



Maximum : 06°C  
Minum : -1°C  
Humidity : 69%

SUNSET  
Today 05:28 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 07:34 AM



## News Digest

### JEE Mains In 13 Languages

Jammu: The joint entrance examination (JEE), mains is being held in 13 languages including Urdu for the next session in 2021, an official spokesperson said Thursday.

As per the exam conducting authority, National Testing agency the JEE mains 2021 would be held in 13 languages including Hindi, English Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi Odia, Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu & Urdu as per the New Education Policy of India, the official spokesperson. ● P08

### LG Greets People On Christmas

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Thursday extended warm greetings to the people of J&K on the auspicious occasion of Christmas and also prayed for peace and prosperity in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. In his message, the LG observed that Christmas is a day to remember the pious teachings of Jesus Christ, an official spokesperson said. He said that the message of peace and compassion preached by ● P08

### Missing Man Found Dead In Kangan

Srinagar: A middle aged man was found dead in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, three days after he went missing, reports said Thursday.

50-year-old Manga Khari was found dead on Thursday morning in Chattergul Bala village of Kangan in the central Kashmir district, news agency KNO reported. Khari, as per the report had gone missing on December 21.

Quoting an unnamed official, the report says that inquest proceedings have been started to ascertain the cause of his death. He said that the body was handed over to the family after completion of legal and medical formalities.

### Electric Shock Kills Youth In Anantnag

Srinagar: A youth died on Thursday after receiving an electric shock in Mattan area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

Anees Ahmad Bhat of Hapatnara village, a labourer by profession, received electric shock when he was laying electric pole and wire with a private company in Nambal village of the south Kashmir district this afternoon, news agency GNS reported.

The injured youth, the report said, was removed to the Public Health Centre (PHC) Mattan for treatment. However, the doctors there declared him ● P08

### Building Guttled In Bhaderwah Blaze

Bhaderwah: A fire seemingly caused by an electrical short circuit burnt down a building in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district in the early hours of Thursday, destroying its three floors, as many shops and a car parked nearby, officials said.

The fire started around 1:30 am at the building located in Ma-thola village of Bhaderwah belt, they said, adding that the property belongs to Sepoy Mukesh Kumar of Assam Rifles who is currently posted in Manipur. Fire tenders were immediately rushed to the spot, and ● P08

## RACE FOR DDCs

# Gupkar Alliance Fears Horse Trading Post-Poll Verdict

'Government Of The Day Acting In A Partisan Manner'

SRINAGAR: The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) on Thursday warned against disrespecting the people's mandate in the District Development Council (DDC) polls in Jammu and Kashmir, saying tinkering with democracy is totally unacceptable.

At the end of the first meeting of the alliance after the polls, in which it secured a majority (110 seats), PAGD spokesperson Sajad Lone said there were "disturbing" reports of "interference" in the people's verdict and the "government of the day acting in a partisan manner".

The meeting took place at PAGD president Farooq Abdullah's Gupkar residence here.

"There are some disturbing reports coming about interference in democracy, in the people's verdict, wherein the government of the day is acting in a partisan manner and in fact, becoming a participant by directly or indirectly facilitating moves by some people to attract independents towards them by confining them," Lone told reporters.



KO Photo Abid Bhat

### Gupkar Alliance Will Continue In Future: Farooq

PAGD president Farooq Abdullah on Thursday said the government should immediately release all PDP leaders who were "detained" ahead of the announcement of the District Development Council (DDC) election results if it wants democracy to survive. ● P08

Flanked by other leaders of the alliance including Abdullah, he said the government should desist from humiliating the "great verdict" of the people of Jammu and Kashmir as history has been witness that such endeavours end up as disasters.

"I think they should desist from this and not humiliate this great verdict of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. ►PAGE 08

### Winter Vacations In J&K Colleges From Dec 28

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday announced winter vacations for government colleges in the Kashmir Valley and winter zones in Jammu division from December 28.

As per an order issued here, the colleges will be closed from December 28 to February 13, 2021.

Colleges falling in the summer zone of Jammu division will close on December 26 and open on January 4, 2021, it added.

The winter vacation for all government educational institutions and recognised private schools up to higher secondary-level in the Kashmir division and winter zone areas of Jammu division is from December 21 to February 28. (PTI)

### ACB Files Charges Against Ex-Chief Engineer, Wife

SRINAGAR: The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday produced charge-sheet against a former Chief Engineer, his wife and sister-in-law in a disproportionate assets case.

According to an ACB spokesperson, charge-sheet in case FIR No 29/2018 under sections 5(1)(e) r/w 5(2) J&K Prevention of Corruption Act & 109 RPC were filed against the then Chief Engineer (CE) of Urban Environmental Engineering Department (UEED) Mohammad Hanif Lone for possession of assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. Charges were also filed ● P08

### Light Snow Predicted In Kashmir Valley Over Weekend

SRINAGAR: There was slight improvement in cold conditions in Kashmir as the minimum temperature rose across the valley on Thursday, even as the MET Office forecast the possibility of light snow over two days from Saturday.

The night temperature marked an improvement but continued to settle below the freezing point, MET officials said.

The weather has remained dry and cold across Kashmir since the snowfall on December 12, with the night temperature staying several degrees below the freezing point, they said.

The officials said Srinagar the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir recorded a low of minus 3.8 de-

grees Celsius up from the previous night's minus 5 degrees Celsius.

They said the mercury in Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir went up from the previous night's low of minus 6.6 degrees Celsius to settle at a low of minus 5.2 degrees Celsius.

They said the famous ski-resort of Gulmarg, in north Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 5.6 degrees Celsius slightly up from Wednesday's minus 6 degrees Celsius.

Gulmarg was the coldest recorded place in the valley. Qazigund the gateway town to the valley recorded the minimum of minus 3.4 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara, in the north, registered a low of minus ►PAGE 08

## 7 More Corona Deaths In J&K, 291 New Cases

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: At least seven more people, including a 92-year-old man succumbed to coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, while the Union Territory reported 291 fresh cases of Covid-19, including 19 travellers and 2 minors during the last 24 hours.

In Jammu division, officials said, four more people lost battle with the deadly disease while in Kashmir three people died of virus, taking the total number of virus related fatalities across Union Territory to 1860.

Among the victims from Val-

ley, officials said, included an 80-year-old woman from Anantnag, an 85-year-old man from Srinagar and a 70-year-old man from Budgam. In Jammu, the victims included a 55-year-old man from Satwari, a 73-year-old man from Janipur, a 92-year-old man from Gole Gujral and a 65-year-old man from Samba.

With these deaths, the total fatality count in J&K reached 1860—1174 in the Valley and 686 in the Jammu region. Srinagar district with 444 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (350), Baramulla (170),

### PM To Launch Ayushman Bharat Scheme On Dec 26

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch Ayushman Bharat scheme on Saturday via video conferencing to extend health insurance coverage to all residents of Jammu and Kashmir. The Prime Minister's Office said on Thursday ● P08

Budgam (107), Kupwara (90), Pulwama (88), Anantnag (83), Doda (61), Bandipora (59), Udhampur (57), Kulgam (53), Rajouri (54), Kathua ►PAGE 08

### No Talks With India For Now: Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said that there is no possibility of a diplomatic dialogue with India in the prevailing situation, according to a media report on Thursday.

"There is no possibility of a backdoor or diplomatic dialogue with India in the prevailing situation...The circumstances are not suitable for any dialogue at the moment," Qureshi was quoted as saying by Dawn newspaper.

Qureshi made the comments while talking to reporters in his hometown Multan on Wednesday, the paper said.

Ties between India and Pakistan nosedived after a terror attack on the Pathankot Air Force base in 2016. Subsequent attacks, including one on Indian Army camp in Uri, further deteriorated the relationship.

Withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's special powers and bifurcating the state into two union territories in August last year also evoked a strong reaction from Pakistan, which has been unsuccessfully ● P08

### Cross-LoC Shelling Continues In Poonch

JAMMU: India and Pakistani troops continue to trade heavy gunfire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said Thursday.

The Pakistani army opened heavy fire and shelled mortars at forward posts along the LoC in Poonch district on Thursday, they said.

Indian troops mounted an effective retaliation to the unprovoked ceasefire violation from the other side, they added.

"At around 1815 hours today, the Pak army initiated an unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars along the LoC in Krishnagati sector in Poonch district," a defence spokesman said.

On December 1, Border Security Force Sub-Inspector Patinsat Guite was killed in a ceasefire violation by ● P08

### ...BARAMULLA ENCOUNTER

## Footballer Turned Militant Among 2 Killed



KO File Photo Abid Bhat

SRINAGAR: Two militants, including an ace footballer from Sopore town were killed on Thursday in a fierce encounter with government forces in Baramulla district of north Kashmir, police said.

On a specific input about the presence of militants, police, army's 29 RR and the personnel of CRPF 176 battalion launched a cordon and search operation in Wanigam Payeen area of the district on Thursday morning, a police spokesperson said. He said the militants hiding in the house of one Me'raj-ud-din Wani were given an offer to surrender.

"However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party, which was retaliated leading to an encounter. In the ensuing encounter, two militants were killed and their bodies were retrieved from

### CRPF Man Injured In Grenade Attack Succumbs

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, who was critically injured in Ganderbal grenade attack on Wednesday, succumbed to his injuries at a hospital here on Thursday.

24-year-old Constable Mritunjay Chutia, ● P08

the site of encounter," the police spokesperson said.

He identified the killed militant as Amir Siraj of Sopore and Abrar alias Langoo, a Pakistani national, both associated with Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM). ►PAGE 08

**INCRIMINATING MATERIALS** including arms and ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other crimes."

### SSB Trooper Injured In Sopore Attack

Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) trooper on Thursday was injured in a militant attack in Watergam area of Sopore. Suspected militants lobbed a grenade towards SSB troopers in Watergam area of Sopore on Thursday evening leaving one of the troopers injured, news agency GNS ● P08

### Militant Module Busted, 4 Held: Police

Police on Thursday claimed to have busted a module of Al-Badr outfit by arresting four militant associates from Tral area of south Kashmir's Pulwama district. Yawar Aziz Dar and Sajad Ahmad Parry of Larmoh village, and Abid Majeed Sheikh and Showkat Ahmad Dar of ● P08

## Army Completes Summary Of Evidence In Shopian Encounter

SRINAGAR: The Army has completed the Summary of Evidence against two of its men involved in July's Amshupura encounter in South Kashmir's Shopian district in which three civilians were killed and a possible court martial could take place after completion of formalities, officials said.

General Officer in Command of the strategically located XV Corps Lt Gen B S Raju said the Summary of Evidence has been completed but refused to give away any details of the outcome.

"Yes, the Summary of Evidence has been completed and the army



FILE PIC

will take next course of action as per the law," Lt Raju said here.

The army had ordered a Court of Inquiry earlier this year after reports appeared on social media that three youths, labelled as militants, had been gunned down by its personnel.

The Court of Inquiry, ►PAGE 08

## In FOCUS / 'Identity Wallpaper Gone': J&K Bank's Calendar Demise Creates Concern

Mohsin Manzoor

As J&K Bank's iconic calendar ran out of its days at the fag-end of the Covid-plagued year, many Kashmiris term it 'another dent to the already battered identity'.

It was the quintessential Kashmiri wit dominating the calendar discourse amid a torrent of disconcerting events in the frosty valley.

"Many of us joke about it, as how we would maintain our milkman's daily account in absence of the J&K Bank calendar in our home now," said Asad Rafiq, a Srinagar-based trader.

"I don't think this move is laughable. We Kashmiris always celebrated the cultural spirit and symbolic significance of this calendar. Its demise feels personal."

As per the circular leaked on social media sites, the J&K Bank received communication from the Ministry of Finance on September this year to stop printing of the annual calendar and diary.

The communiqué cited the growing digitalization around the world as the grounds for stopping the paper version.

"But after ending their signature household presence, J&K Bank



came out with a ridiculous calendar," said Sakib Hameed, an IT professional from Anantnag.

"This poorly-designed e-calen-

dar is a telling comment on the falling standards of the bank, just like its tumbling shares. One really feels sorry for the growing mediocrity in

Kashmir's premier institution."

The bank would reportedly publish around 25 lakh copies of calendar annually at the cost of Rs 3.5 crore.

"This Rs 3.5 crore was not a liability," Zahoor Ziyam, an online user, reacted to the demise, "it was publicity and love worth Rs 350 crores."

Even many bankers are not happy with the move.

"You can't disturb certain institutional practices maintaining the brand image," said Akhtar, a J&K banker employee.

"This step is like robbing the bank of its far and wide publicity. We must understand that J&K Bank cal-

endar was more than a day and date document for Kashmiris; it was the identity wallpaper, now gone in the rising institutional fiddling."

Such concern is also being witnessed in the virtual world where the demise is linked with the larger institutional crisis.

"Despite being in the state of war from last three decades, Kashmiris threw their weight behind J&K Bank, the institution now losing its say and identity," said Mushtaq Ahmad, a J&K Bank account-holder. "Who knows what's next stored for the bank?"

However, many bank officials are calling the calendar move as

the need of the hour.

"First of all, if people are holding us bankers responsible for this calendar issue, let me ask them: How could you resist a directive from Delhi?" a senior J&K Bank executive said.

But beyond this noise over the calendar, the banker continued, the goal is to strengthen digital operations of the bank.

"And therefore, most of us see this move as the need of the hour and a step towards digitization."

However, not many are buying this argument from J&K Bank executives facing the social media scrutiny over the move. ►PAGE 08





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Friday|25-12-2020

# Inflammatory compounds found in cooked meat linked to childhood wheeze

Inflammatory compounds found in cooked meat are linked to a heightened risk of childhood wheeze, finds recent childhood wheeze. The research was published online in the journal Thorax. The compounds, known as advanced glycation end products, or AGEs for short, are by-products of high-temperature cooking, such as grilling, frying, or roasting, with cooked meat a major dietary source. AGEs lock on to particular 'danger signal' cells in the body, which are particularly abundant in the lungs, triggering an inflammatory immune system response. But it's not clear how they might influence the development of respiratory symptoms. To explore this further, the researchers looked at the potential impact of dietary AGE intake and meat consumption on respiratory symptoms, drawing on responses to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

(NHANES) for the years 2003 to 2006. NHANES is a nationally representative annual survey assessing the health and nutrition of the US population. The researchers included 4388 children aged 2-17 years, for whom information on dietary patterns, assessed by the 139-item Food Frequency Questionnaire, and respiratory symptoms were available. The number of AGEs consumed was calculated from the responses to the Food Frequency Questionnaire. Some 537 (13%) of the children said they had experienced wheezing over the past year. After accounting for potentially influential factors, such as age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, weight (BMI), and asthma, higher AGE scores were significantly associated with increased odds of wheezing (18%). They were also associated with increased odds of disturbed sleep



due to wheezing (26%) at least once; wheezing during exercise (34%); and wheezing requiring medication (35%) over the past year. Similarly, higher intake of all types of meats was associated with a more than doubling in the odds of

sleep disrupted by wheezing and the need for medication to ease symptoms. This is an observational study and so can't establish cause, added to which there is no validated method of measuring AGE intake, caution the researchers. But the find-

ings back those of other research linking a proinflammatory dietary pattern and wheezing, they say. "As several cohort studies have suggested an adverse effect of meat consumption on paediatric airways health, confirmation of a positive correlation between AGE intake and non-seafood meat consumption in our cohort strengthens our a priori hypothesis that dietary AGEs may have an important role in airway inflammation in children," they write. The Western dietary pattern, characterised by high levels of AGE-rich foods--meats and saturated fats, may promote an inflammatory cascade, so contributing to airway inflammation and possibly the development of asthma, they explain. In a linked editorial, Professor Jonathan Grigg, Centre for Child Health, University of Queen Mary, London, observes that a growing body of evidence implicates AGEs in the development of asthma.

## اطلاع عام

ہر خاص و عام کو بذریعہ اشتہار مدعو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ ڈاکٹر احمد میر ولد مریم احمد میر صاحب سرائے واہگہ پورہ بالا اسمبلی ہاؤس پورہ کے متعلق چند سوالات پہلے بھی یہ خبر منشی کی کی تھی کہ اس شخص پر پروموس کر کے اسکو کی بھی قسم کا قرضہ دیا جائے، کیونکہ انکی غلطی کی وجہ سے اس کے گھر والوں کو جان و مال کا نقصان اٹھانا پڑا۔ مگر ساجد اشتہار کے باوجود اب پھر چند شخص نے مذکورہ شخص پر پھر پروموس کر کے اسکو قرضہ دینے کی غلطی کی ہے۔

اس بذریعہ اشتہار رٹائی ہم سپا علان کر کے ہر خاص و عام کو کو بخشد ار کرتا چاہتے ہیں کہ مذکورہ شخص کی ساری پراپرٹی، جائداد انکی بیوی بچوں کو نام پر ہے۔ لہذا قرضہ دینے والے اور اس پر پھر پروموس کرنے والے اپنی غلطی کی ذمہ دار خود ہیں۔

اللہ

عائشہ پروین زوجہ ڈاکٹر احمد میر

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## Public Notice

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Javid Ahmad Shah  
S/O Ghulam Hassan Shah  
R/o Pahroo B.K Pora Budgam

F-KO

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

## OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B CONSTRUCTION DIVISION NO.II, SGR.

### FRESH SNOW CLEARANCE NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR WINTER SEASON 2020-21

NIT NO. 137/CDII/11707-17 of 2020-21

DATED: 22.12.2020.

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis for Snow Clearance (Stage-wise) from approved and eligible Contractors for the following works:-

S.No	STAGE NAME	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rupees )	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	M.H of Account	Class of Contractor
1	2	4	5	7	8
1.	S.C.S-1	50/-	500/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
2	S.C.S-2	50/-	500/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
3	S.C.S-3	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
4	S.C.S-4	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
5	S.C.S-5	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
6	S.C.S-6	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
7	S.C.S-7	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
8	S.C.S-8	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
9	S.C.S-9	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
10	S.C.S-10	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
11	S.C.S-11	50/-	500/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
12	S.C.S-12	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
13	S.C.S-13	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
14	S.C.S-14	50/-	500/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
15	S.C.S-15	50/-	500/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"

16	S.C.S-16	100/-	1000/-	3054-SNOW	"DEE"
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1. The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website [www.jk-tenders.gov.in](http://www.jk-tenders.gov.in) as per schedule of dates given below:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	23.12.2020 from 10.00 A.M
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	24.12.2020 from 10.00 A.M
3	Bid submission Start Date	31.12.2020 upto 4.00 P.M
4	Bid Submission End Date	01.01.2021 at 11:00 A.M in the office of Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Srinagar/Budgam.
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	

2. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Construction Division No.2nd, Srinagar(tender inviting authority) and Earnest money / Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR(The Date of Treasury Challan earnest money/Bid security should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date) pledged to Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Srinagar/Budgam (tender receiving authority).

3. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B Construction Division No.2nd, Srinagar (tender receiving authority).

4. The earnest money in favour of unsuccessful bidder shall be released only after submission of Treasury Challan.

5. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids

6. All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form) and detailed NIT issued vide this office No. 07/ CDII/2011-12/389-414 dated 07.04.2011.

No.11707-17  
Dated:22.12.2020

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
R&B Construction Division  
IInd Srinagar

DIPK-10826/20

### LIST OF SNOW CLEARANCE STAGE TENDERS FOR WINTER SEASON 2020-21

STAGE NO.	STAGE NAME	NAME OF THE ROAD	KMS
1	S.C-S-1	Residence lane from Linz to GPO	0.75
		Poloview lane, Ganda Singh Lane.	0.25
		Lal Sheikh lane	0.10
		Regal lane	0.25
		AbiGuzer lane, Khidmat lane, Lambert Lane.	0.80
		State Bank lane	0.20
		Estate Lane	0.26
		Apna Bazar lane	0.12
		Palladium lane	0.30
		Forest lane	0.28
		Court Lane including Loop	0.43
		Banquet Hall premises	0.20
		Women College M.A.Road complex	0.10
		S.P.College premises	0.50
		Directorate of Education premises complex	0.15
		TOTAL	4.69
2	S.C-S-2	I.G.roadNaaz crossing to Tagore Hall Junction via Children Hospital.	0.20
		Allied links, Khalsa lane, Sharma Tyre lane, Gurdwara lane.	1.50
		Dastigeer sahib to I.G.Road Showed Gali road.	0.40
		Maharaj Bazar and Goni Khan road.	1.80
		Dastigeer Sahib to Naaz Cinema via SaraiBalaAlsaia lane.	0.90
		TOTAL	4.90
3	S-C-S-3	Solina inner roads.	1.50
		Roads of WazirBaghTulsibaghGogilbagh.	12.50
		Road from Women Police Station to TengporaBypass along FSC.	1.50
		Allochibagh road	3.00
		L.D.Hospital premises	0.75
		Bone and Joint Hospital premises	1.00
		TOTAL	20.25
4	S-C-S-4	Road from Bakshi Stadium to Indoor Stadium connecting to Circular Road	0.27
		KursooAramwariRajbagh links.	22.70
		Spring field lane, lowerenceVidyalaya lane, Kabeer lane, Ansari lane, Iqbal colony, Aramwari links, Masjid Musahib, Alnoor colony, Sheikh colony to Mehjoor link, New lanes Kursoo bund, Zero bridge to Grave yard, Widening Huryat office to Kursoo bund, Convent square lanes, Dr.Dhar to Comrad inn.	
		Roads in Jawahir Nagar Inner links/Ikhraipora	15.25
		Abdullah Bridge	1.41
		Church Lane Sonwar	1.50
		Roads at Jawahir Nagar.	2.00
		Bund road from Jawahir Nagar to Rambagh Bridge.	2.00
		Chief Engineer, PWD's office complex	0.75
		TOTAL	45.88
5	S-C-S-5	Inner roads of Bakshipora	5.85
		Bangladesh Bonpora Takenwari road.	9.58
		Various roads in Barthana including allied links.	5.50
		Link on either side of National Highway from Qammerwari to Shalteng crossing.	5.40
		Link at Parimpora new colony	4.00
		Roads in SK Colony including link behind Police Housing Colony	9.60

		TOTAL	39.93
6	S-C-S-6	LawayporaMujgund including inner roads of Laway-pora.	6.95
		MujgundWd inner links	6.50
		Malroo inner links	13.00
		Khajabagh inner roads	5.50
		ShaltengMujgund Bund road with allied links.	19.50
		TOTAL	51.45
7	S-C-S-7	Shalteng to Narbal (Right Hand side/Left Hand Side) including GundHassiBhat	16.50
		Shalteng village including roads from Police Station Parimpora to Pump Station.	7.55
		Links on RHS of National Highway from Shalteng to Narbal.	13.60
		Zainakote Village including allied links SICOP road interior including kolina H.S School link and Hokersar bund	7.60
		TOTAL	45.25
8	S-C-S-8	Roads on either side of National Highway	14.50
		Usmanabad, Galibabad link roads.	8.00
		Khushiporachowk to Abanshah via Dar Mohalla via Estates road including links.	10.50
		Gazaliabad 1st, 2nd,3rd Rose Avenue, Friends Colony on NEW HMT road.	7.90
		New HMT road from Shalteng crossing via SICOP market via ChinarChowk old HMT road crossing at Mustafabad.	5.70
		TOTAL	46.60
9	S-C-S-9	Tengpora including inner links.	8.00
		Roads in Bemina area	21.67
		MadriMeharban Road	0.75
		State Institute of Education premises	0.15
		Revenue Training Institute Bemina	0.25
		Women Polytechnic Bemina	0.20
		Board of Secondary Education Bemina	0.25
		TOTAL	31.27
10	S-C-S-10	Road from Batmaloo to N.H Bypass via Tangpora, Naveedabad, Muslimabad, Abubakara colony	11.80
		Roads in Batmaloo area including Firdousabad with allied links.	7.75
		Road from Batmaloo area including S.D Colony Etc.	17.00
		Road from Batmaloo Bus Stand to Shergari including Magermalbagh.	7.00
		Balgarden Nursing Garh colony road.	4.59
		Shutrashahi colony link road and Neelam Cinema to Secretariat Junction back s ide.	2.34
		TOTAL	50.48
11	S-C-S-11	UNO office viaMalteng C.D Hospital uptoDalgate.	2.00
		Buchwara Old Gagrabalincl. inner of BuchwaraDalgate	4.00
		Inner Sonwar Link road.	3.50
		C.D.Hospital premises and paths	0.40
		Psychiatric Disease Hospital premises	0.30
		TOTAL	10.20

12	S-C-S-12	Inner road of Rajbhawan.	2.50
		Brein housing colony link roads(Sheikh Mohalla).	1.00
		Main Brein link road.	4.55
		PohlooManzgam Road.	1.50
		Baba Ghluam Din Sahib road.	5.00
		Meebagh link road .	1.00
		Danpora link road .	1.25
		Jan mohalla and Mir Mohalla road at Brein.	2.50
		Inner links of KhagiMohalla and Laam at Brein.	3.00
		City Hill road taking off From PHC Nishat.	0.65
		GupkarMamkalooro road .	1.50
		TOTAL	24.45
13	S-C-S-13	Gowmargincl.Hussani link road (Park)incl.CoolieMohalla/Dar Mohalla on Right side of N.F.R road	1.50
		PathanBagh colony road.	0.75
		Vakilcolonyroad at Brein.	3.50
		Zeethyar link road at BreinNishat.	0.60
		Old Nishat link at Nishat.	1.00
		Laxmi Swami link road .	1.00
		Syed colony Nishat.	1.75
		Ishber Uphill Guptganga road.	1.00
		GuddyMohalla link road.	0.75
		Dewanbagh colony road and Karnai link road incl.	3.25
		Tarbagh road.	
		Begger Home Exchange road incl.Syed Bulbul Shah-Balki road and Dreamland link.	2.90
		Meerak Abad Link incl. Fakir Mohalla link road.	1.75
		TOTAL	19.75
14	S-C-S-14	Imambada incl. Pazwalpora Shalimar link road.	1.50
		Bonigam link road.	1.20
		KakarMohalla road Behind Shalimar link road incl.	2.50
		SheikhMohalla	
		Dhobi Mohalla link road.	1.00
		Shalimar Arabal link roads.	3.50
		ChanamohallaKharMohallaincl.Shahdaad link.	3.25
		Friends colony Shalimar Tailbal road incl.Link.	1.00
		Motimohalla Shalimar link road incl.allied links.	1.00
		TOTAL	14.95
15	S-C-S-15	ChandporaHarwan link road.	3.00
		Mustaffa colony link road at ChandporaHarwan.	0.75
		Chinar Colony link road at Harwan.	1.25
		Dachigam link road.	5.50
		LashkarMohalla with allied link road.	1.00
		Sheep Farm road with allied links	1.25
		V.C.Lane Mehdi Lane incl. WadiMohalla link incl.	1.50
		Receiving Station link at Harwan	
		TOTAL	14.25
16	S-C-S-16	Mulnar road incl. allied links	2.00
		New theedGundtalDarra road incl. Barji and Syedpora link.	8.65
		Sarabagh road.	1.00
		Gundtal to dara.	2.95
		AsthanporaDarra Inner link.	4.00
		NagbalDarra road incl. allied links.	1.00
		Darbagh to chandpora via BhatMohalla Link road.	1.00
		SakildubHarwan to Kanibagh Dub road	0.50
		Road from Gandtal Stone mine to New Theed	2.00
		Road from Sarabagh to Syedpora	0.90
		TOTAL	24.00



# LG Holds Virtual Interaction With Public

## Several Grievances Of The Applicants Redressed On Spot

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** In continuation to the UT Government's initiative of reaching out to the people with prompt disposal of their grievances, the Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today held 3rd round of the series - "LG's Mulaqaat-Live Public Grievance Hearing", wherein he took the first hand appraisal of people's issues and grievances through virtual mode.

Through LG's Mulaqaat"- Live Public Grievance Hearing, an institutionalized mechanism has been laid for making the grievance redressal mechanism prompt, robust, responsive and more efficient, observed the Lt Governor.

At the same time, the performance efficiency of online Grievance Redressal System is also being monitored so that requisite measures can be taken to achieve the desired results on ground, he added.

On being informed that overall disposal of grievances has increased from 52% in 1st and



66% in 2nd to 79% in 3rd round of LG's Mulaqaat, the Lt Governor expressed satisfaction over the improvement in the performance and increase in the rate of grievance disposal. He underscored the importance of constantly making improvements in the grievance redressal mechanism in order to provide the people with effective citizen centric governance. While taking a detailed assessment of the performance of

the online Grievance Redressal System-JKIGRAMS, the Lt Governor took feedback from the people on the grievance redressal mechanism being put in place by the Administration. He also reviewed the implementation of directions passed during the earlier held interactions.

The Lt Governor observed that Administration at all levels must put in dedicated efforts on grievance redressal to meet the expectations of public.

The objective of the initiative -"LG's Mulaqaat-Live Public Grievance Hearing", is to hold one-to-one interaction with the individuals from across the UT every month selected randomly, and take stock of their issues and concerns for prompt redressal. It also provides important feedback on the working of Administration thus opening the window for making improvements in the working of the Government, the Lt Governor maintained.

In today's two-hour long programme, randomly selected applicants from across the UT projected several issues pertaining to the augmentation of water supply; replacement of electricity poles; removal of encroachment on playground; pending payments on account of various works and schemes, on which the Lt Governor issued on spot directions for their immediate resolution and set timelines for the redressal of other grievances raised during the interaction.

Advisors, Chief Secretary, Financial Commissioners, Finance, Health and Medical Education Department, Principal Secretary to LG; All Administrative Secretaries; Divisional Commissioners; IGP's; DCs; SSPs; HoDs and other senior officers of the various government departments and agencies remained present throughout the interaction and briefed the Lt Governor on measures taken for the redressal of the grievances received and their present status.

## BPA Approves 43 Cases In 11Th Meeting

**SRINAGAR:** The 11th meeting of the Building Permission Authority (BPA) held today under the Chairmanship of the Vice Chairman, J&K-LDA in at Office Complex, Srinagar. 44 cases were decided in the meeting out of which 43 cases were approved, 01 case was deferred.

Meanwhile, the demolition team of the Enforcement Wing Lakes and Waterways Development Authority, demolished illegal constructed in the area of Harwan, Tailbal, Shalimar, Dal and Baghi Roop Singh. These illegal constructions were raised in violation of BOCA norms and the orders of the High Court.

Moreover, the Tripper/Load carrier owners are directed not to carry any type of illegal construction material in the prohibited area of Dal/ Nigeen Lake without proper permission from the concerned authority.

Vice Chairman J&K LDA who is also the Chairman of BOCA has requested the people residing in the local judication of LDA to apply for proper building permission through its building permission authority, before starting

any sort of Construction.

Complex Coronary Angioplasty workshop conducted at GSSH, Shireen Bagh SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 24 A well-organised Complex Coronary Angioplasty workshop was today conducted today here at Govt. Super Specialty Hospital, Shireen Bagh.

The workshop was organised under the Chairpersonship of Prof (Dr. Samia Rashid), Principal/ Dean, Govt. Medical College, Srinagar.

Dr. Pratap Kumar, Cofounder and course Director of KT proctored the session.

On the occasion, the patients who needed Chronic Total Occlusion Angioplasty, antegrade as well as retrograde approach were examined and the retrograde approach Angioplasty was performed for the first time in the UT of J&K and was a complete success.

The patients with severely calcified lesions were also treated and for the first time Intravascular Lithotripsy (IVT) was performed successfully in the UT of J&K. All the patients are doing well and are getting discharged on regular basis.

## Modern Slaughter Houses Coming Up In J&K

**JAMMU:** Principal Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department, Dheeraj Gupta today chaired a meeting to review the progress on setting up of Modern Slaughter Houses in Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by the Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation, Avny Lavasa; Commissioner Pollution Control Board, BM Sharma; Director ULB Jammu, Asgar Hussain; Special Secretary H&UDD, Showkat Mir; Additional Secretary, H&UDD, Dr. RS Sharma, Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Gazanfar Ali; Director ULB, Kashmir, Riaz Ahmad besides the representatives of Animal & Sheep Husbandry, Police and other departments.

Speaking on the occasion, Principal Secretary emphasized that the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for

the Slaughter Houses should invariably conform to the guidelines of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

The Principal Secretary desired that all mandatory requirements should be part of Modern Slaughter Houses while the meeting decided that in view of large requirement of funds other options of funding would be explored for such projects, including PPP Mode.

The progress in the modern slaughter houses being constructed by Jammu Municipal Corporation as well as Srinagar Municipal Corporation was also reviewed. The concerned Commissioners were directed to strictly ensure timely completion of the project.

The Principal Secretary was informed that an expert Committee has been constituted to examine the Model DPRs for Jammu & Kashmir.

## JK To Have A Network Of Theme-Based Libraries

Secy Culture Visits SPS Library, Hails Innovative Steps Being Taken To Reinvent Libraries Through Technological Interventions

**SRINAGAR:** The Department of Libraries and Research is planning to establish a network of theme-based Reading Zones-cum-Public Libraries in J&K in convergence with various Departments to broaden the citizens' access to knowledge and information.

This was announced by Secretary, Culture, Tourism and Youth Services & Sports, Sarmad Hafeez during his visit to the SPS Library complex here today.

He said the Libraries Department has already started the process for establishing two Smart Libraries in Srinagar in collaboration with Srinagar Smart City Ltd. "Some more theme-based libraries are being planned in Srinagar and Jammu in convergence with Tourism Department, Information Department, Airports Authority of India Ltd, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Department of Archives, Archology & Museums and Mubarak Mandi Heritage Society," he said and added that these theme-based libraries will include special reading material for students, researchers, women, children, tourists, travellers, senior citizens and heritage enthusiasts.

Sarmad visited various sections of the library and interacted with a large number of students who were present in the Reading Room there. He hailed the Libraries Department for providing Wi-Fi connectivity to the whole SPS Library Complex.

Responding to various demands of the students including increase in timing and space constraints, the Secretary Culture announced that another Reading Room at the 1st Floor of the SPS Library would be made fully functional and opened for students. He said the operational hours for the Reading Room would be from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm from 1st January 2021. He said the Department would also explore the possibility of keeping the library open during holidays to facilitate the readers. He also called for making the cafeteria in the Library Complex immediately functional.

Sarmad said the Department would be also inviting Career Counsellors and Subject Experts who will impart key tips to students on how to crack various competitive examinations including civil services, NEET/JEE/CAT/CLAT etc.

He called for sustained and extensive technological interventions in libraries including automation, e-cataloguing and

e-circulation to make them more user-friendly.

The Secretary Culture hailed the sustained efforts of Director Libraries & Research, Mr Mohammad Rafiq towards repositioning and reinventing the libraries in J&K through various innovative and technological interventions. "It is heartening to note that the Libraries Department has of late introduced some pioneering measures to give a refreshing look to the libraries in the UT and make them lively literary places," he said and added that the credit for these initiatives goes to the Director Libraries, Mr Mohammad Rafi.

Responding to the demands of the Libraries Department employees, Secretary Culture said a comprehensive reorganization proposal would be formulated to create career progression avenues for the officers/officials of the Libraries Department.

Sarmad said that J&K has the distinction of having oldest libraries in the region including SRS Library Jammu established in 1879 and SPS Library Srinagar established in 1898. He said these two central libraries have a collection of around 1 lakh titles including some rare books and manuscripts.

### 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- (Open)

## This Day in History

- 1717 - Floods ravage Dutch coast provinces, thousands killed
- 1741 - Astronomer Anders Celsius introduces Centigrade temperature scale.
- 1745 - Prussia and Austria sign Treaty of Dresden giving much of Silesia to the Prussians
- 1837 - Battle of Okeechobee-US forces defeat Seminole Indians
- 1914 - Legendary "Christmas Truce" takes place on the battlefields of WWI between British and German troops. Instead of fighting, soldiers exchange gifts and play football.
- 1922 - Lenin dictates his "Political testament"
- 1932 - 7.6 magnitude earthquake ravages Qansu, China, kills 275
- 1941 - Japan announces surrender of British-Canadian garrison at Hong Kong.
- 1942 - Soviet artillery and tank battle on German armies at Stalingrad
- 1946 - Constitution accepted in Taiwan
- 1951 - 1st Christmas Day in test cricket, Aust v WI at Adelaide
- 1965 - US President Lyndon B. Johnson orders a halt to bombing operations in North Vietnam, hoping to spur peace talks
- 1968 - 42 Dalits are burned alive in Kilavenmani village, Tamil Nadu, India, a retaliation for a campaign for higher wages by Dalit labourers
- 1973 - The ARPANET crashes when a programming bug causes all ARPANET traffic to be routed through the server at Harvard University, causing the server to freeze.
- 1973 - Arab oil ministers cancel January 5 percent production cut; Saudi Arabian oil minister promises 10 percent OPEC production rise
- 1976 - Egyptian SS Patria sinks in Red Sea, about 100 killed
- 1976 - Takeo Fukuda becomes Japanese premier
- 1977 - Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin meets Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in Egypt
- 1979 - Soviet forces invade Afghanistan to prop up the Communist government, beginning a disastrous and failed ten-year war
- 1982 Mudassar Nazar scores century, then Imran Khan rips through Indians.
- 1989 - Japanese scientist achieve -271.8°C, coldest temperature ever recorded
- 1991 - Mikhail Gorbachev formally resigns as President of USSR in a televised speech
- 2003 - The ill-fated Beagle 2 probe which was released from the Mars Express Spacecraft on December 19, disappears shortly before its scheduled landing.
- 2004 - Cassini orbiter releases Huygens probe which successfully landed on Saturn's moon Titan on January 14, 2005.
- 2009 - Chinese human rights activist Liu Xiaobo sentenced to 11 years in prison in Beijing, China for "inciting subversion of state power"
- 2012 - 27 people are killed after an Antonov An-72 plane crashes near Shymkent, Kazakhstan
- 2016 - Russian military defence plane crashes into the Black Sea after takeoff from Sochi airport, killing all 92 on board



HIJRI  
CALENDAR

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JAMADI

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1442

## PRAYERS

FAJR

6: 03

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MAGRIB

5:30

ISHA

6:55

From KO Archives

## High Time To Settle Kashmir Issue: EU

Agenceis

**ISLAMABAD:** French envoy to Pakistan today said European Union welcomes any initiative which would facilitate the resumption of dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad to resolve the Kashmir issue. Envoy Yannick Gerard called for a peaceful solution of the Kashmir is-sue." which would meet the aspirations of the Kashmiri population, first and exhausted victim of this long-standing dispute". That's why the European Union, and France of course, favour any initiative which could be conducive to a calmer atmosphere and renewed dialogue. We think that such initiatives should be taken by all the concerned parties and we keep on telling that in all occasions," French envoy said in an interview. EU has already welcomed the truce offered by the Indian government as well as the responding "restraint" announced by Pakistan, he added. "We certainly think that it is now high time, for all parties, to take the courageous decisions required to stop the present stalemate". The current deadlock between New Delhi and Islamabad," is making the region really too dangerous and unstable. So, let's hope that such a process can begin," said Yannick Gerard. Gerard said the continued tension over Kashmir, besides exhausting the populations of the concerned areas, "is a major factor of instability for the whole South Asia." "It creates a volatile and dangerous situation which is jeopardizing and hampering the stability and the development of a whole and potentially dynamic region," said the French envoy. Some steps, like the Lahore process or the search for confidence-building measures, had been taken, even in the recent past, which could be used as guidelines in order to find a way out. "We will encourage any of such initiatives' aimed at restarting dialogue and settling peacefully and fairly the dispute. Confidence and dialogue have to be restored by the parties by any means," he said. He said the European Union and the French Government, certainly acknowledged the repeated Pakistani offers to dialogue, as "a positive step." Paris have been emphasizing on the necessity for re-sumption of "a since dialogue," between India and Pakistan, he said. To a question on a possible role of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Gerard said, "Everybody concerned by the Kashmir issue has, at its own level, to play its role in breaking the impasse. (KASHMIR OBSERVER, 25 DECEMBER, 2000)

## Board Of School Education, Branch Office Sopore

The candidates whose photograph is published in this notice is claiming to have lost the original marks certificate of 10TH & 12th under Below mentioned particulars  
Name: MOHAMMAD SALEEM RATHER  
Fathers Name : MOHAMMAD SABIR RATHER  
Mothers Name : DILSHADA  
Roll No : (10TH) 343589 Session /Year Bi-annual 2005  
(12TH ) 321553 Session /Year Bi-annual 2008  
Now the candidate has applied for Duplicate Marks Card. Anybody (if) having any objection may file the some before undersigned with (07) Seven days from the date of publication of this notice. Besides, the original marks card is teated as cancelled.

Sd/ Assistant Secretary  
Sub Office Bandipora

AMS

## Public Notice

The name of my son has been wrongly written in school records as Afaan Altaf while his correct name is Mohammad Afaan which needs immediate correction . If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Principal Crescent School of Learning Kralpora within a period of seven days from the date of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Altaf Hussain Mir  
F/o Mohammad Afaan Mir  
R/o Rawatpora Tehsil Kralpora Kupwara

FKO

ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF  
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

AWANTIPORA, KASHMIR.

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

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

E-NIT No:-IUST/EW/20/TEND/CLFP/03 Dated: - 23-12-2020

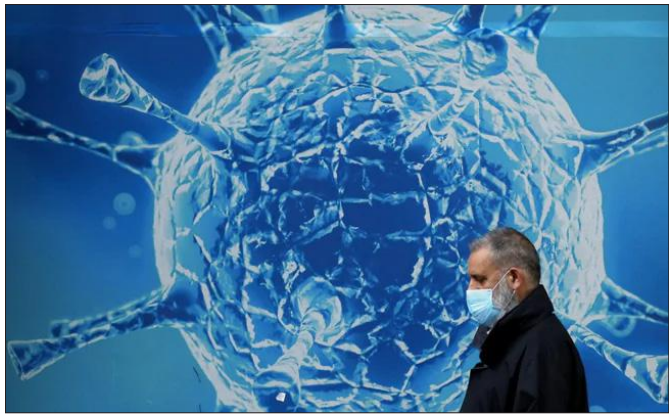
For and on behalf of Vice Chancellor, Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, J&K State, E-Tenders (in Single cover system) are invited on item rate basis, from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K State Govt. / CPWD / Railways or other State / Central Govt Departments for the following work.

Name of work	CONSTRUCTION OF CHAIN LINK FENCING AT POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE IUST, near Police Station Awantipora.
Estimated Cost of Construction	Rs.26,05,000/-
Cost of document	(Non-refundable) Rs. 1000/- (Rupees -One Thousand only) in shape of Demand Draft Only.
Earnest Money	Rs.52,100/- (2% OF Estimated cost of Construction)Pledged in favor of Finance Officer Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora. <b>VALID FOR 12 MONTHS</b>
Class of Contract	"B & C" Class
Time Allowed for Completion of Work	02 Calendar Months
Date of Publishing	22-12-2020
Last Date for Online Submission	30-12-2020
Last Date for DD Submission	31-12-2020
Time, Date & Address of opening of tender	Bids shall be opened at Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora on <b>01-01-2021 AT 2 PM</b>
Availability of Tender document	Tender document can be downloaded from website ( <a href="https://jktenders.gov.in">https://jktenders.gov.in</a> )
The site for the work	Available
Bid Validity	120 Days

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer, IUST



## Covid-19 Immunity Lasts At Least 8 Months, Hope For Longevity Of Vaccines: Study



Agencies

**MELBOURNE:** People who have recovered from the novel coronavirus infection have immune memory to protect against reinfection for at least eight months, according to a new study which provides strong evidence for the likelihood that COVID-19 vaccines will work for long periods.

While earlier studies have shown that antibodies against the coronavirus wane after the first few months of infection, raising concerns that people may lose immunity quickly, the new research, published in the journal Science Immunology, puts these concerns to rest.

According to the scientists, including those from Monash University in Australia, specific cells within the immune system called memory B cells, "remember" infection by the virus, and if re-exposed to the virus, triggers a protective immune response through rapid production of protective antibodies.

In the study, the researchers recruited a cohort of 25 COVID-19 patients and took 36 blood samples from them from Day 4 post infection to Day 242 post infection.

The scientists found that antibodies against the virus started to drop off after 20 days post in-

fection.

However, they said all patients continued to have memory B cells that recognised one of two components of the virus -- the spike protein which helps the virus enter host cells, and the nucleocapsid proteins.

Based on their analysis, the researchers said these virus-specific memory B cells were stably present as far as eight months after infection.

The scientists believe the findings give hope to the efficacy of any vaccine against the virus, and also explains why there have been very few examples of genuine reinfection across the millions of those who have tested positive for the virus globally.

"These results are important because they show, definitively, that patients infected with the COVID-19 virus do in fact retain immunity against the virus and the disease," said study co-author Menno van Zelm, from the Monash University Department of Immunology and Pathology.

"This has been a black cloud hanging over the potential protection that could be provided by any COVID-19 vaccine and gives real hope that, once a vaccine or vaccines are developed, they will provide long-term protection," van Zelm said.



## "Egregious, Disgusting": Trump Pardons Spark Outrage

Agencies

**WASHINGTON:** An angry backlash Wednesday met US President Donald Trump's pardons of corrupt Republican congressmen and security guards convicted of killing 14 civilians in a 2007 Baghdad massacre.

Following the pattern of earlier announcements, Trump extended executive clemency Tuesday to people who showed strong political support for him, and former soldiers and law enforcement officials convicted of murder in on-the-job shootings.

Iraqis expressed outrage and sadness after Trump delivered pardons for the four Blackwater security contractors who were convicted of murder and manslaughter six years ago for the Nisur Square massacre.

The four, all former US servicemen, opened fire unprovoked on the crowded square in 2007, leaving at least 14 ci-

vilians dead -- though Iraqi authorities put the toll as high as 17 -- while wounding dozens more and deeply souring US-Iraqi relations.

Previous administrations were loath to intervene in the legal case.

But the now-defunct Blackwater's owner was Erik Prince, a close Trump supporter and brother of Trump's secretary of education, Betsy DeVos.

**'Utter outrage'**

"I knew we'd never get justice," Fares Saadi, the Iraqi police officer who led the investigations, told AFP.

A former classmate of a medical student killed at Nisur called the pardons "an utter outrage," but said they were not surprising.

"As far as they are concerned, our blood is cheaper than water and our demands for justice and accountability are merely a nuisance," the classmate said,

on grounds of anonymity.

Retired US general Mark Hertling, who served in Iraq, called the Blackwater pardon "egregious and disgusting."

"This was a craven war crime that resulted in the death of 17 Iraqi civilians. Shame on you Mr President," Hertling tweeted, using the higher death count.

Trump also extended pardons to two men convicted in the Russia election meddling investigation of his 2016 campaign, and granted clemency to three former Republican lawmakers that watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington called "three of the most corrupt Members of Congress in recent history."

All five have been vocal supporters of Trump.

"The message Trump has sent tonight is clear: no matter how awful your crime was, justice does not apply to you if you are loyal to him," CREW said.

## Trump Team Weighs Immunity For Saudi Prince In Assassination Plot: Report

Agencies

The Trump administration is weighing a Saudi request to grant Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman immunity from prosecution over accusations that he orchestrated a conspiracy to kill a former high-level Saudi official, according to a person familiar with the matter.

The State Department's legal office is considering the request and will present its findings to Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, who would make a recommendation to the Department of Justice, said the person, who asked not to be identified discussing ongoing litigation. The case against Prince Mohammed was filed in federal court in Washington in August.

Saudi Arabia wants the U.S. to act before Jan. 20, when President Donald Trump leaves office and Joe Biden -- who has promised a tougher stance toward the kingdom -- becomes president, the person said. Granting immunity could also deal a fatal blow to a separate case in which the crown prince is accused in the 2018 killing of Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi.

The current case accuses the crown prince of deploying operatives in the U.S. to track down Saad Aljabri, a former high-level official who has worked with U.S. intelligence agencies, and then dispatching a team to murder him. Aljabri's lawsuit says a team of Saudi hit men flew to



Canada to assassinate him but were stopped by border officials.

Aljabri said in the lawsuit that he became privy to sensitive information about Prince Mohammed's "covert political scheming within the Royal Court" as well as his business dealings and his role in creating a team of operatives to kill Khashoggi. Saudi officials have accused Aljabri of corruption, claims his family has dismissed as politically motivated.

**'Rushed Political Favor'**

The Saudi Embassy in Washington and the government's Center for International Communication didn't immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. Lawyers for the Saudi government also didn't respond. The Washington Post reported earlier that the State Department was weighing the immunity request.

The State Department press office didn't reply to a request for comment, but in the past a spokesperson has said Aljabri was a respected and valued part-

ner in the fight against terrorism whose work had saved American and Saudi lives. Aljabri's legal team declined to comment.

Aljabri's family said the decision about immunity shouldn't be rushed.

"The decision on granting MBS immunity should take its due course even if that makes it fall into the hands of the Biden Administration," said Khalid Aljabri, Saad Aljabri's son, using an acronym for the crown prince. "This should not be a rushed political favor. Granting MBS immunity will result in absolute impunity and he will use it as a U.S. issued license to kill."

It's still unknown whether Pompeo will act before he leaves as part of the transition to the Biden administration next month.

Trump made strong ties with Saudi Arabia the centerpiece of his administration's Middle East policy, downplaying Khashoggi's killing and expediting arms sales to the kingdom. Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner developed a close bond with the crown prince, consulting with him regularly as he developed a Mideast peace plan.

Biden, who referred to Saudi Arabia as a "pariah" during his campaign, has indicated he'll reverse Trump's approach, though he's also said Saudi Arabia must remain an important ally. Both Republican and Democratic members of Congress have been critical of the president's support for Prince Mohammed.

## Covid-19 In Us: Over One Million Americans Receive First Dose Of Vaccine



Agencies

More than one million Americans have received the first of the two doses of the coronavirus vaccine, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Robert Redfield said.

"The United States achieved an early but important milestone today - jurisdictions have now reported that more than 1 million people have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine since administration began ten days ago," Redfield said on Wednesday.

At the same time, Redfield urged Americans to "embrace proven health strategies" such as wearing face masks until the vaccine becomes available to everyone, Sputnik reported.

By the end of this week, US officials expect to have distributed nearly 10 million doses of two approved vaccines, with hundreds of millions of doses on order from developers Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna.

Each vaccine requires an initial shot followed by a booster shot several weeks later.

## Hollywood 'Wouldn't Touch' Khashoggi Documentary, Director Says

The director of an upcoming documentary about slain Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi says Hollywood film distributors "wouldn't touch" the film and "look the other way" when it comes to human rights abuses in the kingdom.

Bryan Fogel, who directed the Academy award-winning documentary Icarus, told The Hollywood Reporter that despite The Dissident receiving glowing reviews when it debuted at the Sundance Film Festival in January, the film was repeatedly snubbed by distributors.

"Without going into behind-the-scenes details that I'm aware of, there was a unified front among the major global media companies, distributors, that they were not going to touch this film," he said in an interview published on Wednesday.

A royal family insider turned critic, Khashoggi was murdered and dismembered at Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul two years ago in a case that significantly tarnished the reputation of the kingdom's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, also known as MBS.

Riyadh has described the slaying as a "rogue" operation, but both the CIA and Agnes Callamard, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, have linked bin Salman to the killing, a charge the kingdom vehemently denies.

In October, a Saudi court sentenced eight people to as long as 20 years for the murder, four months after Khashoggi's family forgave his killers and enabled earlier death sentences to be set aside.

The remains of Khashoggi, a former columnist for Middle East Eye and the Washington Post, have never been found.

"It was disappointing, but I think it speaks... to the global landscape of these companies that films such as this -- that might really need to be seen and viewers would watch -- are being silenced through not being distributed through these channels because they might infringe on subscriber growth or it might put the company at risk of a hack or it might infringe on financing," Fogel told the Hollywood Reporter.

"In the case of Saudi Arabia,



you have so much liquidity and so much money already invested into Hollywood, that clearly factored very largely into the decision."

US distribution rights for The Dissident were acquired by Briarcliff Entertainment, which Fogel says has a "track record of taking on tough films", including Spotlight and Fahrenheit 9/11.

"Look the other way" Fogel also slammed major media companies including Netflix and Amazon for making deals with Saudi companies or accepting Saudi investment.

"Regardless of what they do... corporations, big businesses, governments, media or organizations look the other way of their human rights abuses or the war in Yemen or other things that are happening in that kingdom," the director said.

Earlier this month, a US judge ordered the CIA and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) to explain why they were withholding a written report on Khashoggi's murder, after a rights group requested the documents be made public.

US lawmakers and rights groups have repeatedly called on the Trump administration to release the report, and some say that the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden may work to release the document.

On the second anniversary of Khashoggi's murder, Biden pledged to reassess the US relationship with Saudi Arabia and hinted that MBS was responsible for the killing.

"Jamal's death will not be in vain, and we owe it to his memory to fight for a more just and free world," Biden said.

## Israel Says Pakistan Not Among States It May Have Ties With



Pakistan is not among the Muslim countries Israel is aiming to normalise relations with, an Israeli cabinet minister said.

In recent months, the Trump administration has brokered rapprochements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco.

Ofir Akunis, Israel's regional co-operation minister, told Ynet TV on Wednesday that there were two more countries lined up to normalise ties with Israel before US President Donald Trump leaves the White House next month.

He did not name either but said one was in the Gulf but would not be Saudi Arabia.

The other, further to the east, is a "Muslim country that is not small" but is not Pakistan, Akunis said.

Earlier this week, Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said Islamabad cannot recognise Israel until the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved.

"I categorically presented Pakistan's stance on Israel to the UAE's foreign minister [during a visit to the UAE] that we will not and cannot establish a relationship with Israel until a concrete and permanent solution to the Palestine issue is found," Qureshi said.

Qureshi's statement came

days after his visit to the UAE, which was seen by many as crucial amid rumours that Islamabad had secretly sent a messenger to Israel.

Islamabad denied the reports, which appeared mainly in the Israeli media.

Responding to questions regarding reports about alleged pressure from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf states for the recognition of Israel, Qureshi said he explained to his UAE counterpart the "depth of emotions and feelings Pakistanis have about Palestine and Kashmir".

Meanwhile, Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country, said last week it would not recognise Israel as long as Palestinian statehood demands remain unmet. Malaysia has signalled a similar policy.

In Dhaka, a foreign ministry official said Bangladesh was not interested in establishing diplomatic ties with Israel.

"Our position remains the same," he told the Reuters news agency.

Oman has praised the US-brokered diplomatic drive but has not commented on its own prospects of forging Israel ties.

The Palestinians, whose negotiations with Israel stalled in 2014, fear being sidelined by the normalisation process.

## Trump Pardons More Allies, Including Son-In-Law's Father: White House

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump issued a new raft of pardons on Wednesday for allies including the father of his son-in-law Jared Kushner, adding to a long list he has granted in his waning days in office.

In addition to the pardon for Charles Kushner, Trump also pardoned his 2016 campaign chairman Paul Manafort and longtime ally Roger Stone, the White House said in a statement.

They were among 26 people pardoned and three who had all or part of their sentences commuted on Wednesday by Trump. They came only a day after Trump pardoned another 15



people and commuted sentences for five.

Tuesday's list included two people linked to the probe into alleged collusion between his campaign and Russia and four Blackwater security guards convicted over the 2007 killing of 14 Iraqi civilians.

Those pardons drew outrage,

and Wednesday's actions were likely to do the same.

Real estate developer Charles Kushner pleaded guilty to charges including tax evasion and witness tampering in 2004.

His pardon had been expected by many, given his family connection. Jared Kushner is married to Trump's daughter Ivanka and is a senior adviser to the outgoing president.

Manafort was among those convicted in connection with the Russia collusion investigation, while Stone was convicted of lying to Congress and obstructing a congressional probe into the role of Russia in the 2016 election.

### NEWS MAKERS

## US Army Opens Probe Into Black Market Sale Of Pork In Kuwait

US soldiers stationed in Kuwait are being investigated for their alleged role in setting up an illegal network that resells pork products to residents and nationals in the Gulf country.

Christopher Grey, chief of public affairs at the Army's Criminal Investigation Command, told Middle East Eye on Monday that the CIC is "investigating allegations of abuse and illegal resale of pork products at AAFES [Army and Air Force Exchange Service] in Kuwait."

"Due to the ongoing investigation, no further information will be released at this time to protect the integrity of the investigative process."

Task & Purpose, a news site that monitors US military news, was the first to report on Kuwait's pork



black market.

The news site said that pork could be obtained at the military base for \$30 and then resold for around \$200.

Pork is prohibited in Kuwait, and under the country's strict laws, individuals involved in its sale could

face a three-year sentence and a fine of more than \$165,000.

Task & Purpose reported that according to documents it obtained, those found guilty of involvement in the smuggling ring could face life imprisonment.

Foreign citizens have been arrested before for smuggling pork products into the country, including in 2016 when four Filipino citizens were caught with 35 kilograms of pork products.

Still, Hussain Abdul-Hussain, the Washington bureau chief for local Al Rai newspaper, told Task & Purpose that to his knowledge, "there are no known precedents of US troops being summoned before Kuwaiti courts".

"If Kuwait has complaints about certain soldiers, they take it up with US command in Kuwait," he said.

According to the State Department, while US citizens in Kuwait are subject to the "jurisdiction of the Kuwaiti legal system", American soldiers are subject to US law.



## Efforts On To Locate 602 Tourists Who Came To Goa From UK, UAE



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

In the wake of detection of a new Covid-19 variant in the UK, Goa health authorities are trying to track down 602 people who arrived in the state from Britain and the UAE since December 9, an official said on Thursday.

The maximum number of people who have arrived from these two places are expected to be in Cansaulim area of South Goa district, predominantly a beach destination, he said.

A list of 602 people has been prepared after going through arrivals from the UK and the UAE since December 9, the official from the Directorate of Health Services said.

This includes 91 people in Cansaulim, 57 in its neighbouring Cortalim area in South Goa, 48 in North Goa's Corlim area which also includes Old Goa, and 47 in Chimbél, Ribandar

and parts of Panaji in North Goa district, he said.

The authorities are also trying to locate 41 people in Candolim area, which includes places like Calangute, Baga and other tourist destinations, and another 28 in the capital city Panaji and its adjoining areas.

The state machinery has also been asked to locate people who arrived from these two countries and are living in Loutolim Curtorim, Navelim, Quepem, Vasco, Chinchinim, Balli, Canacona, Curcholem, Sanguem (all in South Goa), and Aldona, Mapusa, Siolim, Porvorim, Shiroda, Dharbandora, Ponda, Cansarvanem and Colvale (North Goa), the official said.

Goa on Wednesday reported 125 new coronavirus cases, taking the count of infections in the state to 50,364.

The state has so far reported 727 deaths due to the disease, as per official figures.

## Fatwa Not Binding, No Legality Attached In Respect Of Ownership Of Immovable Property: Delhi HC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi High Court has said that there cannot be any legality or validity attached to a fatwa, especially in respect of ownership of immovable property, and such a declaration would not be binding on a third party.

The ruling by Justice Prathiba M Singh came on an appeal against a lower court order dismissing an application with regard to ownership of a property in Daryaganj here.

The petitioners, who had filed the suit for possession of the property in the lower court, claimed in the high court that they were owners of the property which they had purchased from the heirs of a person who was allegedly given rights in the property by way of a fatwa issued in 1971.

The plea was opposed by the defendant, a tenant of the property, who claimed that the original owner — a lady — had made a declaration that after her death the tenants/occupants would become owners of the property.

The tenant also claimed that he

was living there for 32 years without paying rent and therefore, he was the owner of the property by way of adverse possession.

The plaintiffs, represented by advocate Arpit Bhargava, had contended that after the lady died, the rights in the property were vested in her nephew by way of the fatwa.

Bhargava had argued before the high court that "A fatwa, in fact, binds as a whole and is a method of bringing about amicable settlement between the parties. "A fatwa per se is not illegal and the original owner, her husband and her sister having passed away, issuance of the fatwa in favour of the nephew of the original owner cannot be held to be illegal." He also argued before the high court that once the defendant accepted that he is a tenant, he cannot challenge the rights of the owner. The court, however, said that the Supreme Court in 2014 had held that a fatwa does not satisfy the requirements of a legally binding document and they do not trace their origin to validly made law.



## Braving Harsh Cold, Protesting Farmers Remain Resolute In Seeking Repeal Of Farm Laws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Braving harsh cold, thousands of agitating farmers at the Delhi borders on Thursday remained steadfast in their demands to repeal the Centre's three new agri laws.

Dense fog reduced visibility to just 100 metres in parts of Delhi on Thursday, affecting traffic movement, the India Meteorological Department said, adding the minimum temperature at the Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, settled at 4.5 degrees Celsius.

Security remained tight at the Delhi borders with hundreds of personnel deployed at Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri as thousands of farmers have been staging their protests at the borders for nearly a month now. This has also led to traffic congestion forcing police to divert vehicular movement.

Taking to Twitter on Thursday, the Delhi Traffic Police alerted commuters

about the routes that remained closed owing to farmers' agitation and suggested them to take alternative roads.

"The Chilla, Ghazipur borders are closed for traffic coming from Noida & Ghaziabad to Delhi because of farmer protests. People are advised to take alternate route for coming to Delhi via Anad Vihar, DND, Apsara, bhopra & Loni borders," it said in a tweet.

In another tweet, police said Singhu, Auchandi, Piau Maniyari, Saboli and Mangesh borders are closed.

"PI take alternate routes via Lamapur, Safiabab, Palla & Singhu school toll tax borders. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba & GTK road. PI avoid Outer Ring Rd, GTK road & NH 44," the traffic police mentioned.

On Wednesday, the protesting farmers hardened their position and asked the government not to repeat the proposal of "meaningless" amendments that they have already rejected but come up with a "concrete" offer in writing for the resumption of talks.

Reading out a reply to the government's talks offer during a press conference, farmer leaders said they are ready for dialogue with an open mind if they get a concrete proposal, but made it clear they will not accept anything less than a complete repeal of the three agriculture laws and legal guarantee for the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

The sixth round of talks on December 9 was cancelled following a deadlock with the farmer unions refusing to budge from their demand for repealing the three laws. Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the central government as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of MSP and do away with the mandi system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

## Govt Again Invites Farmer Unions For Talks, Says It Won't Be Logical To Discuss MSP-Related Demand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The government on Thursday again invited protesting farmer unions for talks, but made it clear that it would not be "logical" to include in the agenda any new demand related to minimum support price (MSP), which is out of the purview of three new farm laws.

In a three-page letter written to 40 farmer leaders, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Vivek Aggarwal said, "I again request you that the government has been discussing all issues with open heart and good intention to end the protest, and will continue to do so. Kindly suggest a date and time (for the next round of talks)."

Previous five rounds of talks between the government and the unions have failed to break the deadlock with the farmers insisting on repeal of the three laws and camping at various border points of Delhi for nearly a month now.

Aggarwal asked the union leaders to provide details of other issues they want to discuss. The talks will be held at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi at a ministerial level, he said.

On MSP, Aggarwal said the farm laws have no connection with the



price regime nor would have any impact on the procurement of farm produce at the fixed rates.

This has been told to the unions in every discussion and it has also been made clear that the government is ready to give written assurance on MSP, he said.

"Any new demand related to MSP, which is out of the ambit of farm laws, is not logical to include in the talks. As informed earlier, the government is ready to discuss all the issues raised by farmer unions," he noted.

Aggarwal's letter has come in response to the Samyukt Kisan Morcha's December 23 letter, through which it had informed the government that the farmer unions are ready for talks but asked it to send

a "concrete proposal in writing instead repeating rejected proposals around meaningless amendments."

In the December 24 letter, the government reiterated that it is ready to find a "logical solution" on the issues raised by protesting farmer unions.

Aggarwal said it is important to keep all doors open for discussion for the government. It is the responsibility of the government to listen to farmer organisations and farmers and the government cannot deny this.

The government with open heart has held several rounds of discussion with farmer unions under the Samyukt Kisan Morcha and urged them to choose a date as per their convenience for the next round of talks, he added.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, UP and some other states are protesting against the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

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

## 'Why Is He Silent?': Rahul Gandhi Takes A Jibe At PM Modi Over China Border Dispute



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

For nearly a month now, thousands of farmers have been protesting at the Delhi borders, seeking the repeal of three contentious laws. Multiple rounds of talks have thus far failed to break the deadlock, and many opposition leaders have hit out at the Modi government over the same. Against this backdrop, several Congress leaders had undertaken a demonstration to the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

While Rahul Gandhi and two other senior Congress leaders were allowed to proceed and eventually meet with the President and submit a memorandum containing two crore signatures seeking his intervention in farm laws issue, many others were detained. The Delhi Police detained several party leaders and workers including Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

"There is no democracy in India. It can be in your imagination, but not in reality," Gandhi told reporters later, responding to queries about the Delhi Police taking party leaders into custody during their march to

Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Earlier this year, Rahul Gandhi had repeatedly hit out at Prime Minister Modi and his government over the Indo-China border dispute. Now, even as Gandhi lambasted the PM over the recent farmer protests, the alleged Chinese incursion too found a mention. Dubbing the PM "an incompetent man who does not understand anything", the Congress leader alleged that the former was making the country weak. This, he said, was being seen by outside forces as an opportunity.

"China has snatched away thousands of kilometers of India's land. Why does the Prime Minister not talk about that? Why is he silent about that? " Gandhi can be heard asking in a video clip shared by news agency ANI.

For the uninitiated, China and India have been locked in a dispute for most of this year, with several clashes taking place. While the Galwan Valley clash had seen several Indian soldiers attacked and killed by their Chinese counterparts, another incident saw firing take place at the LAC for the first time in 45 years. Despite several rounds of talks, complete disengagement is yet to be achieved.

## PFI Received Over Rs 100 Cr In Its Bank Accounts Over The Years: ED To Kerala Court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Enforcement Directorate, probing the money laundering probe against the Popular Front of India (PFI), told a court in Kochi on Thursday that its investigation so far revealed that the Kerala-based outfit has received more than Rs 100 crore in its bank accounts over the years.

The agency, while seeking extension of custody of PFI's student wing leader K.A. Rauf Sharif, arrested in connection with the money laundering probe, made the submission in the Special court for Prevention of Money Laundering Cases in Kochi.

Considering ED's application, the court extended the custody of Sharif for three more days.

In its affidavit submitted, the ED stated that the source and disbursement of these funds is under investigation.

"The investigation conducted by the Directorate against PFI has so far revealed that more than Rs 100 crore have been deposited in the accounts of PFI over the years, and that a large part of the same has been deposited in cash", the ED said.

It also alleged that since 2013, PFI has been indulging in various scheduled offences and the money transfers and cash deposits have also significantly increased after 2014.

Investigation has also revealed that PFI has been involved in anti-CAA protests and funds during the



period of December 2019 to February 2020 may have been used for this purpose, the affidavit said.

ED also mentioned the role and involvement of PFI members in the Delhi riots in February this year have come to its notice in the ongoing investigation into the money laundering in the riots.

"There are also indications that PFI has linkages with the recent violence in Bangalore city in which its political wing--SDPI--has been found to be involved.

PFI has also been involved in various cases in the past in which public order was disturbed and various offences of grave nature were committed by the members of the organisations", it said in the affidavit.

The ED, which carried out searches at the offices of PFI and at the residences of its office bearers across India, said incriminating documents and digital devices were seized during the raids.

It alleged that PFI has been collecting huge amounts of funds abroad and that targets for foreign collection of funds have also been fixed.

### NEWS MAKERS

## Word 'Secular' Has Been Lost In Translation: Urmila Matondkar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Actor-turned-politician Urmila Matondkar, who recently joined the ruling Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, has said she does not regret her brief association with the Congress and has high regard for that party's leadership.

Talking to PTI, Matondkar said one year of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government headed by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has been "brilliant", and taking care of people's welfare amid COVID-19 and natural disasters was a big task.

Matondkar (46) also said she is a "people's actor" and will work hard to become a "people's politician".

"I don't want to become a leader who just sits in AC rooms and tweets... I know what I have to do and how to do and I will keep learning," she said.

Matondkar, who unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elec-

tions on a Congress ticket, joined the Shiv Sena on December 1 this year.

Last year, she had joined the Congress in March and quit the party in September.

On her brief stint in the Congress, she said, "I was in the party for less than six months and the Lok Sabha campaign for 28 days gave me many good memories."

Matondkar said she is not the person who would kept regrets in her heart.

"If I did not spoke against the Congress even after quitting the party, I see no reason why I should do it now," she said.

"My conscience was important for me," she said, referring to her decision to resign from the Congress.

Last year, in a letter dated May 16, addressed to the Congress leadership, Matondkar had criticised the conduct of Sandesh Kondvilkar and Bhusan Patil, close associates of



party leader Sanjay Nirupam.

Matondkar, who had lost to BJP's Gopal Shetty from Mumbai-North Lok Sabha seat, said she didn't quit the party because of the defeat in the polls.

She said she had also got an offer from the Congress for nomination to the state Legislative Council through the governor's quota.

"I thought since I had quit the party, it would be improper to take

a post it had offered," she said.

On her joining the Shiv Sena earlier this month, Matondkar said "I got a call from Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's office, saying I could help in enhancing the standard of cultural affairs of the state by representing the field in the Legislative Council."

"I feel one year of the MVA government headed by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray was brilliant. The welfare of people amid COVID-19 and natural disasters was a big task," she said.

Asked about her shift of ideology, Matondkar said the word 'secular' has been "lost in translation".

"Being secular doesn't mean you have no belief in religion, while being a Hindu doesn't mean you hate other religions. The Shiv Sena is a Hindutva party. Hinduism is a great religion, which is all inclusive," she said.

## Covid-Positive UK Returnee Who Fled Delhi Quarantine Facility Took Train To Andhra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A COVID-19-positive woman who allegedly managed to give the slip to authorities in Delhi after her arrival from the UK recently and reach Andhra Pradesh by train has been picked up from her hometown and admitted to a hospital along with her son, officials said on Thursday.

Their swab samples are being sent to the National Institute of Virology in Pune to determine whether she contracted the new strain of COVID-19, detected in the UK, a health department official said.

The country is on a high alert following the detection of the new virulent, "out of control" strain of coronavirus in the UK and has ini-



tiated various measures including rigorous testing of those who had arrived from the UK recently.

The woman, who reached her hometown of Rajamahendravaram in Andhra Pradesh after allegedly fleeing from a quarantine facility in New Delhi, was apprehended by the Railway Police and health authorities and admitted to a local hospital after Wednesday midnight.

According to officials, the woman, however, told the authorities in Andhra Pradesh that only home quarantine was recommended for her and as such she left New Delhi on her own as she was asymptomatic. Her son, who went to the national capital to pick her up, was also admitted in the hospital and both have been kept in isolated rooms.



K O V I E W

## Test Of Democracy

With independents securing 49 seats in the just concluded District Development Council polls, every party will try to get them on to their side to shore up their strength in the district councils. Former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has even alleged that the administration has been trying to “collect” independent candidates who had won the elections for the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). It is also not known yet what are the political allegiances of these independents. And whether they were fielded as proxies by different parties. This will be clear in the coming days. The shape of the DDCs and which party or the alliance controls them will depend a lot on which outfit or the political combine these independents join, and under what circumstances they do so. For the health of the post-Article 370 democracy it is important that no attempt is made to buy out the independents. And they are allowed to make their decision in an environment free of coercion or inducement. This alone will make it possible for the DDCs to contribute productively to the development of the former state.

The DDCs will act as a third tier of Panchayati Raj system. The elections to these councils mark the implementation of the entire 73rd Amendment Act in the union territory. However, there is a vital difference between the Panchayat Raj system elsewhere in the country and Kashmir. The members of the DDCs in J&K have been directly elected from 14 territorial constituencies of the district. And they alone will exercise power in the DDC and can appoint and remove the chairperson and vice chairperson of the council. This makes it important that the sanctity of the DDCs is maintained.

The centre has held the DDC polls in a largely fair manner, if not in a freer environment. Despite the apprehensions among the political and social circles that the election might be rigged, the results have come as a pleasant surprise. The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration has expectedly done well in the Valley and the BJP in Jammu. If we go by the numbers, the PAGD should control around 14 DDCs and the BJP five. But the support of the independents could change this. There should be no problem if the independents choose of their free will and based on their convictions. This would strengthen the newly restored democracy. And it is towards this end that the centre should work towards in the union territory.

O T H E R O P I N O N

## On J&K DDC polls

The first District Development Council polls in Jammu and Kashmir had rivals, National Conference, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Peoples Conference, coming together on one platform, the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration. The six-party platform consolidated votes in nine out of 10 districts in the Kashmir Valley and three districts of the Pir Panjal valley and the Chenab valley in the Jammu region. The alliance has won 110 seats out of a total of 280 seats and the BJP, with 75 seats has emerged as the single largest party. The Gupkar alliance and the Congress are likely to have their chairmen in 12 to 13 districts in J&K, out of a total of 20, and the BJP could be leading five to six. Independent winners, 50 of them, will be able to swing some districts in favour of the BJP or the Alliance. The Alliance sees the poll results as a verdict against the reorganisation of J&K into two Union Territories and revocation of its special constitutional status on August 5, 2019. This was the first electoral process after the Centre ended J&K's special status, and the alliance had pledged to fight for its restoration. The fears of the regional parties that the polls may be rigged were allayed by the final results. However, the withdrawal of security to leaders and candidates of the Gupkar alliance and restrictions on their campaigning had raised concerns about the process.

The sudden moves against Valley-based politicians in the Roshni land 'scam', cricket scam and other cases by the Enforcement Directorate, and the arrest of PDP leader Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra, just days after he filed his nomination, all amounted to undesirable use of the state machinery with a political intent. The polls, however, came to be seen as the restoration of the democratic process in J&K, which saw arrests of most regional leaders last year and the suspension of political activities to a large extent. These polls also stand out for being a rare electoral process in the past 30 years where the militant outfits and the separatist groups did not campaign vigorously for a poll boycott. Frequent encounters and locals joining militancy in the past one year in south Kashmir did impact the turnout, where most segments saw less than 20%. The BJP, which had already made inroads during the previous panchayat and urban local bodies polls in 2018 when the regional parties boycotted, managed a win over three seats in Srinagar, Bandipora and Pulwama. The low turnout notwithstanding, this comes as a shot in the arm for the image of the party. The BJP has also maintained a tight grip in Samba, Udhampur, Jammu and Kathua in the Jammu region. The political process restarted through the DDC election must be given more space. The Centre must appreciate the role of regional parties in moving towards peace and stability in J&K. Restoration of statehood and holding of the Assembly election are vital.

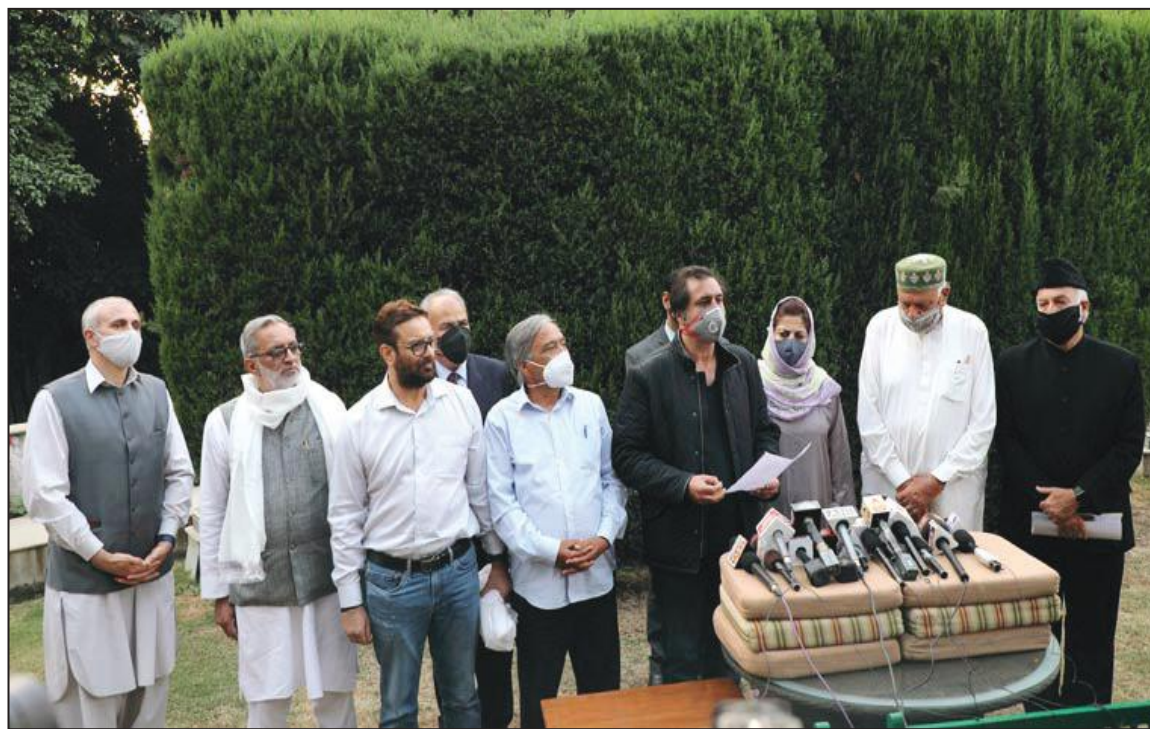
The Hindu

# Time to Rethink Kashmir

Because very little that we thought and understood about the former state before August 5, 2019 applies now

RIYAZ WANI

What does the future have in store? The probability is that it will be more of the same. At least, as long as the BJP is in power. But even if the BJP loses power in future, the Article 370 move remains a fait accompli. And if a large number of outsiders acquire citizenship and buy the land, as the new legal regime has made possible, J&K will be a different place a few years down the line



Sixteen months after revocation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019 Kashmir is a different place. The establishment parties who were otherwise bitter rivals of one another have united for the common cause of the restoration of autonomy. Once vaunted separatist conglomerate Hurriyat Conference has become extinct. Many of groupings' top leaders continue to be in jail or under house arrest. This has hobbled its capacity to organise any political activity.

But even if the separatist leaders were free - and some of them are free - the situation would hardly be different. The government has outlawed any sign of dissent in whatever form and disproportionately raised the costs for a separatist leader or an activist to go out and champion the cause. Ditto for civil society and civil liberties groups. There is hardly any one that is able to freely hold any activity or express an opinion on the situation.

There have also been far-reaching administrative and legal changes right from the domicile laws to new land laws. As a result, J&K citizenship and the buying of land have been thrown open to outsiders. Government has also overturned the Roshni Act whereby occupants of state land were allowed to own it against payment determined by the government. Scores of the other laws have been extended to the former state that are aiding the process of fundamentally changing the facts on the ground.

At the same time, the government has altered the electoral map of J&K by creating District Development Councils, a third tier of the grassroots democracy, whose members unlike in any other state in India are being directly elected. The DDCs are expected to not only undermine the role of the gram sabhas and the Block Development Councils - the first and second tier of Panchayati Raj respectively - but also detract from the powers of the Assembly. The 14 member DDC headed by a chairperson will be solely in charge of the district. Their decisions are likely to override those of a panch, sarpanch and a BDC member. Similarly, an MLA despite being a member of the DDC

will have no role in the election or removal of its chairperson.

As for the prospect of a non-BJP party or the alliance like People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) winning a majority of the DDCs, this will change little on the ground, other than making the local administration a bit more approachable for the people.

Only thing that remains constant from the pre-August 5 days is the militancy. It has gone on regardless of the far-reaching changes that have overtaken Kashmir despite the killings of above 200 militants over the past year.

Going forward, the current situation is likely to linger on for a while. There is little chance that the Assembly election will be held anytime soon. At least, not until the delimitation commission enhances the seats for Jammu making it politically at par with Kashmir. Until that time, the DDCs will serve as a replacement for the Assembly.

Militancy has survived as the youth picking up arms are ready to pay with their lives for their choices. So, the government measures to silence politicians and activists don't apply. And as long as the local recruitment continues as looks likely and the armed men continue to cross over from Pakistan, the militancy seems here to stay.

Going forward, the current situation is likely to linger on for a while. There is little chance that the Assembly election will be held anytime soon. At least, not until the delimitation commission enhances the seats for Jammu making it politically at par with Kashmir. Until that time, the DDCs will serve as a replacement for the Assembly.

Similarly, the Centre is unlikely to restore the statehood of J&K. This also appears to be subservient to the completion of the delimitation exercise. The centre, as seems clear, doesn't want its Article 370 decision to be in any way challenged by an Assembly dominated by the parties which have Kashmir as their core base.

The past year has also shown that the world doesn't care about the withdrawal of Article 370. Even the concern about human rights

in the months following the repeal of autonomy has abated. Kashmir is now off the international radar. Similarly, while Pakistan may not have reconciled to the constitutional changes in Kashmir, it has now kind of gotten used to a new state of affairs. Its protestations about India's actions in Kashmir haven't found adequate traction across the world. In fact, the US and Europe which largely influence world opinion have been barely responsive.

What does the future have in store? The probability is that it will be more of the same. At least, as long as the BJP is in power. But

even if the BJP loses power in future, the Article 370 move remains a fait accompli. And if a large number of outsiders acquire citizenship and buy the land, as the new legal regime has made possible, J&K will be a different place a few years down the line.

Very little that we thought and understood about Kashmir before August 5, 2019 applies now. And if we continue to look at the situation through the same prism, there's no way we can understand what is happening in 'Naya Kashmir'. The new Kashmir needs rethinking our decades old understandings and narratives to make a sense of it.

It is clear that the Modi government has changed the game in Kashmir internally and as a consequence externally too. A static thinking rooted in the early nineties will get us nowhere in sorting the fraught situation confronting us.

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 the Political Editor of Kashmir Observer



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## Of Masks and Fines

The recent decision of Srinagar's Mayor to impose fines on those who do not wear face masks in public places has insensitive dictatorial overtones, he being a part of an electoral process, which itself is democratic should force him to look for all the peculiarities involved in this matter. When the Covid-19 outbreak took all of us by surprise, we were heaped by different challenges ranging from unavailability of face masks and alcohol based hand rubs, to their sale on much higher rates than they are normally sold.

If such a situation still persists, if

we talk about surgical masks for an instance, original surgical masks are now replaced by polymer facemasks, which are a major source of microplastic fibres. They are causing allergies and irritation besides being very inconvenient for usage.

Before making corrections in the system and ensuring safe dispensation and distribution of essential commodities like face masks and hand rubs, the mayor cannot go on exercising maximum laws without any benefit or convenience and facility to the citizens.

Free masks should be distributed at government buildings and public

parks, a close check should be maintained to curb the sale of spurious hand sanitisers and substandard face masks. The supply of emergency medicines and the availability of adequate oxygen cylinders at hospitals should be ensured. At last but not the least, people need to be educated through media, graffiti, hoardings and different initiatives of propaganda enlightening them about the importance of face masks.

Without taking such things into consideration, and jumping to arm the authorities with even more powers to fine, at a time when an economic recession has affected the majority of

the sections here is thoughtless in all senses. The importance of face masks cannot be downplayed, adopting authoritative ways to force people into paying fines for not wearing them doesn't go very well with democratic values and hence this decision needs an afterthought. The Mayor shall withdraw his earlier passed order, work on the administrative loopholes. People have a right to know about the dangers of exposing themselves to this infection. Awareness should be prioritized over imposing fines.

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Mindful Fridays

Misunderstood Mental Health

A sector least understood and a way forward

Aamir Bashir and Wasim Rashid Kakroo

There is great bias towards people with mental illnesses. Many think that these people are lazy or just making it up. There is also the attitude that these people are crazy, possessed by demons, violent, out of control and unsafe. However, these are negative labels that have been attached due to the lack of awareness

Ever heard the popular saying “health is wealth”? This gives large meaning to our life, as health is considered the most valuable and precious thing for every individual. Therefore, it is pertinent to explore different dimensions of health. Before moving forward let us try to understand what the word “health” means.

The World Health Organization defines health as, “a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1948). It can be easily inferred from the above definition that health not only constitutes physical health but also mental and social health.

Since mental health is part of overall health, it is as important as physical health. Unfortunately, mental health is one of the most neglected aspects of health in the developing world, however we can never deny the fact that health is a state of complete harmony of the body, mind and spirit and thus we can say that mental health and physical health are closely connected.

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community, (World health organization).

So, we may say that mental health is a positive state of mind. Being mentally healthy means reaching one's full potential, living satisfying lives, being emotionally resilient and being able to cope with daily stresses of life, feeling in control, feeling good about yourself, managing and expressing your emotions, building and maintaining good relationships.

It is easy to ignore mental health over physical health

We all know what taking care of our physical health looks like: eating right, exercising regularly and getting plenty of sleep. But do you know how to take care of your mental health? Neglecting your mental health can be easy, especially because it's not something we are always taught or reminded to prioritize.

While exploring the reasons behind our negligence towards mental health, the following points can be considered:

- We are too busy to give time to mental health:** It's all too common to put mental health on the backburner. Between family responsibilities, work obligations, and social situations, it's no wonder why very few of us actually find time in the day to day routine to take care of our mental health.
- It is a Taboo To Talk About Your Feelings:** So many of us, especially men, are taught to not talk about our feelings. From a very young age, we're told to “just suck it up” and are told that showing any kind of emotions is weak. We tell a crying child, “Me aes wadaan, wadun chunel jaan” (Don't cry, crying isn't good). But this is an extremely detrimental attitude, both to our relationships and our mental health. Emotions are a key aspect of connection and connection is a key aspect of mental health.
- Lack of mental health awareness:** Many people believe that being physically fit means being healthy; they don't even acknowledge the existence of mental aspects of health and related issues.
- Bizarre explanation of mental health issues:** If we feel that somebody is behaving erratically and our day to day understandings of behavior fail to explain such behaviors as happens in various mental health issues, we ascribe such behaviors either to evil eye or evil spirits. In Kashmir, we say, Amis haez



che nazar legmich (He's been accursed by evil eye) or Amis haez chu tasruf gomut or Amis haz chu hazir gasaan (He's jinxed/acursed) and thus we lose our chance of thinking about such issues seriously.

Relationship between physical and mental health:

It is said that a sound mind lies in a sound body. This popular dictum in itself is enough to understand the relationship between physical and mental health. Physical and mental health is interdependent. The two should not be thought of as separate. We usually understand that poor physical health can lead to an increased risk of developing mental health problems. However, we don't consider that poor mental health can have a negative impact on physical health, leading to an increased risk for some conditions. Mental health plays a major role in people's ability to maintain good physical health. Mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety, affect people's ability to participate in health-promoting behaviors.

What's more is that neglecting your mental health can lead to or exacerbate serious health complications such as: heart disease, high blood pressure, weak immune system, Asthma, obesity, gastrointestinal problems, premature death etc. For instance, depression alone can cause chronic fatigue, insomnia and increased sensitivity to aches and pains due to abnormal function of neurotransmitters in the brain. People with depression often have worse physical health, as well as worse self-perceived health, than those without depression. Poor mental health can lead to poor lifestyle choices. For example, people with depression have been found to eat more junk food, stay idle and choose less active life leading to serious health issues such as obesity and cardiovascular problems.

Importance of mental health awareness:

Awareness is a form of education. The more you know the more power you have. Knowledge is power. This power can cause a positive effect on our community and help mobilize the resources towards better mental health. Mental health awareness increases the chances for early intervention, which can help patients to receive timely appropriate care and can result in a fast recovery. Awareness reduces negative adjectives that have been set to describe our people with a mental illness. By raising awareness, mental health issues can now be seen as issues of concern and the public can be made more sensitive towards discussing such issues and looking for their treat-

ment. Thus our point is that mental health awareness should be taken as seriously as physical health awareness for conditions, such as diabetes, blood pressure, or cancer.

Awareness also eliminates stigma for people who battle with various mental health problems. Stigma refers to the opinions and thoughts of the community about something ill understood or misunderstood. Stigma shames mentally ill people. It creates a community where minds are closed off and rejects acceptance of those who are “different”. Commonly held attitudes and behaviors about something in the public sphere move a community into either a positive or negative trend. If there is a negative trend then the implications may cause a combination of denial and hatred. Awareness can also create new understandings for the mentally ill. As the demand from the public about the information related to this issue increases, it can produce a flow of attention in this direction. This attention can eventually result in great changes for the mentally ill. It can lead to improvements in policy, research, and service development.

In addition, there is great bias towards people with mental illnesses. Many think that these people are lazy or just making it up. There is also the attitude that these people are crazy, possessed by demons, violent, out of control and unsafe. However, these are negative labels that have been attached due to the lack of awareness. Raising awareness can address such misconceptions. Awareness is key for understanding what mental health is and how families can receive the help they need. Public knowledge is important in accessing and mobilizing community resources. In short, lack of awareness of mental health is not just “their” problem; it is our problem as a community.

Costs involved in ignoring mental health:

Ignoring the area of mental health can have huge consequences for the economy of the country as it leads to burden on the already taxed resources. It can also lead to more and more stigmatization of people with mental health issues. Not investing in the sector of mental health may lead to underutilization of human resources and human potential as one needs to take care of his or her mental health in order to realize the God given gifts and potential to take humanity to newer heights.

Aamir Bashir is a Mental health counselor at IMHANS and Wasim Rashid Kakroo is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist who works at IMHANS

# Has Covid Cost Friendships?

Shane Rogers

If you leave your car sitting the garage for too long, the battery can go flat. Similarly, if we don't maintain our friendships, they can go a bit flat too. So just as it's good practice to drive your car every so often and have it serviced regularly, friendships are easier to maintain with some semblance of regular contact.

What has this meant for our friendships during 2020, a year of social distancing and lockdowns? My research suggests physical separation wasn't necessarily associated with psychological separation or the breakdown of friendships.

And that appears to be thanks mostly to communication technologies.

Mental health, friendships and COVID

Consistent with research from other parts of the world, lockdown experiences in Australia have been associated with diminished emotional well-being for many people.

My colleague Travis Cruickshank and I surveyed 1,599 Australians from various age groups during the national lockdown in April. Our study is still at the preprint stage, which means it hasn't yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

A substantial proportion of participants reported a deterioration in their mental health due to COVID-19 (10% deteriorated a lot, 44% deteriorated some-

what, 40% reported no change, and 6% improved somewhat).

We also asked how their friendships had been affected, and surprisingly, most respondents reported no change (66%). This was despite 72% noting they were interacting face-to-face with friends a lot less (and a further 14% somewhat less) during the pandemic.

Communication technologies to the rescue

At first glance our results seem strange, as even the best communication technologies are arguably not an adequate substitute for face-to-face interaction. It's difficult to make eye contact — an important social cue — through a screen. And if you've ever tried to catch up with a group of friends over Zoom or a similar platform, you'll know it can become a little chaotic.

However, 56% of participants in our study reported spending more time interacting with friends using technology during the pandemic (for example, phone, email, or online chat). So it seems most people used communication technologies to stay connected with their friends during lockdown — even if it wasn't quite the same as catching up in person.

Social media sometimes gets a bad rap. For example, excessive social media use has been associated with negative outcomes such as lower self-esteem and narcissistic tendencies. It can also be a vehicle for spreading misinformation.

However, having a raft of options for communicating digitally, of which social media platforms are a big part, has arguably been a good thing overall.

People have been able to share jokes with a wide audience to keep spirits up. For example, a Facebook group encouraging people to dress up in costumes to take their bins out, and then post pictures, went viral around the world.

More importantly, people could stay connected with friends and family during a stressful time. We know social support is important for managing anxiety, especially during fraught times.

Our results are consistent with other Australian research and US research which found people didn't perceive their

What has this meant for our friendships during 2020, a year of social distancing and lockdowns? My research suggests physical separation wasn't necessarily associated with psychological separation or the breakdown of friendships

social support to be negatively affected during the pandemic.

But not everybody made use of technology

In our study, while most people reported no impact on their friendships, 27% of people reported a deterioration in their relationships with friends. These people were more likely to also report not increasing their level of communication via technological means.

These people were also more likely to report their mental health had deteriorated.

It's important to note we collected our data fairly early in the pandemic. So it's possible more people, particularly those in Victoria who endured a prolonged second lockdown, may have experienced deterioration in their friendships since we collected our data.

But our results highlight the important role communication technologies can play during a pandemic, and the value of using such technologies to maintain relationships and social support, for the benefit of our mental health.

Interestingly, 7% of people reported an improvement in friendship quality. Perhaps connecting over difficult times brought some people closer. Alternatively, with various communication technologies and apps gaining traction, some people may have started interacting with friends during lockdown who they wouldn't normally see or speak to.

New communication technologies on the horizon

Video chat platforms (such as Zoom) saw a dramatic increase in use during the pandemic. While serviceable, video chat is still lacking compared with face-to-face interaction.

The pandemic has heightened interest in the development of new digital communication technologies. One prospect is communication in virtual reality (VR).

During the pandemic, a host of start-up companies have appeared selling VR meeting platforms. There was also an increase in usage of social VR programs, although these remain on the fringe.

A current issue with social interaction in VR is that the avatars generally have minimal expression and therefore only represent a shell of a character that transmits your voice. As summed up in this article on The Conversation, “VR technologies perhaps only offer a pale imitation of the multi-sensory experiences of life”.

However, new developments in motion tracking technology and touch-stimulating devices are set to significantly improve the social interaction experience in VR within the next few years.

New VR headsets are in development that include inbuilt facial motion tracking, such as those by Facebook, and also the DecaGear 1. In the coming years, we may be interacting in VR at work and at the weekend with our friends.

By arrangements with the Conversation



## Implementing Forest Rights Act, 2006

# Govt Moots Extensive Training

**JAMMU:** The Government is gearing up for implementation of Forest Rights Act 2006 in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Pertinently, the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 was extended to the UT of J&K after the reorganization of the State in October 2019.

In this regard, a video conference was held with all Deputy Commissioners of the UT, which was addressed by the Principal Secretary, Revenue Department,

Shaleen Kabra, Commissioner Secretary Forest, Ecology & Environment Department, Sarita Chauhan, Administrative Secretary, Tribal Affairs Department, Rehana Batul and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF), Dr. Mohit Gera in which the action plan/roadmap for implementation was shared and discussed with the Deputy Commissioners.

The implementation of the Act involves recognition and vesting of the forest rights in forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional Forest dwellers

who have been residing in such forest for generations but whose rights could not be recorded. The Act provides a framework for recording rights so vested and the nature of evidence required for such recognition and vesting in respect of forest land.

The framework for recording the rights involves the Gram Sabha, the Sub-divisional Level Committee and the District Level Committee. The nature of evidence required are recorded in detail in the Rules and also involves ground verification by the

Forest Rights Committee comprising of 10-15 members to be selected by the Gram Sabha.

The Government has already constituted the UT Level Monitoring Committee headed by Chief Secretary, District Level Committee headed by the Deputy Commissioner, Sub-divisional Level Committee headed by the Sub Divisional Magistrate and comprising officers from forest, tribal affairs and rural development department besides non official members.

During the meeting, the

Deputy Commissioners were informed about the various milestones to be achieved at all levels, the importance of training and awareness creation among all the Government and other functionaries. The modalities and schedules of the trainings, training resources and training providers were also informed to the Deputy Commissioners.

The trainings of official members of District Level Committees and Sub-divisional Level Committees shall be conducted from 29th to 31st December, 2020 and

trainings for frontline Government functionaries belonging to Revenue and Forest Department shall be conducted from first week of January, 2021. This shall be followed by awareness cum training of the members of Forest Rights Committees as well as Sarpanches and Panchayat Secretaries for a thorough understanding of their role in the implementation of the Act.

After the completion of training on rights and determination of rights, the process will be rolled out for inviting applica-

tions from eligible forest dwellers / tribes.

Speaking on the occasion, Shaleen Kabra emphasized on smooth conduct of the process at all levels by the Deputy Commissioners.

Sarita Chauhan made a presentation on the roadmap for implementation of Forest Rights Act, 2006, while Rehana Batul gave details of functions of all Committees and Dr. Mohit Gera, IFS, PCCF (HoFF), J&K made a brief presentation on trainings and awareness to be created at different levels of Committees.

## After Polls Results, Parties' Focus Shifts To Forming Majority For Control Of Ddcs

**SRINAGAR:** Behind the scenes activities to choose the chairpersons of the maiden District Development Councils have gained momentum as both People's Alliance for Gupkar Declration (PAGD) and the BJP are eyeing the districts that have no clear majority in the just concluded elections for the grassroots-level democratic institutions.

The PAGD has got a clear majority in six districts, followed by the BJP in five in the first-ever DDC election. However, the alliance of seven mainstream regional parties has got an edge over the saffron party in six other districts as it is just short of one or two seats for the major-

ity, while the BJP is in the driver's seat in one district.

Independent candidates, who have won 50 seats across the Union Territory, hold sway in the rest of the two districts -- Srinagar and Poonch -- where they have won seven and eight seats, respectively.

Congress, on the other hand, can play the role of king-maker in the districts where there is no majority for any party even though it has ended up with only 26 seats across 20 districts 10 each in the Kashmir valley and Jammu division -- and has already indicated that it is committed to checkmate the BJP wherever possible.

There are 280 DDC constitu-

encies 14 each in 20 districts and so far the results for 278 have been declared.

The results of two DDC constituencies are awaited as the counting of votes has been kept in abeyance to clear doubts over the citizenship of two of the contesting candidates from north Kashmir's Bandipora and Kupwara districts.

"The counting of votes was deferred in Drugmulla constituency (Kupwara district) and Hajin-A (Bandipora) in view of a question that has arisen on eligibility of one each contesting candidates from the two seats, J&K State Election Commissioner, K K Sharma had said.

Two persons hailing from

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), who are married to former militants, are among the contestants from the Dragmulla and Hajin-A constituencies.

With the focus shifting on the selection of DDC chairpersons among the 14 elected representatives for each district, sources said hectic activities have started as both rival camps PAGD and BJP -- are trying to garner the support of Independents to wrest control over maximum districts through their own chairpersons.

The PAGD, which among others includes regional heavyweights National Conference and PDP, swept the DDC polls by winning 110 seats, while the

BJP emerged as the single largest party by getting 74 seats including three in the Kashmir valley. J&K Apni Party has won 12 seats, PDF and National Panthers Party (NPP) two each and BSP one.

Congress Chief Spokesperson Ravinder Sharma, when contacted by PTI, said no formal talks have been started with PAGD with whom it had entered into a seat sharing agreement before the DDC elections.

The Government is yet to issue a notification as some seats have to be reserved for women, Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes The process is to be completed within a month after the declaration of results, Sharma said.

### Gupkar Alliance Fears...

History is replete with examples that those who tried to humiliate the verdict of the people, ended up in a disaster. We need to respect this verdict and show respect to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Under no circumstances should democracy be tinkered with, interfered with -- that is totally unacceptable," Lone said.

He said the people of Jammu and Kashmir, "after so many upheavals", have reposed their faith in democracy and "it is incumbent upon and the onus lies on the administration to reciprocate that respect and faith in democracy".

Lone said the meeting was called to review the performance of the alliance in the maiden DDC polls in the Union Territory. "We met and expressed gratitude to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, to those who voted for us and even to those who did not vote for us. We express gratitude to those who came out in very large numbers to strengthen democracy in Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti did not attend the meeting, but the party was represented by its general secretary, Ghulam Nabi Hanjura.

PDP sources said Mufti was unwell and thus, could not attend the meeting.

### NC Shoots Letter To SEC...

Meanwhile the National Conference on Thursday shot a letter to the State Election Commissioner KK Sharma expressing fears of horse trading by a certain political party.

In the letter sent to SEC, senior NC leader and party General Secretary Ali Mohammad Sagar has expressed apprehensions that many independent winning DDC candidates were being "coaxed and coerced" to join a certain political party, a NC spokesperson said Thursday.

"A very disturbing state of affairs has come to our notice -- many independent winning DDC candidates are being coaxed and coerced to join a certain political party. There are touts who are encouraging horse trading. Display of money and bidding of price for joining them is taking place. At some places threats and coercion is also being employed," Sagar, as per the party spokesperson said.

While requesting the SEC to ensure that such undemocratic practices are looked into and action taken, Sagar said that EC can employ other means to ascertain his fears and concerns.

"The entire exercise is set to go futile if SEC does not intervene immediately and forcefully," he added. (PTI)

### Gupkar Alliance Will Continue...

Talking to reporters after the first meeting of the Peoples' Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) following the conclusion of the polls, Abdullah alleged the leaders, including former minister Naem Akhtar, are "held up in thanas for no any rhyme or reason".

Besides Akhtar, Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) Sartaj Madni and Mansoor Hussain were among 20 leaders taken into preventive custody a day before the counting of votes for the DDC elections began on Tuesday, according to officials.

The PDP is part of the seven-party Gupkar alliance. "Those people who are held up in thanas (police stations) for no rhyme or reason must be released immediately if you want democracy to survive," Abdullah said.

PAGD spokesperson Sajad Lone questioned the need to detain people when the elections were conducted peacefully. "What is the logic? The election has ended. It has been one of the most peaceful elections in the last three decades. The most non-violent, peaceful election, and this should have ended with something good," he said.

"That it ends with preventive detentions is something totally antithetical to the way the elections have been held in terms of peace, lack of violence while traditionally, in the last three decades, we have seen so much of violence," he added.

Lone further said, "We condemn these detentions with all the power that we have. And we just hope that after such a great performance of democracy, we are not faced with these arbitrary detentions. They (PDP leaders) should be released immediately. This is our demand. We are here today with the mandate of the people, a majority and a decisive mandate, and we say that they should be released."

The PAGD swept the maiden DDC polls by winning 110 seats, while the BJP emerged as the single largest party with 75 seats after securing the largest vote share in Jammu and Kashmir.

Counting of votes in two of the total 280 constituencies, one each in Bandipora and Kupwara districts of north Kashmir, was deferred till further orders, officials had said. Asked if the Gupkar alliance will continue in the future, Abdul-

lah said, "Absolutely. Why do you have doubts about that? We are united and we will continue to be united for what this People's Declaration stands for."

The member of Parliament from Srinagar also urged the Centre to restore high-speed mobile internet in Jammu and Kashmir. "We request the government that 4G should be restored immediately. It is unfortunate that the people of this state, our children, students, business people are suffering because now everything is online. When the prime minister is talking about 5G, we do not even have 4G. This should be restored as quickly as possible," he said.

Except for Ganderbal and Udhampur, high-speed mobile internet has remained suspended across the union territory since August 5, 2019, when the Centre revoked the special status of the erstwhile state. (PTI)

### No Talks With India For...

trying to rally international support against India on the Kashmir issue. India has maintained that the scrapping of Article 370 was its internal matter. It also asked Pakistan to accept the reality and stop all anti-India propaganda. (PTI)

### Cross-LoC Shelling Continues...

the Pakistan army along the LoC in Poonch.

Prior to that, two soldiers were killed in another ceasefire violation from across the border in Sunderbani sector of the district on November 27.

On November 26, a JCO was killed and a civilian critically injured in Pakistani shelling in Kirni and Qasba sectors of Poonch. A havaldar in the Indian Army was killed on November 21 in Pakistani shelling in Laam sector in Rajouri district.

On November 13, as many as 11 people, including five security personnel, were killed in multiple ceasefire violations by Pakistani troops along the LoC in north Kashmir. (PTI)

### Light Snow Predicted In...

3.8 degrees Celsius and Kokernag, in the south, minus 3 degrees Celsius, the officials said.

Kashmir is currently under the grip of 'Chillai-Kalan' -- the 40-day harshest winter period when the chances of snowfall are most frequent and maximum.

'Chillai-Kalan', which began on December 21, is considered the harshest winter period in Kashmir as a cold wave grips the region and the temperature drops considerably leading to the freezing of water bodies including the famous Dal Lake here as well as the water supply lines in several parts of the valley.

The chances of snowfall are most frequent and maximum during this period and most areas, especially in the higher reaches, receive heavy snowfall, the officials said.

While 'Chillai-Kalan' will end on January 31, the cold wave continues even after that in Kashmir with a 20-day-long 'Chillai-Khur'd' (small cold) and a 10-day-long 'Chillai-Bachiha' (baby cold).

The MET Office has said the weather is likely to remain mainly dry till December 25, but there is a possibility of light in the valley for two days from Saturday.

There is no forecast of any major snowfall activity till the end of this month, it added. (PTI)

### ACB Files Charges Against...

against Lone's wife and his sister-in-law for abetment of offences in the Court of Special Judge Anti Corruption Srinagar.

The ACB spokesperson said that during investigation, Lone was found in possession of immovable properties, including one double storey house on one kanal of land at Wanbal Rawalpura Srinagar, one double storey house on one kanal and three malras of land at Naz Colony Bandipora, one double storey house on one kanal 13 marla land at Khandyal Gurez, one flat in Tawi Apartments at Sidhra Jammu, one flat in Royal Apartments at Talab Tillo Jammu, one flat in Gulposh Apartments at Bemina Srinagar, one three storey shopping structure at Bandipora Town, three kanals of land at Mujgund Srinagar.

"The accused Chief Engineer was also found to have accumulated huge movable assets including 7 personal cars, bank balance of Rs 2.18 crore, Cash of Rs 6,58,000/-, foreign currency, LIC and Metlife Policies besides mutual funds etc," he said.

He further said that the probe has also established that value of assets possessed by the accused Chief Engineer is hugely disproportionate (129%) to the income received by him from all sources, which constitutes an offence of criminal misconduct u/s 5(1) (e) r/w 5(2) J&K Prevention of Corruption Act Svt 2006.

"Investigation also revealed that wife and sister-in-law of the accused have facilitated him in raising the assets from money earned through corrupt practices by allowing to invest clandest-

inely in different properties in their names, which tantamount to the offence of abetment u/s 109 RPC r/w J&K 5(2) J&K Prevention of Corruption Act Svt 2006 against them," the Bureau spokesperson said.

"All the three accused were produced in Anti Corruption Court Srinagar and charge-sheet was filed against them, after government accorded sanction for prosecution. Next date of hearing has been fixed on March 1, 2021," he added.

### 7 More Corona Deaths In J&K,...

(48), Ganderbal (43), Shopian (37), Samba (38), Poonch (22), Ramban (21), Kishtwar(21), and Reasi (14). Meanwhile, 291 more people, including two minors and 19 travellers tested positive for coronavirus in J&K during the last 24 hours, officials said.

Giving a district wise break up, the officials said, Srinagar reported 66, Baramulla 7, Budgam 22, Kupwara 12, Pulwama 18, Anantnag 3, Bandipora 3, Ganderbal 4, Kulgam 4, Shopian 8, Jammu 94, Udhampur 9, Rajouri 8, Doda 3, Kathua 8, Kishtwar 3, Samba 8, Poonch 1, Ramban 6 and Reasi 4 new cases of Covid-19. Moreover, the officials said that 299 more patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals including 160 from Jammu Division and 139 from Kashmir. (With GNS inputs)

### PM To Launch Ayushman...

that the scheme will ensure universal health coverage, and focus on providing financial risk protection and ensuring quality and affordable essential health services to all individuals and communities.

Home Minister Amit Shah and the union territory's Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha will also be present on the occasion.

The scheme will provide free of cost insurance cover to all the residents of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, the PMO said, adding that it will provide financial cover of up to Rs 5 lakh per family on a floater basis to all residents of the UT.

There is provision for operational extension of 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana' (PM-JAY) to approximately Rs 15 lakh additional families, the PMO statement said, adding that that the scheme will operate on insurance mode in convergence with PM-JAY.

The benefits of the scheme will be portable across the country. The hospitals empanelled under the PM-JAY scheme shall provide services under this scheme as well, the PMO said.(PTI)

### Footballer Turned Militant...

According to news agency KNO, 22-year-old Amir was missing on June 24 this year when he left his maternal uncle's house at Adipora, Sopore, to play football.

Quoting sources, the report says that Amir had switched off his mobile phone and couldn't be contacted by any of his family members.

"Amir was an ace footballer and was known for his skills in the play field," the report added.

According to the police spokesperson, both the militants were involved in several crime cases, including attacks on security forces and civilian 'atrocities'.

"Incriminating materials including arms and ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other crimes," he added.

The police spokesperson further said that a case under relevant sections of law has been registered and investigation has been initiated in this regard. He also urged People to cooperate with police till the area is completely sanitized and cleared of all the explosive materials, if any.

### CRPF Man Injured In Grenade...

of CRPF 115 battalion died of serious splinter injuries at the SK institute of medical sciences here on Thursday, a senior police officer said. Chutia was among six people, including his three colleagues, injured in a grenade attack in Tawheed Chowk area of Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district on Wednesday.

### SSB Trooper Injured In Sopore...

Soon after the attack, government forces launched a cordon and search operation in the area to nab the attackers.(GNS) reported. The injured trooper was removed by his colleagues to the nearby hospital for treatment.

### Militant Module Busted, 4...

Dadsara Tral were arrested on Wednesday night by a joint team of police, army's 42 RR and the personnel of CRPF 130 battalion during a search operation launched in the twin villages on the

basis of a specific information, a police spokesperson said.

All the four arrested youth, he said, were militant associates of Al-Badr outfit.

"On their disclosure, they led the joint team to a secret place where they had concealed arms and ammunition. On their instance, one AK-56 rifle, one magazine and 28 rounds besides a hand grenade were recovered," the police spokesperson said.

In this regard, he said, a case FIR No. 195/2020 under relevant sections of law has been registered at police station Awantipora. "Further investigation into the matter is in progress," he added.

### Army Completes Summary...

which completed its probe earlier in September, had found "prima facie" evidence that troops had "exceeded" powers under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) during the July 18 encounter in which three men were killed. Following this, the army had initiated disciplinary proceedings.

Officials in know of the development said the two army personnel may face court martial proceedings for violating the powers vested under the AFSPA, 1990 and not following the Do's and Don'ts of Chief of Army Staff as approved by the Supreme Court. The officials said the accused personnel may face serious charges under the law.

They also said the role of the three civilians as well as the person who had allegedly led the army to the youths in Amshipura in Shopian needs to be thoroughly examined by the police.

The three civilians killed in Amshipura were Imtiyaz Ahmed, Abrar Ahmed and Mohammed Ibrar, hailing from Rajouri district. Their identities were subsequently confirmed through a DNA test. The bodies were handed over to their families in Baramulla in October.

The role and antecedents of these three youths are also being investigated due to lack of clarity on their intent and actions upon coming to Shopian. Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha had visited the families of the three Rajouri youths and expressed condolences. He had also assured the families that the UT government will extend full support to them and ensure that justice is done in the case.

He had also conveyed the message of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the government stands with the aggrieved families, and they will be taken care of with all support from the government. (PTI)

### 'Identity Wallpaper Gone'...

Most of them are also drawing flak after the bank produced a "lackluster" e-version as an alternative.

"When you easily give up on your brand product without putting up any resistance, it makes the motives of executives clear-- that they are also seeking change by disturbing the status quo," said Nazir Geelani, a fruit merchant from Sopore.

"But then, what can you do?" he added."In the so-called 'Naya Kashmir', new orders are being unleashed at the cost of undoing the existing ones."

### JEE Mains In 13 Languages said.

He further said that the NAT has also released the examination schedule according to which the Session-I exam would be held from February 23 to Feb 26, 2021, the Session-II from March 15 to March 18, 2021, Session-III from April 27 to April 30, 2021 and Session-IV from May 24 to May 28, 2021.

### LG Greet People On Christmas

Jesus Christ is as valid today as it was thousand years ago. "I pray that we all try to emulate his life lessons, wisdom and be loving and compassionate towards one another and work selflessly for the betterment of the society," Sinha, as per an official spokesperson said.

### Electric Shock Kills Youth...

brought dead. "His post-mortem is being conducted at GMC Anantnag," Block Medical Officer (BMO) Mattan Dr Saleem said

### Building Gutted In Baderwah

an operation was launched to douse the flames as shops and houses adjoining the building are mostly made of dry cedar and pine wood, the officials said. Baderwah ADC Rakesh Kumar said as per preliminary investigation, there are no signs of any foul play.

"It appears that there is no foul play, and the fire started due to a short circuit. A team has been already deputed to access the losses, and we will compensate the family under the SDRF scheme at the earliest," he added.



## Online Services Offered Under Ease Of Doing Business In J&K



**JAMMU:** Commissioner Secretary, General Administration Department, Manoj Kumar Dwivedi today reviewed various services forming part of the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP), 2018 under Ease of Doing Business.

The Government, as a part of the Public Service Guarantee Act, has been streamlining the service delivery mechanism across the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and efforts are being made to reach out to the beneficiaries and citizens for more efficient provisioning of services in a time bound manner.

As part of the Business Reform Action Plan, 11 departments have been asked to offer 73 services on the online mode only. These include the departments of Finance, Health and Medical Education, Home, Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture Production and Farmers' Welfare, Power Development Department, Industries and Commerce, Forest, Ecology and Environment, Labour and Employment, Food

Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs and Tourism.

While reviewing the services offered online, Manoj Kumar Dwivedi appreciated efforts of the confirming departments and advised them to periodically update the portals so as to provide user friendly services. Flagging concerns about the non-functionality of portals of some departments, Dwivedi directed these departments to expedite the process of making the portals live, so that the citizens are able to access such services through online mode in the shortest possible time.

It is notable to mention that the bulk of such services pertain to day to day requirement of the citizens and business concerns and the efforts made in this regard shall be providing succour to the public in accessing the services online with minimal requirement of physical visits to the public offices.

The meeting was attended by officials of concerned departments.

**IT IS NOTABLE TO MENTION THAT** the bulk of such services pertain to day to day requirement of the citizens and business concerns and the efforts made in this regard shall be providing succour to the public in accessing the services online with minimal requirement of physical visits to the public offices.

## Volkswagen To Hike Polo, Vento Prices In India By Up To 2.5 Pc Next Month



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI:** German carmaker Volkswagen on Thursday said it will hike prices of its hatchback Polo and mid-sized sedan Vento in India by up to 2.5 per cent from next month. The company joins other automobile manufacturers such as Maruti Suzuki India, Nissan, Renault India, Honda Cars, Mahindra & Mahindra, Ford India, Isuzu, BMW India, Audi India and Hero MotoCorp, which have already announced that they would hike prices from January due to increased input costs.

"Effective January 2021, Volkswagen India announces a price revision of up to 2.5 per cent across the Polo and Vento models in lieu to the rising input costs," a spokesperson of Volkswagen Passenger Cars India said in a statement.

The company sells Polo and Vento with price starting from Rs 5.88 lakh and Rs 8.94 lakh, respectively.



## Tourism Deptt. Organizes Christmas Eve Celebrations At Srinagar, Gulmarg

**SRINAGAR:** The Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir, Thursday organised Christmas Eve Celebrations here at SKICC and at St Mary's Church, Gulmarg in which the members of Christian Community, representatives of Travel trade, and tourists participated in large numbers.

In this connection, the premises of the SKICC was decorated with Merry Christmas themed bunting, flags, balloons and various kinds of banners giving a festive look on the occasion.

Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Bas-eer Ahmad Khan who was chief guest on the occasion inaugurated the function. Secretary Tourism and Culture, Sarmad Hafeez, Director Tourism Kashmir, Nissar Ahmad Wani, Director SKICC, Bakshi Javed Humayun, besides other officers of the Tourism department were also present on the occasion.

The members of Christian community participated in the special prayers, carols and various cultural programmes. The devotees prayed for communal harmony, love and compassion for humanity.

Speaking on the occasion, Advisor extended his greetings and wishes to the people and prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of Jammu and Kashmir. He said people of J&K are known for the brotherhood and value communal harmony which is evident from the large participation of the locals and the travel trade members in the celebrations of these festivals.

Advisor said the Tourism Department has lined up many activities for promotion of tourism sector and to attract a good number of travellers to J&K. He said apart from Christmas celebrations, the department has made all the preparations for mega event on New Year, winter carnival and Khelo India games which will be held at various resorts including ski resort of Gulmarg. Advisor further announced that government is throwing open many other

potential areas for tourism activities and also upgrading the infrastructure to ensure memorable stay for the travellers.

He lauded the efforts of the Tourism department and SKICC for organizing such function and hoped that large number of tourists will enjoy white Christmas celebrations at Gulmarg. He urged upon tourism players to take maximum benefit from such platforms provided by government and appealed them and all stakeholders to contribute their best for revival and promotion of tourism industry across J&K.

While stressing on importance of highlighting the measures undertaken by Tourism Department for reviving and boosting tourism related activities in J&K, Advisor said media fraternity particularly national media has pivotal role in portraying real picture of Kashmir which has abundant attractiveness and is ideal all four season tourist destination for peace and beauty lovers.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Tourism Sarmad Hafeez also extended his Christmas greetings to the community.

Sarmad Hafeez said besides the festivals and other tourism promotional events, the department is also organising free skiing courses for youngsters mostly drawn from government schools. "We have already started promotional events. Skiing courses are already in progress by Youth Services and Sports Department at Gulmarg. The 2nd batch of trainees sponsored by the tourism department was also flagged off today. Many other events have started to create a buzz that J&K Tourism is open for travellers which has proven very fruitful as is evident from the fact that enquiries for Kashmir holidays have picked up," he said.

Sarmad Hafeez expressed happiness that, after COVID 19 lockdown which saw every sector especially tourism getting badly affected, the

tourists have started visiting the Valley.

"Hotels at Ski resort are fully packed and sold out. It is difficult to find a single room till January first week which is a good sign and it has brought cheers to the travel sector here which were badly affected by Covid pandemic lockdown and travel restrictions," he said.

He further said the department of Tourism is making every effort to bring tourists back to the Valley through various tourism promotional programmes including road shows. The Secretary said tourism department has already started campaigns to woo tourists and flow of tourists is increasing day by day amid proper Covid-19 protocols and arrivals have gone up, even locals are visiting tourist places to enjoy snow and snow games.

"We are hopeful that the tourist arrival will continue to increase in the coming months. We will also leave no stone unturned in our promotional campaigns in association with the local travel and hospitality sector," he said.

Director Tourism Kashmir Nisar A Wani also spoke on the occasion and gave a detailed overview of the arrangements and preparations put in place at various resorts especially at Gulmarg for winter tourism activities.

On the occasion Christmas themed cake competition was also held and the first three winners were given cash awards while others were given mementos and certificates. Scores of young bakers had participated in the competition who designed special cakes on Christmas theme.

Earlier, the Advisor flagged off cycling rally as part of the celebrations and also flagged off trainees to Gulmarg for a week long ski course.

A separate function was also organised at Gulmarg and prayers were held at the St Mary's Church - one of the oldest churches of British era. Many tourists also participated in the celebrations at the Church.

## India's Online Food Market To Grow At \$ 8 Billion By 2022: Report

IANIS

Indias online food ordering market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 25-30 per cent to touch \$7.5-8 billion by 2022, up from \$4 billion, said a report by Google and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) on Thursday.

This brings good news for multiple food technology brands, including the world's largest fish and meat online e-commerce platform FreshToHome, which managed to raise a total of \$121 million in a Series C funding in a year that was full of upheavals for most businesses.

Greater internet penetration into tier 2 and 3 markets has worked as a catalyst for online food companies such as Licious, Grofers, BigBasket,



Zappfresh, and MilkBasket, as more and more people shifted from conventional retail markets to online food deliveries during the pandemic. This, coupled with their accelerated reach resulted in newer groups of customers and higher profits.

Moreover, mobile-based apps, tech integration including QR-based menu display, contactless payments, online meals customisation, online tracking and tracing of ingredients, and AI-enabled smart camera-aided services in the food industry have

become norms today. This integration of technology with food is estimated to grow at a CAGR of 25-30 per cent to \$8 billion by 2022.

Rapid digitization and a consistently growing consumption multiplied the reach of food tech aggregators between 2017-2019 by six times, according to a report by Google and BCG.

And if statistics are anything to go by, even the time spent exploring and ordering food online has almost doubled from 32 minutes in 2017 to 72 minutes a month in 2019. It is also anticipated that the food ordering frequency is estimated to rise by 18-20 per cent, though average order values may slow down by 5-10 per cent as consumers order smaller portions but in higher numbers.

## EY To Hire 9,000 Professionals In 2021 In Various Technology Roles



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Global professional services organisation Ernst & Young Services on Thursday said it will hire about 9,000 new workforces in India in 2021, in various technology roles across all member firms.

These hires will be from the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) background and in areas including artificial intelligence, machine learning, cyber security, analytics and other emerging technologies, EY said in a statement.

"Today, our clients, both in government and private businesses, are embarking on technology-led transformation and we are supporting them in this journey. With the pace of digital adoption accelerating exponentially, we are strengthening capabilities in emerging technology roles and significantly intensifying our hiring efforts

in the coming year," EY India Partner and Consulting Practice Leader Rohan Sachdev said.

EY in India has over 50,000 people working in all member firms including global delivery centers.

Currently, 36 per cent of all EY India employees are from the STEM background.

We are developing a broad-range of new digital proprietary tools and solutions which we are looking to take to scale across organisations and geographies.

"We are using our sector knowledge to deliver tailored digital solutions and services to support our clients' transformation plans and leveraging the managed services model to help them navigate the volatility. Our people remain at the center of our strategy to meet the growing demands of our clients," EY India Partner and Technology Consulting Leader Mahesh Makhija added.

**WE ARE USING OUR SECTOR** knowledge to deliver tailored digital solutions and services to support our clients' transformation plans and leveraging the managed services model to help them navigate the volatility. Our people remain at the center of our strategy to meet the growing demands of our clients,"

## Nissan To Hike Prices Of All Vehicles In India By Up To 5 Percent From January



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI:** Japanese automaker Nissan on Wednesday said it will hike prices of its vehicles in India by up to 5 percent across models from next month to offset increased costs. The revised prices will be applicable across all available models for Nissan and Datsun, effective January 2021.

The company sells a range of mass market vehicles under the Datsun and Nissan brands, including Datsun Redi-Go, newly launched SUV Magnite and Kicks, with prices in the range of Rs 2.89 lakh to Rs

14.15 lakh.

Commenting on the price hike, Nissan Motor India Managing Director Rakesh Srivastava said, "In the current challenging market conditions, we are constrained to increase the price of all Nissan and Datsun models due to increased costs. The proposed price increase will be effective from January 2021."

Other automobile makers like Maruti Suzuki India, Renault India, Honda Cars, Mahindra & Mahindra, Ford India, Isuzu, BMW India, Audi India and Hero MotoCorp have already announced that they would hike prices from January due to increased input costs.

### NEWS MAKERS

## J&K Bank Holds 12th AGM Of JKB Financial Services Ltd

**SRINAGAR:** JKB Financial Services Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of J&K Bank today held its 12th Annual General Meeting at Srinagar. The Meeting was chaired by Chairman & Managing Director of J&K Bank, Mr. R K Chhibber and attended by its Shareholders and Directors on Board.

The Shareholders of the Company reviewed and approved the financial results of the Company for FY 2019-20. Besides the shareholders approved the re-appointment of Mr. Sunil Gupta as Director on the Board. The appointment of Mr. Rakesh Koul & Mr. Nisar Ahmad Zargar as Directors and Mr. Mohammad Muzaffar Wani as Managing Director



of the Company was also approved. The shareholders also passed a resolution for the appointment of Ms. Nishi Baru

as Director on the Board of the Company. The resolution for the amendment in Memorandum of Association of the Com-

pany to undertake business in commodity trading and other business lines was also passed by the shareholders.

During the meeting the business strategy of the Company for expanding its footprints not only in UT's of J & K and Ladakh but also rest of the country was also discussed.

The Chairman advised the Company to aggressively market its products and services and also take initiatives for increasing awareness about financial planning and goal oriented investments among the masses.

The Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Pankaj Gour and Company Secretary of the Company, Mr. Zaffar Hamed were also present in the meeting.

## Piaggio India Launches Aprilia SXR 160 At Rs 1.26 Lakh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi:** Piaggio India on Wednesday launched its premium scooter Aprilia SXR 160 priced at Rs 1.26 lakh (ex-showroom Pune). The model can be booked for an initial amount of Rs 5,000 across all dealerships in India and online on aprilaiindia.com, the company said in a statement.

The premium scooter is powered by a single-cylinder, 4-stroke engine that produces peak power of 11 PS at 7100 RPM. It comes with a fuel tank capacity of seven litres.

Commenting on the launch, Piaggio India Chairman and Managing Director Diego Graffi



said, "designed in Italy, for India, the Aprilia SXR 160 is an epitome of great style, high performance and great comfort."

The scooter will be available at all the dealerships of the company across India, he said adding, "we believe that this scooter will set high standards in the Indian premium two-wheeler market

and will be a testament of Piaggio's upcoming plans for India."

Aprilia SXR 160 comes with an anti-Lock braking system (ABS) along with ventilated disk brake and twin pots calliper hydraulic brake which delivers high braking performance, the company said. It also has a host of other features such as digital speed indicator, RPM meter, mileage indicator, average speed and top speed display, digital fuel indicator, ABS indicator, engine malfunction indicator.

"Customers can also opt for the mobile connectivity accessory which connects the user's mobile to the scooter and helps them in locating it, raising security alarm when needed," it added.



# Masks Alone May Not Stop COVID-19 Spread, Physical Distancing Key: Study

Press Trust of India

Washington: Simply wearing a face mask may not protect you from catching the novel coronavirus, that causes COVID-19, if you are not maintaining physical distancing, according to a study.

The research, published in the journal Physics of Fluids, tested how five different types of mask materials affected the spread of droplets that carry the SARS-CoV-2 virus, when we cough or sneeze.

All the material the researchers tested dramatically reduced the number of droplets that were transmitted.

However, enough droplets to potentially cause the viral illness still made it through several of the materials when physical distance was less than six feet, they said.

"A mask definitely helps, but if the people are very close to each other, there is still a chance of spreading or contracting the virus," said Krishna Kota, an as-

sociate professor at New Mexico State University in the US.

"It's not just masks that will help. It's both the masks and distancing," Mr Kota added.

The researchers developed a machine that uses an air generator to mimic human coughs and sneezes.

The generator was used to blow tiny liquid particles, like the airborne droplets of sneezes and coughs, through laser sheets in an airtight square tube with a camera.

They blocked the flow of the droplets in the tube with five different types of materials -- a regular cloth, a two-layer cloth mask, a wet two-layer cloth, a surgical mask, and a medical-grade N-95 ventilator.

Each of the masks captured the vast majority of droplets, ranging from the regular cloth mask, which allowed about 3.6 per cent of the droplets to go through, to the N-95 mask, which statistically stopped 100 per cent of the droplets.

The researchers noted that at distances of less than six feet,

even those small percentages of droplets can be enough to get someone sick, especially if a person with COVID-19 sneezes or coughs multiple times.

According to the researchers, a single sneeze can carry up to 200 million tiny virus particles, depending on how sick the carrier is.

They noted that even if a mask blocks a huge percentage of those particles, enough could escape to get someone sick if that person is close to the carrier.

"Without a face mask, it is almost certain that many foreign droplets will transfer to the susceptible person," Mr Kota said.

"Wearing a mask will offer substantial, but not complete, protection to a susceptible person by decreasing the number of foreign airborne sneeze and cough droplets that would otherwise enter the person without the mask," he said.

Mr Kota added that people should try to minimise or avoid close face-to-face or frontal human interactions.



A mask definitely helps, but if the people are very close to each other, there is still a chance of spreading or contracting the virus

## Indians buying 5G phones for future seamless video streaming

Despite no 5G on ground, Indians are buying 5G-ready smartphones, especially millennials, believing that 5G will give greater thrust to user-generated content especially video streaming when available, said a new report.

Amid the pandemic, 5G has contributed to an uptick in video creation and consumption among 5G smartphone users in China and Western Europe.

More than four in every five 5G smartphone users are satisfied with overall 5G usage globally and in India, there is heightened consumer excitement and optimism around 5G smartphones, according to a global consumer study by Gurugram-based CyberMedia Research (CMR).

"5G will positively impact the way we create, communicate, collaborate, consume content and share our experiences with our loved ones and the world through primarily, a video-led medium," said Prabhu Ram, Head-Industry Intelligence Group, CMR.

"I believe that when 5G becomes available in India within the next two years, it will give a considerable thrust to the increasing trend of short-form video creation and sharing, amongst millennials," Ram said in a statement.

The study titled "The 5G Future Now" studied covered 5,000 consumers in the age groups of 18 to 35, spread across India (3,000), China (1,000) and Western Europe (1,000).



For early 5G smartphone users in China and Western Europe, 5G is translating into exciting use cases, such as short-form video creation and consumption, video-calling, mobile gaming and AR/VR, among others.

In India, 5G readiness is one of the top three considerations amongst premium smartphone users (83 per cent), just behind battery life (84 per cent) and smartphone brand imagery (84 per cent), the findings showed.

According to Satya Mohanty, Head-Industry Consulting Group, CMR, Indian consumers are seeking to upgrade to 5G-ready phones driven by the urge to future-proof themselves.

"While doing so, they seek to benefit from the overall user experience that the premium device offers, whether it be through smooth everyday performance, AI-enabled cameras, or enhanced mobile gaming capabilities," Mohanty added.

Nearly three in every five existing premium smartphone users are definitely seeking to upgrade to 5G ready smartphones.

When it comes to 5G smartphone offerings, consumers nurture emotional bonds and affinity with smartphone brands that can deliver on consumer expectations around their brand vision, new innovations, and 5G tech R&D leadership, the report mentioned.

-Agencies

## Enzyme discovery can help rein in blood vessels that fuel cancer

A recent study pinpoints the precise molecular machinery that makes this happen, providing scientific insights that can potentially be translated into medicines that help kill tumours and stop cancer from spreading in the body.

The findings also may enable new interventions that promote healthy blood-vessel development for people with heart disease and other conditions, says the study's leader Xiang-Lei Yang, PhD, a professor in the Department of Molecular Medicine at Scripps Research.

The research appears in the journal PLOS Biology. "We've uncovered a key regulation step that drives blood-vessel development for tissues deprived of adequate oxygen--finally creating a more complete picture of the complex process that enables cancer tumors to adapt and survive," said Yang.

"By blocking this process on a molecular level, we found it's possible to inhibit tumour growth," added Yang.

The study culminates a years-long project initiated by first author Yi Shi, PhD, who began the work as a staff scientist in Yang's lab but recently finished his contributions from Nankai University in Tianjin, China, where he is now a faculty member.

Over the past decades, Yang and her team have published several key discoveries relating to how cells create blood vessels, delving into previously unknown roles of genes that regulate this function.

Prior studies dealt with genes known as c-Myc and HIF-1, which promote blood vessel development and have

strong links to cancer. In the new study, Yang's team looked at negative regulators of blood vessel growth--or proteins that turn the function off--to find out what causes them to become inactivated when tissues are deprived of oxygen, which is what happens within a solid tumour.

Their central focus was an enzyme known as SerRS (seryl-tRNA synthetase), most commonly known to exist in the gel-like substance within cells.

There, the enzyme kicks off the first step of making new proteins. However, the enzyme is also found within the nucleus, performing an entirely different but vital job: Limiting unhealthy blood vessel growth by tamping down the function of c-Myc and HIF-1.

In the study, the researchers found that SerRS can be "silenced" by proteins known as ATM/ATR, which manage DNA damage responses. These proteins activate when tissues are deprived of oxygen. When this happens, new blood vessel growth can go unchecked and tumours can flourish. Through separate experiments involving mice and human breast cancer cells, the team confirmed that by blocking the effect of ATM/ATR on SerRS, they were able to successfully reduce tumour growth.

Notably, Yang says, SerRS is part of an evolutionarily ancient family of enzymes called tRNA synthetases, which begin the process of making proteins that go on to form blood, skin, bones and other essential elements of human life. The findings of this study show that SerRS has evolved extra functions beyond making proteins.

Agencies

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

#### TENDER NOTICE INVITING E- TENDERS

NIET NO: 30 e-Tendering/2020-21

Dated: 21-12-2020

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

S. No.	Name of work	Est. Cost (In Lacs)	Cost of Tender Document (Non-refundable)	Earnest money	Time of Completion in days/ Weeks	Class of Contract (Civil)	Head of Account
1.	Construction of Guard Rooms/Frisking Rooms at Central Office, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Karan Nagar Srinagar.	Rs. 9.03/-	500/-		12 Days	CEE/DEE	Authorized Vide NO.SMC/JCW/SE/9394-96, Dated 19-12-2020
2.	Raising of Boundary walling at Central Office, Srinagar Municipal Corporation Karan Nagar Srinagar.	Rs. 7.14/-	500/-		10 Days	CEE/DEE	Authorized Vide NO.SMC/JCW/SE/9394-96, Dated 19-12-2020
3.	Construction of brick walls near staircase at Central Office, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Karan Nagar Srinagar.	Rs. 1.90/-	200/-		7 Days	DEE	Authorized Vide NO.SMC/JCW/SE/9394-96, Dated 19-12-2020
4.	Construction of separate Entrance/Gate with Guard Post for VIP movement at Central Office, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Karan Nagar Srinagar.	Rs. 4.49/-	200/-		7 Days	DEE	Authorized Vide NO.SMC/JCW/SE/9394-96, Dated 19-12-2020
5.	Providing of MS Sheet window shields at Central Office, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Karan Nagar Srinagar.	Rs. 14.93/-	700/-		15 Days	CEE/DEE	Authorized Vide NO.SMC/JCW/SE/9394-96, Dated 19-12-2020
6.	Installation of two number Automatic Boom Barrier/Drop Gate at main gate of Central Office, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Karan Nagar Srinagar.	Rs. 3.50/- Lacs	200/-		7 Days	DEE	Authorized Vide NO.SMC/JCW/SE/9394-96, Dated 19-12-2020
7.	Construction of four number Tower Posts at Central Office, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Karan Nagar Srinagar.	Rs. 15.47/-	700/-		18 Days	CEE/DEE	Authorized Vide NO.SMC/JCW/SE/9394-96, Dated 19-12-2020

1.	Publish date	21-12-2020 04:00 PM
2.	Document download	22-12-2020 10:00AM To 28-12-2020 04:00PM
3.	Bid submission/uploading date	22-12-2020 10:00AM To 28-12-2020 04:00PM
4.	Bid Opening date	29-12-2020 02:00 PM
5.	Submission of hardcopy for successful bidder	30-12-2020 upto 4.00 PM

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

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

No: SMC/EELRWD/4351-4346  
Dated: 21-12-2020  
DIPK-NB-4804/20

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

### Government of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER WATER WORKS DIVISION SRINAGAR

#### GIST OF NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER E-NIT No: 30/WWD OF 2020-21 DATED:22.12.2020

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER WATER WORKS DIVISION SRINAGAR ON BEHALF OF GOVERNOR OF J&K STATE OF [U.T], INVITES TENDERS BY E-TENDERING MODE FROM APPROVED AND ELIGIBLE REGISTERED ELECTRIC / MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS/ FIRMS OF UNION TERRITORY OF J&K.

HEAD OF ACCOUNT: JKIDFC LTD.

POSITION OF FUNDS AVAILABLE

S. No	Name of Work	Estd. Cost (in lacs)	EMD (in Rupees)	Cost of tender Document (challan)(in Rs)	T.O.C	Class of Contractor
1	Providing, fixing, testing & commissioning of V.T. pumping units for sump of upper Brein area at Water Treatment Plant Nishat. (Under Languishing Programme)	24.65	49300	750	30 days	Electric / Mechanical
2	Providing, fixing, testing & commissioning of Submersible de-sludging pumps with allied accessories at Water Treatment Plant Nishat. (Under Languishing Programme)	11.10	22200	350	25 days	Electric / Mechanical

NOTE:FOR FURTHER DETAILS, BIDDERS ARE REQUESTED TO REFER TO E-NIT INSTRUCTIONS PUBLISHED ON WEBSITE:HTTP://WWW.JKTENDERS.GOV.IN.VINDE THIS OFFICE ENDORSEMENT No: WWD/30OF 2020-21 Dt:23.12.2020. THE DATES SHOWING BID SUBMISSION DATE/CLOSING DATE ETC. ARE GIVEN BELOW:

1	Date of publishing	23.12.2020
2	Document downloading date	23.12.2020/1600hrs
3	Bid submission start date	23.12.2020/1630hrs
4	Bid submission closing date	31.12.2020/1600hrs
5	Date and time for opening bids	01.01.2021/1100hrs
6	Place of opening of bids	Office of The Executive Engineer Water Works Division Srinagar.

DIPK-10847/20

No: WWD/7121-35  
Dated:23-12-2020

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
Water Works Division Srinagar.





# AUS Vs IND: Coach Justin Langer 'Empathises' With Indian Team But Is Glad That Visitors 'Are Stressed'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Australia chief coach Justin Langer can empathise with the Indian team after the 36-run shocker it endured in Adelaide but he is also "glad" that the visitors are "stressed" during the Christmas weekend ahead of the second Test on December 26.

Having won the first Test within two and half days by dismissing India for their lowest Test score of 36, Langer said his team would look to drive home the advantage in the absence of Virat Kohli by putting relentless pressure on new skipper Ajinkya Rahane.

What would he have done

had he been in India coach Ravi Shastri's shoes?

"None of my business. I have had enough with stresses ....I empathise with the opposition and I know what it feels like. If India are feeling any stress, I am glad they are and not us over the Christmas weekend," Langer said during a virtual media conference organised by series broadcasters Sony Network.

He did admit that the absence of Kohli (paternity leave) and Mohammed Shami (wrist fracture) would be an advantage for his team but the focus firmly remains on its own planning.

"Of course, whatever sport you play, if you take out two of your stars, Virat Kohli is an all-



time great player I think and Shami is a real glue for the team because he is so miserly and

on the first day and build pressure on Rahane as he is the new captain of India for this series. So the processes don't change. Whenever you take out best players of any cricket team, it weakens them and that's the reality," he said.

While David Warner is out of the second Test, Langer couldn't say with finality whether the dashing opener will be available for the third Test in Sydney.

"I am very hopeful. ....as I said for the last three weeks or so, he will be doing everything possible to get back out onto the ground, so fingers crossed," he said.

But he does have trouble running?

"He is starting (to get) a bit of trouble running at full speed, when he gets that back and feels confident with it, of course he will come back into our team, so we will just monitor him regularly and fingers crossed that he will be back," Langer said.

Tim Paine's batting has been a topic of discussion as the Australians judge every keeper-batsman through the Adam Gilchrist prism but the coach has enormous faith in his skipper's abilities and the leadership qualities he has shown in the past two years.

"You think about Adam Gilchrist, I guess, who transformed the game in a sense, and that is why Adam Gilchrist is an

all-time great player because he transformed the game. I have got enormous faith in Tim Paine," Langer said.

"...whether it's his wicket-keeping, his captaincy, his batting, I have said publicly and privately for almost the last year, he is our most important player, because he is a lead wicket-keeper, his leadership on and off the field is incredible," he said.

"...we saw he can play, how well he batted in first innings under pressure in Adelaide, probably changed the game actually with the run-out of Virat Kohli, so he is a great player, great leader and I literally love having him in our team," he said.

**NONE OF MY BUSINESS. I HAVE HAD ENOUGH WITH STRESSES ....I empathise with the opposition and I know what it feels like. If India are feeling any stress, I am glad they are and not us over the Christmas weekend,"** Langer said during a virtual media conference organised by series broadcasters Sony Network.

## Cricket Australia Declares Melbourne As Standby Venue For Sydney Test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cricket Australia on Thursday said Melbourne has been placed on standby to host the third Test between India and Australia if Sydney's COVID-19 situation renders it "untenable" despite efforts being made to continue with the original schedule.

The fate of the third Test has been shrouded in uncertainty since earlier this month after a fresh COVID-19 outbreak in the northern beaches in Sydney, which is scheduled to host the third Test from January 7.

"CA has reaffirmed its commitment to giving it the best chance to play the third Vodafone Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground and the fourth Vodafone Test at the Gabba as per the original schedule," CA said in a statement.

"Should the public health situation in NSW render playing in Sydney untenable, CA's preferred contingency plan is to work with the Victorian Government to play the third Vodafone Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground followed by the fourth Vodafone Test at the Gabba," it added.



A final decision on the third Test venue would be made during the Boxing Day Test.

Even though the situation in northern beaches has improved, there are concerns that Queensland will not grant the required exemptions, which will mean players and broadcasting crews will not be able to travel from Sydney to Brisbane between the third and fourth Tests.

However, CA interim chief executive officer Nick Hockley said the board is working closely with the Queensland government to get exemptions.

"We are working constructive-

ly with the Queensland Government and have been encouraged by the positive nature of discussions with them. We thank the Queensland Government for their support," Hockley said.

"The record testing numbers and the drop in new community transmissions in NSW have provided cause for optimism, however if the situation in Sydney deteriorates, we have strong contingency plans in place," he added.

Earlier, CEO Stuart Fox said Melbourne Cricket Club is "ready" to host back-to-back matches between India and Australia but would rather see Sydney retain its

traditional New Year's Test.

"I've been in touch with Cricket Australia daily and our position has been, we would love to see the Sydney Test Match stay in Sydney, it's no fun having it relocated," Fox told 'SEN Radio'.

"We're ready to go if we're needed, but again, if that Test can get away in Sydney, it's such an iconic Test, very traditional and an important sporting moment in Australian sport so let's hope it gets away, I'd hate to see it moved." In a bid to save its New Year fixture, NSW on Wednesday had offered to host the Brisbane Test as well, if the Queensland government refuses to grant exemptions to the teams returning from Sydney.

"I don't think a decision is pending today, probably the strategy would be to delay and see where the Sydney numbers get to," Fox said.

"Obviously, there's a lot to think about with staffing, preparing another pitch and ticket sales, so we're in a position, we're ready to go, but again, let's hope it stays in Sydney.

The series finale is scheduled to be played at the Gabba on January 15.

## BCCI Approves 10 Teams For IPL 2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**AHMEDABAD:** The BCCI's governing body on Thursday ratified the entry of two new franchises in the IPL to make it a 10-team affair from 2022 during its Annual General Meeting (AGM) here.

In another major development, the Board, in principle, decided to back the ICC's bid for inclusion of cricket, in the T20 format, in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics "after getting some clarifications from the International Olympic Committee".

"Two new teams will be introduced in the 2022 IPL," a Board source told PTI.

Also, it was decided that all first-class players, both men and women, will be suitably compensated for the curtailed domestic season due to the CO-



VID-19 pandemic.

The BCCI plans to get the domestic season underway, after several months' delay, in January with the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 championship.

In other decisions, veteran Congress leader Rajiv Shukla was officially anointed the board's vice president in place of his protege Mahim Verma

from Uttarakhand.

It was also learnt that the general body decided in favour of Sourav Ganguly continuing as a director in the ICC Board.

Secretary Jay Shah will be the alternate director as well as India's representative at the Chief Executive Committee meets of the global body.

## Chetan Sharma Appointed New Chairman Of Selectors

**AHMEDABAD:** Former India pacer Chetan Sharma was on Thursday appointed chairman of the senior national selection panel by the BCCI's Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC), which also picked Mumbai's Abey Kuruvilla and Odisha's Debasish Mohanty in the five-member team.

The new panel was formed on the sidelines of the Board's 89th Annual General Meeting (AGM) here, with Sharma pipping Maninder Singh and Vijay Dahiya from the north zone.

"It's indeed a privilege for me to get an opportunity to serve Indian cricket once again. I am a man of few words and my action will speak louder than words," Sharma, who has a five-wicket haul at Lord's in a Test match, told PTI.

"I can only thank BCCI for this opportunity," the 54-year-old added. Former medium pacer Kuruvilla, who was backed by Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) bigwigs, was preferred over a more decorated Ajit Agarkar from the west zone.

Mohanty, a former India seamer from Odisha, was serving as junior national selector for the last two years and will remain in the committee for another couple of years only.

The selection panel also comprises former India players Sunil Joshi (south zone) and Harvinder Singh (central zone).

"The committee further recommended Chetan Sharma for the role of chairman of the senior men's selection committee based on seniority (total number of Test matches)," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a press release.

"The CAC will review the candidates after a one-year period and make the recommendations to the BCCI," Shah added.

As per the BCCI constitution, the

candidate with the most Test caps becomes the chief selector.

Sharma represented India in 23 Tests and 65 ODIs during an 11-year-old international career, the highlight of which was his hat-trick in the 1987 World Cup.

At the age of 16, Sharma started playing first-class cricket for Haryana and made his Test debut aged 18, a year after making his ODI debut against the West Indies in December 1983.

The main deliberation on the day was to ensure a safe passage for Kuruvilla, whose cricketing achievements were no match for Agarkar, who was the only candidate with more than 200 international appearances among the contenders.

"Agarkar never had the support of the Mumbai Cricket Association. There were allegations that he didn't watch matches as Mumbai chief selector. The MCA was adamant that Abey is their man," a senior BCCI source told PTI.

"Abey had backing from really influential people in Mumbai cricket fraternity and he played his cards really well. There was no way Ajit, despite his cricketing record, would have pipped Abey," he added.

It is learnt that some of the candidates were asked questions pertaining to roadmap of Indian cricket and also hypothetical questions on split captaincy.

While Joshi, who remained the chairman of selectors since his appointment to the post in March, after which cricketing activities came to a standstill due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was always on the cards.

"Joshi was made chairman with the premise that someone else will take over once all the members of the panel are changed," he said.PTI

## FIFA Cancels U17 And U20 World Cups In 2021



**FIFA** has canceled the Under-17 and Under-20 World Cups scheduled for next year due to the pandemic. The next editions are now due to be staged in 2023, with Indonesia still hosting the U20s and Peru the U17s.

FIFA says "the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present challenges for the hosting of in-

ternational sporting events and to have a restrictive effect on international travel." The governing body added "it became clear that the global situation has failed to normalize to a sufficient level to address the challenges associated with hosting both tournaments, including the feasibility of the relevant qualification pathways."

**A**parliamentary panel on Thursday recommended putting athletes, coaches and support staff going for the 2021 Japan Olympics in the priority group for the COVID-19 vaccination process.

The committee also voiced concern over large number of vacancies of coaches, saying they should be filled up in a time-bound manner so that Olympic preparations do not suffer.

The Japan Olympics are slated to be held from July next year.

The panel has also recommended identifying training facilities, stadia and sports centres for Olympic quali-

fied athletes which have not opened yet. It said the closed

## Olympics-Bound Athletes, Coaches Should Be In Vaccine Priority Group: Panel

centres should be reopened "at the earliest" or theatletes should berelocated to alternate centres which have opened.

The department-related parliamentary standing committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports headed by Vinay P Sahasrabudhesubmitted its report on "Preparation for Olympics 2021" to Rajya Sabha Chairperson M Venkaiah Naidu through virtual mode.

The report said medical staff and other medical equip-



ment should be made available within select Sports Authority of India and other training centres.

"This will ensure that athletes do not lose any time for

treatment and recovery. This will also keep them from travelling to hospitals where the chances of contracting COVID are the highest," it observed.

The panel pointed out that due to coronavirus-triggered lockdown and travel restrictions, there was loss of international and national competition exposure which has hugely affected the training of the athletes.

"The department and National Sports Federations must ensure that players get an op-



**A**rgentine football star Diego Maradona did not consume alcohol or illicit narcotics in the days before his death, an autopsy released on Wednesday said.

Maradona, who died in November aged 60, had taken seven different medicines to treat depression, anxiety and other ailments but "there was no presence of [illegal] drugs," a

judicial official told the Reuters news agency.

The autopsy, which was based on blood and urine samples and released by the Buenos Aires Scientific Police, said Maradona had problems with his kidneys, heart and lungs.

Investigators are looking into various facets of his death that rocked Argentina and the wider footballing world and have not

ruled out wrongful death.

The more detailed autopsy confirmed the results of one carried out immediately after his death that said the former Boca Juniors and Napoli player died from "acute pulmonary edema secondary to exacerbated chronic heart failure with dilated cardiomyopathy."

In an angry broadside at her father's critics, Maradona's daughter Gianinna said the autopsy showed "a result compatible with cirrhosis of the liver".

The charismatic 1986 World Cup winner, who was regarded as one of the greatest football players of all time, had battled alcohol and drug addiction for much of his life.

A judge last week ruled that Maradona's body cannot be exhumed or cremated in case DNA is needed at a later date for use in paternity or other cases.

Maradona has five recognised children and six with filiation requests. They are part of a complex inheritance process under way in Argentina.

portunity to play maximum international tournaments before the 2021 Olympic games.

"International competitions should be accorded priority as they prepare athletes for pressure situations they may find themselves in during actual Olympics," it said.

The committee observed that travelling to far away tournaments is a big challenge for athletes. Countries such as France and Germany that host tournaments at home, have produced more champions, it pointed out.

"India should host more international tournaments so that players can reduce travel to collect more points and move up the ranking ladder.



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