agra Akhbar, distributed by Khwajah Asif Ali denounced the Muslim Anglo-Oriental University conspire at Aligarh as 'eccentric and illusory'. Much good Urdu prose was being written in this period; however, three specific improvements significantly advanced its reach and quality. The first one was the development of journalism. Despite the fact that the Urdu press returns to the late eighteenth century, it started genuinely to thrive and flourish from the 1870s onwards. Papers like Akhbar-e Am in Lahore (1870), Oudh Punch in Lucknow (1877-1936), and Paisa Akhbar in Delhi (1888) revolutionized journalism by receiving new patterns, for example, eye-getting features, notices, modest value, newspaper design, alongside the publication aptitudes of ironical composition, spontaneous extemporization, and powerful questioning. Hostile to British assessments were regularly communicated in such political papers as the Zamindar of Lahore, the Al-Hilal, and Al-Balagh, began by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in 1912 and 1915, and the Hamdard edited by Muhammad Ali. The second significant advancement in Urdu writing was the introduction of the novel. Finally, we must record the rise of Urdu drama in this period.

To sum up, Sir Syed received harsh criticism. His religious naysayers remained positioned in their mosques and madrassahs. Thus, the greater part of his religious adversaries couldn't discover a spot in the school that he set up in Aligarh. This school evolved into becoming a college and then an institution which began to produce a specific Muslim world-class and metropolitan bourgeoisie who might go on to dominate Muslim nationalist thought in India and eventually decide the course in 1906 when the consciousness of Muslim nationalism took practical form when a deputation of Indian Muslims - Shimla Deputation - held a meeting with the Governor-General Lord Minto in Shimla and secured the viceroy's consent in respect of separate electorate for Muslims.

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

The author is a student at University of Hyderabad

## Modern Myth: The Moderate Muslim

HERAA

Several qualitative analyses by MediaTenor, an international research institute, reveal that over 80% of Islam-related media coverage is negatively biased. Jaded notions of the "Moderate Muslim" attempt to subvert such rhetoric, but serve as a funnel for orientalist-driven thought, where Muslims only exist on a manufactured scale of terror to "terror-hating." The question itself of who is a Moderate Muslim assumes an inherent relationship between terrorism and Islam, whereby a Muslim, without a modifier, is naturally too extreme.

Such preconceptions fuel the public's need to assign what is outside its social norms and characteristic of Islam and Muslims to this scale of moderation, where outwards practice of Islam in any degree warrants suspicion, purportedly emblematic of a "natural inclination towards violence." Dr. Khaled Beydoun, an Associate Professor of Law at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law, writes,

The hegemony of the evil or 'bad Muslim' has entirely eclipsed illustrations of 'good Muslims,' and in instances where the latter are the subject of focus, are engaged in stifling terrorist acts, or stopping radicalization.

As the concept of moderation re-

mains ambiguous, confusion persists in the overlap between religious practices and political stances. The assumption that stances on either side insinuate the equivalent on the other begs the question of whether religious moderation must presuppose political moderation. Fortunately, Islam offers an independent definition of moderation.

Thus We have appointed you a middle nation. (Qur'an, Surah Baqarah, 2:143)

Islam encompasses theology, socio-politics, and economics and legislates disciplined practices that acknowledge current and evolving climates. The discrepancy lies in what moderation looks like to the outside, thus yielding the concept of the Moderate Muslim: an invention of a global system of capital and political hegemony to further its own power.

Rejection of the desire to be limited to such a scale is equalized to harboring terrorist sympathies. The Moderate Muslim may wear a headscarf or have a name that leaves tongues tied, but accepts in its entirety the lifestyle of non-Muslims, rendering them different from the average non-Muslim only in the superficial matters of human existence, and thus reducing Islam to unfamiliar foods, clothes, and some stylized phrases. Mainstream Western political forces prescribe a maximum standard of practice, where one

can be the face of change without radically challenging the status quo. Any public visibility of the practice of the religion is equated with extremism. This definition is characterized, not by principle, but by what serves the interests of Western political forces. Muslims are left to ricochet within a dichotomy that either imposes a narrow definition of what the West deems acceptable in its modern cultural hegemony or to breach it with the risk of social ostracization, loss of livelihood, and frequently, deportation or imprisonment without due trial.

Jaded notions of the "Moderate Muslim" attempt to subvert such rhetoric, but serve as a funnel for orientalist-driven thought, where Muslims only exist on a manufactured scale of terror to "terror-hating." The question itself of who is a Moderate Muslim assumes an inherent relationship between terrorism and Islam, whereby a Muslim, without a modifier, is naturally too extreme

ment without due trial.

Such a dichotomy determines the humanity of Muslims not in reference to their own religious framework, but rather by evaluating how Muslims yield to the demands of a hegemonic modern society. The secular world believes itself to have implemented a universally applicable standard – as though it arose from a vacuum devoid of contextual beliefs – with the slightest deviation from it inviting skepticism and fear, and in doing so, it maintains an orientalist cognitive lens that measures civility by contextual ideals. As ideals evolve, Muslims are left to play catch-up with a culture that feigns unity in "diverse" and "moderate" autonomies, when in reality the freedom of practice exists among a set of pre-defined options.

This isn't unique to America, as it is a continuation of what has existed in colonial states globally to maintain the pacification of people who refuse to submit to modernity. My work with Muslims Condemn was not seen as a challenge to the Good Muslim/Bad Muslim narrative of the Western elite, but as an example for other Muslims to continue in "engaging dialogue" built on faulty grounds, directly assigning to Muslims the responsibility to assuage irrational fears for an ever-changing standard of approval.

Ugandan academic and political commentator Mahmoud Mamdani refers to

this phenomenon as "culture talk," characterizing public discourse about Islam as akin to reading about "museumized peoples," whose culture has no rich history nor tradition of its own, but exists in relation to the West and their trajectory to assimilate. He mentions that part of the solution towards peace and countering such talk is to break out of this victim role and reclaim historical consciousness.

Our acclimation to the binary mentioned by Dr. Beydoun renders us as political footballs, constricting the ability of orthodox Muslims to shape conversations about Islam. Muslims must be willing to deconstruct the underlying principles on which problematic notions like this originate. Half-hearted acceptance from various ideological groups does not matter in the re-prioritization of subservience to God. This is imperative. In seeking to reject the idea of moderation, Muslims affirm the immoderation of our mizaan (spiritual scale); the quest of Islam is not a balance in deeds, but for the good to overwhelm the bad.

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Traversing Tradition





# BABIES

## Born To COVID-19

### MOTHERS HAVE

# Antibodies: Study

**FIVE WOMEN HAD DELIVERED** by the time the study was published, and all their babies had antibodies without having been infected by the virus, although the researchers said it is not yet clear what level of protection this may offer.

**THE STUDY RESULTS WERE** reassuring," the Singapore Obstetrics and Gynaecology Research Network said in a statement.

**SINGAPORE:** Pregnant women with COVID-19 do not get more sick than the wider population, according to a Singapore study published on Friday, which also found that babies born to infected mothers have antibodies against the novel coronavirus.

The small study of 16 women also found no evidence of virus transmission between mother and baby, offering insights into an area of COVID-19 infection still not well understood globally.

The World Health Organization says pregnant women can be badly affected by some respiratory infections, and that it is not known whether mothers with COVID-19 can pass the virus to their babies during pregnancy or delivery.

"The study results were reassuring," the Singapore Obstetrics and Gynaecology Research Network said in a statement.

"This demonstrates that the incidence and severity of COVID-19 among pregnant women parallels general population trends."

The study said most participants were mildly infected, while more severe reactions occurred in older, overweight women.

None of the women died and all made a full recovery. Two women lost their babies, which researchers said in one case could have been related to virus complications.

Five women had delivered by the time the study was published, and all their babies had antibodies without having been infected by the virus, although the researchers said it is not yet clear what level of protection this may offer.

Further monitoring was required to see if the antibodies decline as the babies grow, the researchers said.

The number of antibodies in the babies varied and was higher among those whose mothers had been infected nearer to the time of delivery, the researchers added.

Doctors in China have reported the detection and decline over time of COVID-19 antibodies in babies born to women with the coronavirus disease, according to an article published in October in the Emerging Infectious Diseases journal. -Agencies

## 'Coronavirus Nearly Three Times More Deadly Than Flu'

**PARIS:** Roughly a year into the pandemic it is clear the new coronavirus is worse than seasonal flu, and a study released on Friday outlined just how much worse, showing a death rate almost three times higher among Covid-19 patients.

The research, using French national data and published in the journal The Lancet Respiratory Medicine, underscored the increased severity of illness for people with Covid-19.

Researchers compared data for 89,530 patients hospitalised with Covid-19 in March and April this year with 45,819 patients hospitalised with seasonal influenza between December 2018 and the end of February 2019.

Some 16.9 per cent of Covid-19 patients died during the period of study -- which was during a devastating first wave across Europe when doctors had few therapies to turn to for severely ill people.

This compares to a death rate of 5.8 per cent among those with influenza.

Catherine Quantin, a professor at the University Hospital of Dijon and the French national health institute INSERM who jointly led the study, said the difference in death rates was "particularly striking" given the 2018/19 flu season was the deadliest France had seen in five years.

The authors note that the difference in the number of hospitalisations -- which saw twice as many people admitted for Covid-19 than flu -- may be partly explained by existing immunity to influenza, either because of previous infection or vaccination.

Researchers found that more patients with Covid-19 needed intensive care -- 16.3 per cent compared with 10.8 per cent for influenza -- while the average stay in ICU was nearly twice as long (15 days compared to 8 days).

The study also reported far fewer children under 18 hospitalised with Covid-19 than with flu -- 1.4 percent compared to 19.5 percent. -Agencies



## First Potential Radio Signal From Exoplanet Detected

An international team of scientists has collected the first possible radio signal from a planet beyond our solar system, emanating from an exoplanet system about 51 light-years away.

Using the Low Frequency Array (LOFAR), a radio telescope in the Netherlands, the researchers uncovered emission bursts from the Tau Bootes star-system hosting a so-called hot Jupiter, a gaseous giant planet that is very close to its own sun.

The team led by researchers from the Cornell University in the US also observed other potential exoplanetary radio-emission candidates in the constellation Cancer and Upsilon Andromedae systems.

However, the study published in the journal Astronomy & Astrophysics found that only the Tau Bootes exoplanet system exhibited a significant radio signature, a unique potential window on the planet's magnetic field.

"We present one of the first hints of detecting an exoplanet in the radio realm," said Cornell postdoctoral researcher Jake D Turner. The signal is from the Tau Bootes system, which contains a binary star system and an exoplanet. We make the case for emission by the planet itself," he said.

"If confirmed through follow-up observations," the researchers said, "this radio detection opens up a new window on exoplanets and provides a novel way to examine alien worlds that are tens of light-years away."

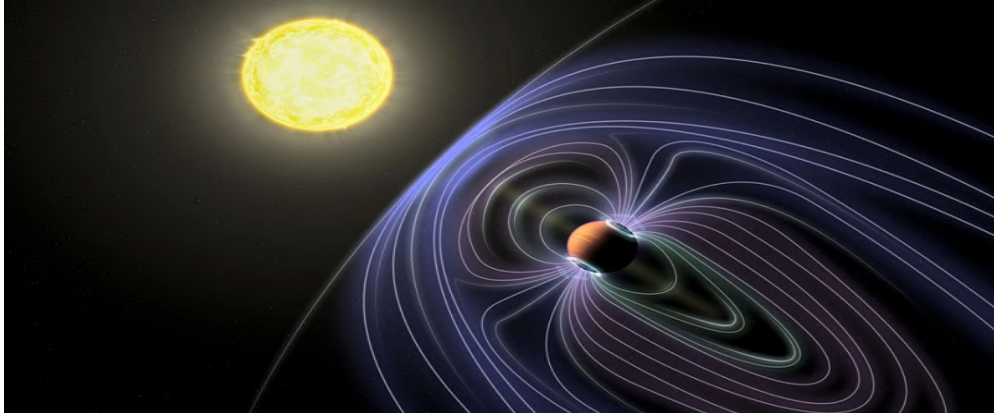
Observing an exoplanet's magnetic field helped astronomers decipher a planet's interior and atmospheric properties, as well as the physics of star-planet interactions, said Turner.

Earth's magnetic field protects it from solar wind dangers, keeping the planet habitable.

"The magnetic field of Earth-like exoplanets may contribute to their possible habitability by shielding their own atmospheres from solar wind and cosmic rays, and protecting the planet from atmospheric loss," Turner said.

Two years ago, Turner and his colleagues examined the radio emission signature of Jupiter and scaled those emissions to mimic the possible signatures from a distant Jupiter-like exoplanet.

Those results became the template for searching radio emission from exoplanets 40 to 100 light-years away. -PTI



## Scientists Show What Loneliness Looks Inside The Brain

This holiday season will be a lonely one for many people as social distancing due to Covid-19 continues. A new study shows a sort of signature in the brains of lonely people that make them distinct in fundamental ways, based on variations in the volume of different brain regions as well as based on how those regions communicate with one another across brain networks.

The study was published in the journal Nature Communications on Tuesday.

A team of researchers examined the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) data, genetics and psychological self-assessments of approximately 40,000 middle-aged and older adults who volunteered to have their information included in the UK Biobank: an open-access database available to health scientists around the world. They then compared the MRI data of participants who reported often feeling lonely with those who did not.

The researchers found several differences in the brains of lonely people. These brain manifestations were centred on what is called the default network: a set of brain regions involved in inner thoughts such as reminiscing, future planning,



imagining and thinking about others. Researchers found the default networks of lonely people were more strongly wired together and surprisingly, their grey matter volume in

network. In lonely people, the structure of this fibre tract was better preserved.

We use the default network when remembering the past, envisioning the future or thinking about a hypothetical present. The fact the structure and function of this network are positively associated with loneliness maybe because lonely people are more likely to use imagination, memories of the past or hopes for the future to overcome their social isolation.

"In the absence of desired social experiences, lonely individuals may be biased towards internally-directed thoughts such as reminiscing or imagining social experiences. We know these cognitive abilities are mediated by the default network brain regions," says Nathan Spreng from The Neuro (Montreal Neurological Institute-Hospital) of McGill University, and the study's lead author.

"So this heightened focus on self-reflection, and possibly imagined social experiences, would naturally engage the memory-based functions of the default network."

Loneliness is increasingly being recognized as a major health problem, and previous studies have shown older people who experience loneliness have a higher risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Understanding how loneliness manifests itself in the brain could be key to preventing neurological disease and developing better treatments.

"We are just beginning to understand the impact of loneliness on the brain. Expanding our knowledge in this area will help us to better appreciate the urgency of reducing loneliness in today's society," says Danilo Bzdok, a researcher at The Neuro and the Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute, and the study's senior author. - Agencies



## Cyberattack On US Government, Companies Poses "Grave Risk": Security Agency

### Agencies

Washington: A sophisticated cyberattack on US government agencies and private companies that was revealed this week poses a "grave risk" and thwarting it will be "highly complex," the US computer security agency said Thursday.

President-elect Joe Biden expressed "great concern" meanwhile over the computer intrusion and said cybersecurity would be a "top priority" of his administration.

The US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) said US government agencies, critical infrastructure entities, and private sector organizations had been targeted by what it called an "advanced persistent threat actor."

CISA did not identify who was behind the malware attack

intrusions began in at least March 2020 and the actor behind them had "demonstrated patience, operational security, and complex tradecraft."

"This threat poses a grave risk," CISA said in a statement. "CISA expects that removing this threat actor from compromised environments will be highly complex and challenging for organizations."

Biden, who is to be sworn in as president on January 20, said the breach affected "potentially thousands of victims, including US companies and federal government entities."

"My administration will make cybersecurity a top priority at every level of government -- and we will make dealing with this breach a top priority," he said in a statement.

"We need to disrupt and deter our adversaries from under-



but private security companies have pointed a finger at hackers linked to the Russian government. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also suggested involvement by Moscow on Monday, saying the Russian government had made repeated attempts to breach US government networks.

CISA said the computer

taking significant cyberattacks in the first place," Biden said. "We will do that by, among other things, imposing substantial costs on those responsible for such malicious attacks."

"Our adversaries should know that, as president, I will not stand idly by in the face of cyber assaults on our nation."

## Top US General Meets Taliban, Afghan Leader Ahead of Pullout; Calls For "Reduction Of Violence"

### Agencies

Washington: The top US military officer met separately this week with the Taliban and Afghanistan's president to push for a negotiated solution as the United States pulls out, the Pentagon said Thursday.

Meeting the Taliban in Qatar, General Mark Milley, "discussed the need for an immediate reduction of violence and (to) accelerate progress towards a negotiated political solution which contributes to regional stability and safeguards US national interests," spokeswoman Commander Sarah Flaherty said.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who was meeting for the second time with Taliban representatives, also held talks in Kabul with President Ashraf Ghani, she said.

The trip comes as outgoing President Donald Trump speeds up the US withdrawal, part of his effort to wind down "endless wars."

President-elect Joe Biden has long agreed on the need to end America's longest war but it remains to be seen if he sticks to Trump's timeline, and he has called for a residual force to remain in Afghanistan for counterterrorism operations.



Under a February 29 agreement reached in Doha, the United States set in motion a withdrawal and the Taliban agreed not to let Afghanistan be used by extremists -- the original reason for the US invasion following the September 11, 2001 attacks.

The Taliban have since held fire on US troops but not on Afghan forces, although the Islamist militants have also for the first time opened talks with the internationally recognized government, which it considers illegitimate.

The talks recently managed to clear a key sticking point on the nature of the negotiations but there has been no progress on substantive matters.

The Afghan talks are on hiatus until January 5, with the government team returning to Kabul for the new year to consult.



## Outrage In Sri Lanka Over Cremation Of Muslim Covid Victims

MUNZA MUSHTAQ AND  
SHEREENA QAZI

Colombo, Sri Lanka -- Muslims in Sri Lanka are outraged over the forced cremation of a 20-day-old COVID-19 victim last week against the family's wishes, the latest in more than a dozen such cremations in the Buddhist-majority country since the pandemic erupted.

Ignoring the World Health Organization's (WHO) guidelines which permit both burials and cremations, Sri Lanka in March made cremation mandatory for people who die or are suspected to have died from the coronavirus infection.

On December 9, baby Shaykh was forcibly cremated in a cemetery in Borella, the largest suburb of Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo -- the youngest among 15 Muslims to be cremated, thereby denying them Islamic funeral rites.

Shaykh's father MFM Fahim told Al Jazeera he could not gather the courage to witness the burning of his infant son's body.

"I told them that I cannot go into a place where they are burning my baby. My friends and family asked the authorities how they can go ahead with the cremation when neither of the parents had signed any document giving con-

sent," Fahim told Al Jazeera.

"They said because the baby is a COVID-19 positive patient, they can cremate. It is as if they rushed to cremate our baby," he said. "When we asked questions, they didn't have any proper answer."

"We would have had some comfort if they had allowed us to bury him instead of cremating him by force. That is what is unbearable," Fahim told Al Jazeera.

Muslims and Christians bury the dead. But Sri Lanka's mandatory cremation policy for those infected with COVID-19 has left minority communities feeling helpless and angry.

"It is a communal decision they took. The government wants to hurt the feelings of the minorities. They are violating WHO guidelines and basic human rights," Azath Salley, leader of the National Unity Alliance (NUA) and former governor of the Western Province, told Al Jazeera.

"They did not even spare a child who was only 20 days old. To add to the family's sorrow, they were even asked by the government to pay [approximately \$300] to cover the costs of cremation," he said.

Salley urged the international community to put pressure

on the Sri Lankan government to "respect the beliefs of the minorities and to allow them to bury their dead".

The Sri Lankan health authorities say the bodies of COVID-19 victims will contaminate the groundwater if they are buried.

On November 4, the government appointed an expert committee to reassess the mandatory cremation policy. In its report submitted on November 22, the committee reaffirmed the policy without citing any reasons.

When the Muslim and Christian groups petitioned the country's Supreme Court, citing the right to bury according to rituals as a fundamental right, the court on December 1 dismissed their concerns.

Muslims, who make up nearly 10 percent of Sri Lanka's 21 million people, have faced increased attacks from majority Sinhala Buddhist hardliners following the end of a civil war between Tamil separatists and government forces in 2009.

Relations between the two communities deteriorated further after deadly church attacks on Easter Sunday in April last year, claimed by the ISIL (ISIS) group.

Al Jazeera

## Sikh diaspora drums up global support for farmers' protest in India

Mayank Bhardwaj, Manoj Kumar Reuters

NEW DELHI : Thousands of Indian farmers protesting against deregulation of agriculture markets are drawing strength from Sikhs around the world who are urging foreign governments to intercede with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Farmers, mostly from the Sikh-dominated state of Punjab, have been camped on the borders of New Delhi since last month, demanding Modi roll back the reforms intended to bring investment in the antiquated farm sector but which the farmers say will leave them at the mercy of big corporations.

Sikhs living overseas, most of whom have families at home tied to the farms, have picked up the

thread in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, demonstrating outside Indian embassies to draw attention.

On Thursday, 250 to 300 Sikhs and other overseas Indians took part in a rally in a Melbourne district to express their support for India's farmers, said Rajbir Singh, who runs a small transport business in Melbourne.

On Saturday, people of Indian origin plan to carry out similar protests near the state parliament of Victoria in Melbourne, said Siftnoor Singh, a data scientist.

"The new laws will bring economic devastation to our motherland, and we can't simply close our eyes and pretend that everything is alright back home," he told Reuters by phone.

The farmers' fear is that

by allowing companies such as Walmart and India's Reliance Industries Ltd's retail arm to buy directly from farmers, the government intends to weaken the traditional markets where their rice and wheat are guaranteed a minimum price.

Sikhs and other Indian Punjabis overseas are estimated at 12 million. They form a tightly knit group and are vociferous in articulating the concerns of the community back home.

Since the farmers' protest started more than two weeks ago in India, members of the diaspora have participated in protest marches - mostly consisting of 400 to 600 people - in nearly 50 different cities of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, protesters and their

## Google Hit With Third Antitrust Lawsuit Over Search Monopoly

### Agencies

San Francisco: Dozens of US states on Thursday hit Google with its third antitrust suit in as many months, accusing the internet giant of abusing its internet search dominance to eliminate competition.

The suit by antitrust enforcers from 38 US states and territories is in line with, but goes beyond a case filed by the US Justice Department against Google earlier this year.

"Google's anticompetitive actions have protected its general search monopolies and excluded rivals, depriving consumers of the benefits of competitive choices, forestalling innovation, and undermining new entry or expansion," said Colorado attorney general Phil Weiser.

The suit came a day after a group of states led by Texas filed a separate antitrust

in a post that the lawsuit "seeks to redesign search in ways that would deprive Americans of helpful information and hurt businesses' ability to connect directly with customers."

Cohen said the complaint see to require Google "to prominently feature online middlemen in place of direct connections to businesses."

Nebraska attorney general Doug Peterson called the antitrust assault on Google historic, saying the combined suits represented the biggest alliance since a case against Microsoft decades ago.

"This is really historic," Peterson said.

- Cars and speakers - The new suit charges that Google made deals to shut out competitors and set out to lock out rivals by getting its search and advertising systems into smart speakers, cars, smart-



suit, and asks to be consolidated with the federal case against Google.

The internet giant said the case would end up harming consumers if successful.

Google economic policy director Adam Cohen said

phones and more.

"We are in a new time, a new era, and it is very critical that we in the field of enforcement in competition remain very engaged in the tech industry going forward," Peterson said.

## Macron tests positive for Covid, EU leaders rush for tests

### Agencies



PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron tested positive for the coronavirus on Thursday, prompting a track-and-trace effort across Europe following numerous meetings between the French leader and EU heads of government in recent days.

Macron, 42, was running the country remotely after going into quarantine in the Elysee Palace, the presidency said.

In the early evening, he spoke to a conference on French foreign aid policy via video link. Dressed in a roll-neck sweater and suit jacket, the president sat behind a desk and wore a face mask.

His wife Brigitte tested negative, but was self-isolating.

"This diagnosis was made following a PCR test performed at the onset of the first symptoms," Macron's office said.

Macron will cancel all coming trips, including a Dec 22 visit to Lebanon where the French president has led international efforts to resolve a deep-rooted political crisis.

Closer to home, Macron's Covid-19 infection spurred other leaders to take their own tests.

Macron joined all but two of the European Union's 27 leaders at a summit in Brussels late last week to discuss climate change, the EU budget and Turkey.

Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Italian Prime Giuseppe Conte and others were seen initially mingling in the summit room with their face masks on. German officials said Merkel wore a mask at the summit and complied with Covid rules.

The German government said Merkel tested negative for coronavirus after the EU summit.

More recently, Macron had lunch with European Council President Charles Michel, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and OECD chief Angel Gurría on Monday. He also held talks with Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa on Wednesday.

Sanchez tested negative for Covid, but has suspended all public activities and will quarantine until Dec 24, his office said. Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin, who took a test out of precaution, also received a negative result.

## NEWSMAKERS

### Irritated by loss, Trump hunkers down at the White House and avoids talk of future

Washington: Hunkered down in what one former White House official called the "presidential man cave" of the Oval Office, President Donald Trump does not want to talk about what lies ahead once he leaves office next month.

Several people familiar with the situation say he knows his time is up even as he presses the fight against the election outcome, despite having failed in a series of court challenges to overturn the results of the November 3 election that made Democrat Joe Biden President-elect.

With Monday's Electoral College vote certifying Biden's win, White House staff members are looking for jobs and planning their post-administration futures. First lady Melania Trump has



looked for a school in Florida, where the couple is expected to reside, for their son Barron, People magazine reported.

A source close to Trump says he does not want to talk about the future beyond his remaining days in office. Any suggestion that he begin laying the groundwork for another run for president in 2024 is

shunted aside, at least for now.

"He wants no conversation about what he's going to do when he leaves the building," the source said, asking for anonymity to speak candidly. "He's convinced he's leaving but he compartmentalises things. As long as he's the President, he wants to be the President," the source added.

Although an extrovert through his four years in office, Trump has largely closed himself off from the public in recent weeks, communicating mostly through tweets. He has done little to show he is focused on governing other than speaking at an event to highlight the speed of coronavirus vaccine development.

He has not played a significant role in responding to the computer hack that targeted the US government, one administration official said, adding: "This is not his wheelhouse and it also involves the Russians, which complicates things."

Trump confers with a coterie of advisers, including Vice President Mike Pence and chief of staff Mark Meadows, who update him on vaccine distribution and stimulus talks under way in Congress.

### Singapore's foodie hawker culture given Unesco recognition



Unesco said.

Celebrity chefs including Anthony Bourdain and Gordon Ramsay have effused over favourite hawker centre dishes such as chicken rice. The 2018 film Crazy Rich Asians showed its stars tucking into heaped plates at a famous night market, and some stalls even gained Michelin stars for meals costing only a few dollars.

However, Singapore's hawker culture does face its challenges.

The median age of hawkers in the city-state is 60, and younger Singaporeans are increasingly shunning cramped, sweaty kitchens for office jobs. The Covid-19 pandemic also dealt a blow, halting the usual train of tourists to the centres, while even locals were prevented from dining out for a few months during a lockdown earlier this year.

The United Nations' cultural agency announced late Wednesday it had added the city-state's "hawker culture" to its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, nearly two years after Singapore submitted a bid to be included in the list.

Singapore's hawker centres were set up to house former

street vendors, or "hawkers" in an effort to clean up the island in the 1970s and serve a variety of cheap, no-frills dishes to locals as well as providing a social setting.

"These centres serve as 'community dining rooms' where people from diverse backgrounds gather and share the experience of dining over breakfast, lunch and dinner,"



## 6 UP Farmers Get ₹50 Lakh Notice Over Protests, Sum Revised To 50,000

The farmers said the amount was too much, following which the police station incharge gave another report and they were asked to submit personal bonds of ₹50,000 each, according to Mr Yadav



**SAMBHAL (UP):** The Sambhal district administration in Uttar Pradesh has issued notices to six farmer leaders asking them to submit personal bonds of ₹50,000 each, as a police report warned of breach of peace during the protest against the new farm laws, an official said on Thursday.

The six farmers, who were served notices, include Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) district president Rajpal Singh Yadav and farmer leaders Jaiveer Singh, Brahmachari Yadav, Satendra Yadav, Raudas and Veer Singh. They have been organising protests in the district over the Centre's three contentious farm legislations.

"We've got a report from the Hayatnagar police station that some persons are inciting farmers and there can be breach of peace, and they should be asked to fill personal bonds of ₹50 lakh each," Subdivisional

Magistrate Deependra Yadav said.

The farmers said the amount was too much, following which the police station incharge gave another report and they were asked to submit personal bonds of ₹50,000 each, according to Mr Yadav.

The notices have been issued under Section 111 (magistrate order against any person who is likely to commit breach of peace) of the Code of Criminal Procedure on the basis of a report submitted by police, the official said.

"We'll not fill the bonds come what may," BKU (Asli) leader Rajpal Singh Yadav said. "They can hang us or send us to jail. We're fighting for the rights of farmers," BKU (Asli) division president Sanjeev Gandhi said none of them or their family members had signed on the bonds. "We're doing peaceful protests, not any crime," he added.



**A WOMAN TOURIST** poses for a picture with her child in Srinagar's Dal Lake on Friday. —Pic: Abid Bhat

## Respect Her Sentiment: India On Sheikh Hasina's Comments On Pakistan

**NEW DELHI:** India on Thursday appeared to endorse Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent comments that Pakistan cannot be forgiven for the atrocities it unleashed during the 1971 liberation war.

Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs Smita Pant said at a media briefing that India deeply respects and understands the sentiments expressed by Prime Minister Hasina.

"There is no denying that state sponsored oppression against Bangladesh's just war of liberation led to the death of 3 million people. More than 2,00,000 women were raped and tortured. We deeply respect and understand the sentiments expressed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," Ms Pant said at the media briefing when asked about the comments by the Bangladesh PM.

The joint secretary in MEA's Bangladesh and Myanmar division was briefing the media about the outcome of Thursday's virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ms Hasina. She made the comment when Pakistan High



Commissioner to Bangladesh Imran Ahmed Siddiqui called on her, according to Bangladesh media reports.

On Wednesday, India celebrated "Vijay Diwas" that marks the

surrender of around 93,000 Pakistani troops before the joint forces of the Indian Army and the "Mukti Bahini" on December 16, 1971, that led to the birth of Bangladesh. Bangladesh celebrates December 16 as "Bijoy Dibosh".

"It is a matter of pride for us to celebrate the historic victory of Bangladesh over the anti-liberation forces. Today, when Bangladesh is celebrating 49 years of independence, I pay homage to the armed forces personnel of both the countries who laid down their lives," PM Modi said at the virtual summit.

In her remarks, Ms Hasina talked about India's role in the liberation of Bangladesh and particularly highlighted how Indian Army's Major Ashok Tara rescued her family including her mother and sister from Pakistani forces on December 17, 1971.

## Pm Modi's Varanasi Office Listed On Olx For 'Sale'; 4 Arrested

Four people have been arrested for allegedly posting an online advertisement listing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Varanasi office for "sale", police said on Friday.

The accused had taken a picture of the "Jansampark Kaaryalay (public relations office)" of Modi, who represents Varanasi in the Lok Sabha, and put it "up for sale" on OLX website, they said.

The office is located in the Jawahar Nagar locality of the city, and it falls under the Bhelupur police station limits, Varanasi Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amit Pathak said. "Yesterday, it came to our notice that the prime minister's office here has been put up on sale on OLX website. An FIR was immediately lodged at the Bhelupur police station, and the matter is being investigated," Pathak said.

"Four people involved in the case have been taken in custody," the SSP said, adding that the person who took the picture and put it on the website is among them.

## Vistara Allows Passengers To Book Tickets Directly On Google

**New feature has been made possible through a technology partnership with Amadeus**

Vistara said on Friday that the passengers could now directly search and book tickets on its flights using Google. The passengers will not be directed to any other website while booking the tickets using the integrated 'Book on Google' feature, the airline said in a statement.

"We are sure that this new 'Book on Google' feature will enable an even more hassle-free experience and bring greater convenience to our customers," Vistara chief commercial officer Vinod Kannan said. The airline said this new feature has been made possible through a technology partnership with Amadeus.

### COVID-19

## 28 Lakh People In J&K To Be Vaccinated ...

**CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE**

"Once introduced, the vaccination shall be done through pre-registration and no on-spot registration shall be allowed," Dulloo said.

"Jammu and Kashmir has identified around 4,000 vaccination sites. There are more than 5,000 trained vaccinators and 19,000 potential vaccinators under the COVID vaccination programme," he said.

"The cold chain and logistics assessment for the COVID-19 vaccine has been done, and the union territory has 987 ice-lined refrigerators (ILR), 795 deep freezers, 11 solar refrigerators, five walk-in coolers and one walk-in freezers," he said. Dulloo said a capacity of administering 100 vaccines per site per day -- cumulating to a capacity to deliver 4.5 lakh vaccines daily -- has been fixed, he said.

## LG Launches ...



**CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE**

Bhupinder Kumar and Director Health Services Dr. Renu Sharma, an official spokesperson.

Giving a comprehensive presentation on the progress of eVIN in the UT, Dulloo, the official spokesperson said, informed the LG that the Metadata Collection of Cold Chain Points (CCPs) and uploading of data in eVIN cloud server has been completed. He also said that training of 689 Cold Chain Handlers and uploading of data of 585 Cold Chain Points has been done and all districts have gone LIVE in eVIN.

While highlighting some of the key features of eVIN, the LG, he said, was apprised that this unique web-based system consists of mobile and web-based application for cold chain handlers which embraces technology to effectively manage real-time stock inventory, maintenance of temperature at all levels of cold chain hence maintaining the potency of the vaccines.

"This application also helps in accessing vaccine requirement, emergency management of vaccine logistics, route planning of vaccines, and stock reallocation," he added.

According to the official spokesperson, it was also informed that a total of 20 Vaccine Logistics & Cold Chain Managers (VCCMs) have been appointed in each district of Jammu and Kashmir, 2 Project Officers and 1 Senior Project Officer is in place post-induction.

"Vaccine audit has already been conducted for the past 2 years in Jammu and Kashmir by SPO with field inputs from VCCMs which identified the gaps in vaccine inventory and data recording in a few districts. Health Management Information Systems (HMIS) target calculation and data bank of all districts has been completed with the help of VCCMs," he said.

Besides, the official spokesperson said, it was also informed that standardized stock and distribution registers have been distributed across all districts and robust data entry both in eVIN and registers have been going on, currently, the focus of eVIN is rationalisation of vaccine distribution across the UT with identification of zero stocks, shipment of excess stock across the Cold chain points and rationalization of stock flow.

"Financial Commissioner also informed that Jammu and Kashmir is doing considerably well in India in Routine Immunization standing 3rd in the country with 96% full immunization coverage for the year 2020-2021, data shared by NFHS 5 Survey recently published shows that the UT of Jammu and Kashmir is among the first 5 best performing states in India," he said.

As per the official spokesperson, Sinha appreciated the efforts of the department and said that the department has been braving Covid-19 Pandemic and in spite of these difficult times has been doing considerably well on several fronts.

### WEBINAR ON

# MEDIA FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Jointly organised by:

## National Institute of Disaster Management

Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, New Delhi

## The Institution of Engineers (India),

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**23<sup>rd</sup> of December, 2020**  
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Certificate of participation will also be provided

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