

LoC Flares ...

mortars along LoC in Nowshera sector in Rajouri district," a defence spokesman said in Jammu. Indian Army personnel guarding the LoC retaliated befittingly to the unprovoked ceasefire violations, officials said.

Jammu and Kashmir recorded 5,100 instances of ceasefire violations by Pakistan along the LoC in 2020 -- the highest in the past 18 years -- in which 36 people were killed and over 130 were injured, official sources said. Twenty-four security personnel were among the 36 killed.

Security forces officials said that shelling and firing by Pakistani troops was "very heavy" in 2020, virtually making the 2003 India-Pakistan border truce "redundant".

"Pakistani troops repeatedly targeted forwards posts and villages along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) to create a fear psychosis among the people and destabilise the peace along the borderline," a senior police officer said. (With PTI inputs)

Mehbooba Fires ...

investigation and asked the saffron party to fight with her politically and not through NIA, CBI and ED.

The former chief minister said that this letter is to put the ED on notice that if it intends to question her or examine her electronic or digital devices or those of the members of my family, it shall only do it in the presence of Ms Mehbooba or her representative and under the supervision of an impartial/judicial authority. "If there is any breach of what I consider to be the norms of law, good conduct and constitutionalism, I shall not hesitate to take matter up legally and politically," she added.

Mehbooba said it has come to her notice that the ED is summoning various persons from Kashmir, possibly in connection with ECIR/16/HIV/2020.

"The only common thread connecting three persons appears to be that they are all acquainting with me, my family or my political party in one or another way. The questioning of these persons is also focused on myself, my personal, political and financial affairs; my later father's grave and memorial, my sister's finances, home construction, my brother's finances and personal affairs etc," she wrote.

"Not very long ago, a key person of the PDP, who has now been returned successful by the people of Kashmir in the DDC elections, Waheed Parra, was arrested by the NIA in what appears to be a non-existent case around the dates of the elections. On the eve of the results, several of my relatives and party leaders were kept unlawful detention by the J&K administration," she added.

The PDP president said the use of the ED against political opponents is not an unknown device for a party in the power at the centre. "I wish to notify you that as a responsible citizen and politician, a former chief minister and Members of Parliament, and daughter of one of the most illustrious public personalities in this country, I am ready and willing to face any questioning by any agency. But, I will insist upon the legitimacy of the process," she said.

"I have understood that mobile phones and personal digital devices of some of the persons summoned in connection with the aforesaid ECIR has been seized by or at the behest of ED, or by intelligence agencies coincidental with the summons issued by the ED," Mehbooba further said.

"I draw your attention therefore to section 21(2) of the PMLA, 2002 and also notify you of the constitutional right to privacy, the right to democratic politics and indeed the right to due process. This is further to put you on notice that if you intend to question me or examine my electronic or digital devices or those of the members of my family, you shall only do it in the presence of myself or my representative and under the supervision of an impartial/judicial authority. If there is any breach of what I consider to be the norms of law, good conduct and constitutionalism, I shall not hesitate to take matter up legally and politically," she added. (Agencies)

Leh Highway ...

zero during the day. The mercury would witness further drop during the coming winter days.

The Srinagar-Leh highway has been closed for winter months, DSP Traffic Rural Ganderbal, Faheem Ali told news agency KNT.

Divisional Commissioner P.K. Pole also confirmed closure of the strategic highway for winters following slippery road conditions.

"We have withdrawn all our personnel deployed on the highway between Sonamarg and Drass, on the other side of the Zojila pass to regulate traffic," he said.

Pertinently, Beacon on the intervening night of December 31, rescued 300 passengers and 106 vehicles, stuck at Zojila Pass due to the slippery road conditions.

The official said that traffic police and local administration on both sides of the Zojila had made all efforts to clear vehicles to their respective destinations before its closure. The strategic highway remains closed from about four to five months every year. Meanwhile, metrological department has predicted moderate to heavy snowfall from Monday.

Authorities across the Kashmir valley have geared up all resources to

meet any challenge following the prediction of moderate to heavy rain and snow in Kashmir.

Intense Cold Wave ...

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', which began on December 21, will end on January 31, the cold wave continues even after that in Kashmir with a 20-day-long 'Chillai-Khurd' (small cold) and a 10-day-long 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold). (PTI)

Will Investigate ...

on Tuesday evening and ended on Wednesday. While one militant was killed in the early hours of Wednesday, two others were shot dead a few hours later, they had said.

"The GoC is a senior officer. I have no reason to dispute what he has said (about the encounter)," Singh told reporters.

The DGP was replying to a question about the "big strike" statement of the army officer in the backdrop of the police saying that the slain militants were not on the "militant list".

Singh also said, "It is not important that every militant is listed with the police. It is after a chain of process, he is listed."

On Wednesday, a police spokesman had said that though the three killed militants "were not mentioned in our list of militants, yet two of them were hardcore associates of militants (over-ground workers)" and had added that of the two, one was a relative of top Hizbul Mujahideen commander Rayees Kachroo, who was killed in 2017.

He had also said that it is suspected that the third might have joined militant ranks very recently.

However, family members from south Kashmir's Pulwama and Shopian districts, during a protest in Srinagar on Wednesday had claimed that the slain youths had no connection with militancy and that two of them were students.

The slain youths were Athar Mushtaq and Aijaz Maqbool, both students, and Zubair Ahmad was a carpenter, said the families.

On the families' claims, DGP Singh said that "about yesterday's operation, what you have referred to... parents don't know about the whereabouts of their children. The families of two slain youths claimed that their children had gone to submit forms at a university. I want to ask them what were their children were doing at the encounter site if they had gone to submit forms."

"We will look into the statements of the parents. If there is any truth in it, we will act accordingly. My initial impression of this operation is that the operation has been conducted in the right manner," he said.

The youths' families had staged the protest outside the Police Control Room (PCR) in Srinagar, stating that their "wards were not militants but students." PTI

3 More Corona ...

697 in the Jammu region. So far 1186 have died in the Valley.

Srinagar district with 450deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (355), Baramulla (171), Budgam (108), Kupwara (91), Pulwama (88), Anantnag (83), Doda (64), Bandipora (60), Udhampur (57), Kulgam (53), Rajouri (54), Kathua (49), Ganderbal (43), Shopian (38), Samba (38), Poonch (23), Ramban (21), Kishtwar (21), and Reasi.

Meanwhile, 227 fresh Covid-19 cases, including ten security forces personnel and two minors were detected in J&K in the last 24 hours, officials said.

They said among fresh infections, 95 from Jammu Division and 132 from Kashmir Valley, taking the overall case count to 120971.

Giving district wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 51, Baramulla 16, Budgam 11, Kupwara 12, Pulwama 19, Anantnag 10, Bandipora 2, Ganderbal 7, Kulgam 4, Jammu 70, Udhampur 3, Rajouri 5, Doda 1, Kathua 10, Kishtwar 1, Samba 3, Poonch 1 and Ramban 1 new case of coronavirus.

Moreover, they said, 249 more patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals 123 from Jammu Division and 126 from Kashmir. (With GNS inputs)

Govt Panel to ...

report within a period of four weeks," reads the order.

The government orders follow reprimand by the high court earlier this year, saying that adhocism is resorted to despite depreciated by the Supreme Court way back in 2000.

"What is seen in the then State of J&K and now the Union Territory of J&K is that the judgment of the Supreme Court is being complied with less and violated more, as practically in all the departments, promotions are being made on incharge basis," the court had said, adding, "This practice is prevalent more in Engineering Department. The reasons therefore are not unknown."

How an employee, who is sub-stantively working on the lowest post, can be given the charge of a highest post in the department without there being regular promotions, the court had questioned. "No one knows their seniority position.

It is the local adjustment made claiming that he is senior most available and there being a vacancy, he should be given charge of that," the court had said, stressing that these employees continue working on that post for years together and whenever any transfer is sought to be made, they approach the court and persuade to grant interim relief and as a result of that, continue on the same position for years together.

"This course adopted by the different departments is generating avoidable litigation as many of the employees approach the court raising the plea that they are senior to the person who has been given charge of some higher post," the court said, adding, "Not only this such a course also demoralizes other employees in the department. This is resulting in adhocism in the working of different departments of the government." The court had said that the Supreme Court in 2000 ordered the constitution of a High Level Committee to be appointed to examine the entire issue. (GNS)

'225 Militants ...

Addressing the annual press conference of Jammu and Kashmir Police, Singh said, "We undertook over 100 successful operations in J&K. Ninety operations took place in Kashmir and 13 in Jammu. As many as 225 militants were killed -- 207 in Kashmir and 18 in Jammu division."

He said that among the slain militants, 47 were top commanders belonging to various outfits. "Today, all top commanders of various outfits have been eliminated," he added.

The DGP said 16 Jammu and Kashmir Police personnel -- 15 in Kashmir and one in Jammu -- and 44 security personnel -- 42 in Kashmir and two in Jammu -- were killed while fighting militancy this year.

Singh said that police and security agencies have cracked down on over-ground workers (OGWs) of militant outfits, who throw grenades or work as messengers and couriers.

"As many as 635 OGWs were arrested and 56 out of them were booked under the Public Safety Act (PSA)," he said.

During the year, 299 militants and their associates were arrested and 12 militants surrendered, he said.

The police chief said that 426 weapons, over 9,000 ammunition and magazines, and a huge cache of explosive material were recovered and seized during anti-militancy operations.

There has been a decrease in the number of civilian killings this year. "As many as 38 civilians were killed this year as compared to 44 last year," Singh said.

He, however, said that there has been a slight increase in militant recruitment this year as compared to last year. "But 70 per cent of them have either been eliminated or have left militant outfits and returned. As many as 46 militants have been arrested and 76 have been killed (among new recruits). Their shelf life is very less," the DGP said.

He said that there is a large scale decrease in the level of infiltrations this year. Due to the strong anti-infiltration grid, the infiltration is down, he said.

Singh said that Pakistan is trying to increase the arch of militancy to Jammu region and foment communal trouble here.

"There were a dozen militants active in the Jammu region, the number has reduced to three now. They are in Kishtwar district, we are tracking them," Singh said.

The police chief further said that despite several attempts by Pakistan, cases of infiltration this year is the lowest in the last three-four years.

"So, they (Pakistan) had to rely on local recruits and they tried to supply weapons, explosive materials and cash to them through drones, most of these were foiled," he said.

"The best thing is that the trend of local youths joining militant groups is constantly decreasing," he added.

LG Extends New ...

"Let us all resolve to work collectively for creating a brighter tomorrow and be the pioneers of change. I hope and believe that with the dawn of New Year, Jammu and Kashmir would usher in a new era of progress and equitable development," he added.

He prayed for sustained peace, good health, progress, and prosperity to all in the coming year.

PaK Teen ...

Quoting an unnamed official, the report said that the boy was presently in the custody of SOG Poonch and investigation was going on.

SSP Poonch Ramesh Angral confirmed that the boy has been apprehended. He said further investigations are underway.

HC Suspends ...

rules," the order added.

Meanwhile as per a separate order, Noor Mohammad Mir, Secretary DLSA Kupwara, has been transcended and posted as Sub Judge Uri. (GNS)

Man Charged For ...

of providing him a government job in the Forest Department.

"The accused had also provided the complainant with a fake recruitment order," the official added.



KO Photo: Abid Bhat

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

GULMARG: The ski resort Gulmarg remained abuzz amid sub-zero temperatures with a host of activities organised by Directorate of Tourism on New Year eve.

The Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Pandurang Kondbarao Pole, who was the chief guest on the occasion, inaugurated the activities with night skiing at 6pm to begin the New Year celebrations.

Director Tourism Kashmir Mr. Nisar A Wani, CEO Gulmarg, Inam ul Haq, Joint Director Tabassum Kamili, Deputy Director Ideel Saleem, Assistant Director Gulmarg Javed ur Rehman and senior officers from the department and district administration besides the representatives from travel trade and hotel association bodies.

Scores of tourists from across the country who were already holidaying in Gulmarg turned up at the venue to enjoy the night skiing exhibition.

The tourists along with the skiers and stakeholders also participated in other fun-filled activities including bonfire, fireworks etc, on the slopes which lasted till midnight.

Monolith surfaces in Ahmedabad, but sans mystery

Ahmedabad, Dec 31 (PTI) A 'monolith', the likes of which have appeared and vanished in different parts of the world since November, has now emerged in a garden in Ahmedabad city, Gujarat. This is the first appearance of a monolith, a structure made of shiny steel sheets, in India. However, unlike in other parts of the world, the mystery around the object did not last long as it was disclosed that a private company has installed it.

The triangular prism-shaped structure, around seven feet tall, became a hit among city dwellers after it was spotted in a garden on SG Highway on Thursday morning.

The garden is jointly managed by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and Symphony Ltd. Situated near Gurudwara in Thalteji area, it was one of the attractions inaugurated by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani recently. "The monolith has been placed there by the Symphony Ltd which takes care of the garden. The structure has been installed by the company for the visitors. People can see their reflection on the shiny surfaces of the structure and take selfies too," said Director, AMC's Garden Department, Jignesh Patel.

The first such three-sided steel monolith appeared and disappeared after a few days in a remote desert of Utah, United States. Later, similar structures were spotted in around 30 countries.

The monolith was installed at Symphony Forest Park on December 29, but it gained popularity on Thursday with people flocking to the garden.

Apparently to keep mystery alive, the company did not make any announcement except sharing some photos of the structure on the Forest Park's Facebook page on December 29.

"This is really amazing that the monolith actually appeared in our city. Since these structures tend to disappear in some time, I have come here with my friends to click selfies," said one youngster.

Kashmir Inc Urges Extension Of VAT Amnesty Scheme

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCC&I) on Thursday urged Jammu and Kashmir government to extend VAT amnesty scheme for another one year citing the situation caused by coronavirus pandemic.

In a statement issued here on Thursday, a KCC&I spokesperson said that the situation emerging after August, 2019 onwards has gone from

Gulmarg also wore a festive look with the illumination of the golf club, ski shops and other venues where several functions were held to entertain the tourists and other local visitors.

The main function was held at Golf Club where artists enthralled the audiences with their beautiful cultural, music and skit performances to bid adieu to the year 2020 and welcome the New Year 2021.

Renowned artists from the Valley including stand up comedians Nazir Josh performed at the Club which captivated the attention of the audiences.

The department of tourism had also made elaborate arrangements for the exhibition of Kashmir's famed arts and craft products, street food and cuisine at various stalls.

On the occasion, the Divisional Commissioner interacted with skiers who were recently trained by the tourism department for the beginners course.

The Divisional Commissioner also extended New Year greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and wished for happiness and prosperity for everyone.

AAP alleges 'authorised goons' of BJP targeting its members

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI) The AAP on Thursday alleged that "authorised goons" of the BJP have been targeting and attacking its members ever since the party extended support to the ongoing farmers' agitation with the latest being its MLA Atishi outside whose house two "suspicious" cars bearing 'MP' (Member of Parliament) stickers were parked.

The BJP's Delhi unit has rejected the allegation and said AAP leaders were making such "rhetorical" statements to divert people's attention from the Delhi government's failure to release funds to municipal corporations and ensure proper water supply.

Addressing a press conference, AAP MLA Raghav Chadha claimed that ever since Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal spoke up in support of the farmers and their rights, there have been repeated attacks on the free movement of elected representatives of the Aam Aadmi Party, and attempts have been made to silence, threaten and scare party members.

"Our Kalkaji MLA Atishi's life too is under threat. Some goons stood outside her home. Two cars were parked outside her home last night. These cars carried the stickers that are only issued to vehicles that can enter Parliament. This means the authorised goons of BJP have been targeting and attacking members of AAP," Chadha alleged.

"They are playing psychological games with us, picking and

In his New Year greetings message, Div Com hoped that the New Year will be a year of peace, harmony, progress.

He urged the people of the country to visit J&K with their friends and relatives to enjoy their holidays and hospitality and love of the Kashmiris here.

He appreciated the efforts of the department in organising such courses free of cost for the locals who were drawn mostly from the government schools.

He also expressed his happiness over the increased flow of travellers to the ski resort and hoped that the New Year will be best for the business community especially for the travel and hospitality sector which were hit badly due to the ongoing pandemic.

Director Tourism Kashmir also extended his New Year greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the new year is beginning with a renewed hope.

He said ski resort Gulmarg is jam packed with the tourists on New Year which was possible as a result of the department's continued efforts to promote Kashmir as a safe destination in the ongoing pandemic.

choosing different members of the AAP to attack at will," he said.

He further claimed that he and Atishi have sought an appointment with the Delhi Police commissioner but are yet to be allotted time.

"We will soon meet the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi and appeal to him to remind the Delhi Police of its constitutional responsibilities. If there is an attack on any MLA or leader of the Aam Aadmi Party, or if any untoward incident happens, if any one of us is injured, only the Bharatiya Janata Party will be responsible for it," Chadha said.

Denying the allegations, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that AAP leaders are running a campaign of making rhetorical statements.

"The main purpose of AAP leaders behind this rhetorical statement campaign is to divert attention from the Delhi government's failure to release municipal funds and to ensure proper water supply to the people. No BJP worker has ever attacked any AAP leader and BJP shall never ever resort to political violence," he said.

Kapoor said the BJP's three-day dharna outside the chief minister's residence was totally peaceful and as for the incident at the Jal Board office "we have already said that vandalism was done by AAP workers already present in that office to discredit a peaceful demonstration seeking proper water supply for the people".

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI) The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will conduct board exams for classes 10 and 12 physically from May 4 to June 10 next year, Union Minister of Education Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' announced on Thursday. Practical examinations will be conducted by schools from March 1. The results of the board exams will be announced by July 15, he added. Usually, practical exams are conducted in January and written exams begin in February and conclude in March. However, the exams are being delayed this session in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. "The board exams for classes 10 and 12 will be conducted from May 4 to June 10. Schools will be allowed to conduct practical exams from March 1. Date sheet for both the classes will be issued soon. The result will be declared by July 15," Pokhriyal announced.

Masoodi Demands Impartial Probe Into Hokarsar Killings

SRINAGAR: National Conference Member of Parliament from Anantnag Justice (retd) Hassnain Masoodi on Thursday sought an impartial investigation into the Hokarsar killings and impressed on the government to clear the ambiguities leading to the killing of three youth.

In a statement issued to press, Masoodi while demanding an impartial probe into the killings said the stated version of the police was far from convincing and ambiguous. "The police version is not convincing and clear-cut; it is an admitted case of police that none of the three youth in their early twenties were in the militant list; two of the youth are admitted not to have been involved in militant activities and said to be OGWs. In the case of a third boy who is twenty years old, it is said that he 'might have joined militant ranks'. The statement joined together is far from convincing and lends support to the version of families of the slain trio that they were innocent and not involved in any militant activity," he said.

He asked the government to recall the Shopian killing and subsequent findings that those killed



KO File Photo: Abid Bhat

were innocent and had come all the way from Rajouri to earn livelihoods and continue their studies. He demanded thorough investigation into the issue and return of bodies of slain youth to their families so that their last rites are observed by their families at their respective places.

Masoodi said the matter warrants time bound inquiry as the versions of the family and the police are contradictory. "The version of the family in wake of the ambiguous version of police seems to be nearer to truth.

Therefore it becomes imperative upon the government to come clean on the matter. In previous Shopian killings, the boys were found innocent. I express my deep sympathies and unison with the bereaved families and pray forbearance to them in their hour of grief," he said.

Masoodi also spoke to Principal Secretary Home Shaleen Kabra home and demanded a probe into the matter. He will take up the matter with LG J&K Manoj Sinha and Advisor Home to LG RR Batnagar.

Ready To Work Without Salaries, Say DPS Budgam Drivers



BUDGAM: Drivers Union of Delhi Public School (DPS) Budgam Thursday said the terminated drivers are willing to work without salaries till the financial position of the school stabilises provided they are given a chance.

Addressing a press conference here at Press Club Nazir Ahmad Rather president of the drivers union said: "They got a message in September 2020 from the school authorities that their services have been terminated".

"We have been working as drivers and conductors in the school for the last 10 to 13 years, but now we are being terminated from the services, which is injustice with us", he alleged.

"On 15th September we were intimated through SMS messages that our services have been terminated and when we approached the management to provide us the reason for our retrench-

ment, they said that the school is suffering financial losses", he said

"We even approached the consumer court but they till date have not taken any action on this matter", Rather said.

"If school authorities say they have financial constraints, we are ready to work without salary till the financial situation of school improves, but our services should not be terminated", said Rather.

Earlier Drivers Union of DPS had also protested and accused former Union Minister and senior Congress leader Saif-u-Din Soz, who is one of the founders of the school, of cheating them and had said, "The school had no access on road and villagers were promised a job against contributing land towards the construction of the road, but now they are shunting us out, under the pretext of financial loss."

CUK Inks Pact with ICSI



SRINAGAR: Design and Innovation Centre (DIC) of the Central University of Kashmir (CUK) Thursday inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI), through its Srinagar chapter, here and decided to mutually share the expertise and facilities of both institutions for the benefit of students.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir and ICSI President, CS Ashish Garg signed the MoU in the presence of Mr. A K Srivastava, Director Student Services, Registrar, Prof. M Afzal Zargar, Director DIC and Finance Officer, Prof. Fayaz A Nikka, AROC Srinagar, Mr. Hamid Bukhari and Chairperson ICSI Srinagar chapter, Ms Yamina Almas.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir asked both the DIC and ICSI to implement the MoU in letter and spirit and work with synergy and dedication for the same. "By joining hands, both institutions would be able to share the facilities, teaching-learning, organize joint academic activities including workshops and seminars and conduct research on the dying art and craft of Kashmir," Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir said

adding the DIC was the prestigious project bagged by the varsity, whose mandate was to inculcate the skill based training among the youth in the diverse art forms, which are nearing extinction. He assured the Srinagar chapter of ICSI of full support from the varsity for its future endeavors.

Addressing the gathering, ICSI President, CS Ashish Garg said that by signing the MoU with CUK, the number of CS professionals in the valley would increase manifold. He said the ICSI has till date signed MoUs with 15 IIMS and had recently inked a pact with the Government of Jammu and Kashmir. CS Ashish Garg said that in order to attract the students, the institution was offering a 100 per cent fee waiver for those interested in the CS programme. He hailed the members of Srinagar chapter for working hard on the MoU.

Registrar Prof. M Afzal Zargar congratulated both the DIC and ICSI for the MoU and said the collaboration of the institution was the need of the hour. He said that during contemporary times, the institutions cannot work in isolation and have to utilize the resources, both human and material, in order to accomplish their goals.

DC Takes Note Of SOP Violation By Coaching Centres

SRINAGAR: The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) Srinagar on Thursday said that several Coaching Centers in the district were continuing their class work despite reporting some COVID-19 positive cases in the respective institutes.

The DDMA magistrate of Srinagar in an order said, "Some COVID-19 cases have been reported from several coaching institutes of the Srinagar, particularly those operational in Parraypora and Rajbagh areas of the Srinagar city, during the sampling drive carried out by district Administration."

The DDMA Srinagar Magistrate Shahid Iqbal Choudhary in an order said, "The management of these coaching institutes continued their classes even after reporting of positive cases, in brazen violation of COVID-19 SOP's that too without even bothering to inform district Administration."

Choudhary ordered closure of class work in such coaching institutes wherein COVID-19 positive cases have been reported.

"In view of the situation and in line with COVID-19 guidelines, it is hereby ordered that coaching institutions where positive cases have been reported shall immediately close their classes till complete sampling is carried out and results are received, besides sanitization of facility," he said—(KNO)

Jammu Transporters Call For Chakka Jaam On Jan 6 From Lakhanpur To Uri

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir transporters Thursday called for a complete 'Chakka Jam' (No vehicle movement) on January 6 as a mark of protest against the Union Territory administration for failing to facilitate transporters during crisis time.

Addressing a press conference at Jammu, All J&K Transport Welfare Association J&K Jammu, chairman, S.T.S Wazir as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that there will be complete Chakka Jaam from Lakhanpur to Uri Baramulla on January 6 and the inconvenience caused will be the sole responsibility of UT administration.

He said that transporters across the globe faced tough times in the ensuing year similarly the transporters in Jammu and Kashmir faced the same situation but the transporters elsewhere were facilitated in different manners with ease and even government helped them.

Referring to Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh, Wazir said these states have to Waive off the tax for the entire year as Himachal government waived off the tax of Covid lockdown period."It is disappointing that J&K UT administration revoked the fare hike order without our consultation and reasons," he said.

Wazir said that they were made to pay penalty in Jammu and Kashmir for the documentation which is illegal and in these crisis times, "our vehicles can't ply as our community is facing immense hardships and a dearth of proper income."

He said that the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir has no time for the transporters since he didn't give them time to meet him so that they could apprise him about the issue faced by them. "We're repeatedly made to pay huge interest for document renewal", he said.

He said that the situation has crumbled the transport sector.

Bus Service From Anantnag To Lakhanpur Begins

ANANTNAG: The Jammu and Kashmir State Road Transport Corporation (JKSRTC) has started 32 seater bus services from Anantnag to Lakhanpur via Jammu.

The bus is scheduled to operate on every alternate day from Anantnag to Lakhanpur and will have comfortable space for 32 passengers.

Meanwhile the general public is being informed that all those who are interested to use the services of this bus for their movement to Jammu or outside the UT may contact the office of the Depot Manager JKSRTC Anantnag or may call on phone no 8899052127.

LAWDA Conducts Demolition Drive In City Areas

SRINAGAR: The Enforcement Wing of Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA) today conducted the demolition drive in Chandpora Harwan, Lashkari Mohalla, Habak and Pohloo Brein areas of Srinagar city.

During the demolition drive, 03 double storey houses, one showroom and one plinth that were raised illegally by the violators, were demolished on the spot besides, illegally dumped material was also seized (sand/Bajri) in the area of Habak.

As per an official handout it was given out that the legal action shall follow against the violators under law.

Inter Departmental Employees TT Tournament Concludes At IUST

AWANTIPORA: Inter Departmental Employees Table Tennis Tournament 2020 organised by Directorate of Physical Education and Sports, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) concluded here on Thursday. The Final Match was played between Prof. A. H. Moon, Dean School of Engineering and Technology & Mr. Zahoor Ahmad, Lab Assistant, Dept. Of Physics. The match was thrilling and electrifying during which Mr. Zahoor Ahmad won by 3:1 Sets. Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof. Mushtaq A Siddiqi was Chief Guest and Registrar IUST, Prof. Naseer Iqbal was Guest of Honour on the occasion. While addressing the participants and spectators at the closing ceremony, Prof. Siddiqi lauded the efforts of the Directorate of Physical Education and Sports for conducting such tournaments for the University Employees. Such type of activities definitely reduce the Psychological depression of employees during tough times like Covid-19 and definitely energizes and restores their natural rhythm", he added. Speaking on the occasion Prof. Naseer congratulated all the participants and encouraged them to participate in such activities. He assured all the possible support to the sports department for conducting such activities in future also. Mr. Sameer Wazir (Chairman Sports Committee/ Finance Officer) was also present on the occasion.

Dr. Hilal Ahmad Rather Assistant Director welcomed the Chief Guest and thanked all the participants for their participation in the said event. Dr. Hilal assured that Directorate will always organise such events for boosting employee's morale. The other dignitaries present on the occasion included Assistant Registrar, Mr. Javid Ahmad Khan, faculty from various Departments, Mr. Altaf Hussain Shah and Mr. Majid Nazir Mukhdoomi (Sports Assistants).

Public Notice

It is for the information of general public that Haneefa Begum w/o late Fayaz Ahmed Bhat.R/o Sarie Dangerpora has applied for dependent certificate. in Tehsil Office Sumbal its cleared by Patwari halqa Sarie Dangerpora that Fayaz Ahmed Bhat had died on 24-04-2020. Following are the family members of deceased.

01.Haneefa Begum W/o late Fayaz Ahmed Bhat age 45
02.Imran Fayaz S/o late Fayaz Ahmed Bhat.age 10
03.Moomin Fayaz S/o.late Fayaz Ahmed Bhat. Age 07.
04. Tahir Fayaz S/o late Fayaz Ahmed Bhat age 05.

If anybody having any objection in this regard He/She may file his/her objection in the concerned office within the period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice.

AJKO

Naib tasildar Sumbal.

DIAL-EMMA



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- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
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- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS



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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

This Day in History

- 1724 - Glassblower Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit proposes system for making thermometers and the Fahrenheit temperature scale in a paper to the Royal Society of London and is elected a fellow on its basis
- 1758 - The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature establish the "starting point" for standardized species names across the animal kingdom, based on the binomial nomenclature by Carolus Linnaeus 10th edition of Systema Naturae
- 1772 - First traveler's cheques go on sale in London, can be used in 90 European cities
- 1800 - Dutch East Indies Company dissolves
- 1801 - The Irish Parliament votes to join the Kingdom of Great Britain, forming the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland
- 1804 - Haiti gains independence from France (National Day), making it the only state ever founded by former slaves and without slavery
- 1842 - 1st illustrated weekly magazine in US publishes 1st issue, NYC
- 1846 - Yucatan declares independence from Mexico
- 1860 - Slavery ends of in Neth Indies
- 1863 - Battle of Galveston, Texas-Confederates recapture the city
- 1869 - War of the Triple Alliance: Paraguay's capital Asunción falls to Brazilian forces led by General João de Souza da Fonseca Costa
- 1890 - Eritrea is consolidated into a colony by the Italian government.
- 1891 - French troops occupy Nioro, West-Sudan, 3000 killed
- 1895 - Norway adopts Mid-European time
- 1896 - German physicist Wilhelm Röntgen announces his discovery of x-rays
- 1903 - In Delhi, a great durbar, or formal reception, marks the coronation of King Edward VII as Emperor of India; the British release some 16,000 prisoners in honor of the occasion
- 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt and Edith Roosevelt unveil new renovations to the The White House, including a new West Wing1927 - Turkey adopts the Gregorian calendar: December 18, 1926 (Julian), is immediately followed by January 1, 1927 (Gregorian).
- 1934 - International Telecommunication Union established

From KO Archives

Salahuddin Wants All 7 in Pak Hizb Cautions APHC Of Trap

MUZAFFARABAD -The Hizbul Mujahideen group has maintained that the proposed visit of the All Parties Hurriyet Conference leaders to Pakistan to prove an "exercise in futility" if all the seven member of alliance's executive council were not included in the delegation.

"If some (leaders) are allowed and some are barred from travelling to Pakistan), Nit will create doubts about the APHC. Rather, it can create an impression that the alliance is divided into moderate and extremist people," said group's supreme commander Syed Saiahuddin, in an interview to Dawn.

He said, it would be New Delhi's big trap to create misgivings and strengthen the impression about division in the ranks of the APHC. The APHC leaders must show farsightedness and diplomatic efficiency to send the impression that New Delhi and not they themselves are constituting their delegation for Pakistan' Salahuddin's remarks came in the wake of reports that the travelling documents to Syed Ali Shah Geelani, a hard-liner in the alliance, were not being issued by New Delhi.

Indian officials had claimed that they had not received the application of Mr Gilani for the same. A Hurriyet leader, Abdul Ghani Lone, rejected the claim as lie and told an Indian channel that he had himself submitted Gilani's papers. I will advise the (APHC) leaders to avoid visit to Pakistan unless all of them are allowed to travel. And if all of them get permission, then they should first sit together and evolve an agenda in consensus with each other for the tour."

Salahuddin said Pakistan was already on the back of the Kashmiris and had been extending all out political, moral and diplomatic support to them all along the past 53 years of their struggle. But the thing that needs to be settled with New Delhi is how sincere and serious she is in resolving the festering issue, he added. "If the APHC does not get any assurance from the Indian government before hand then their journey will prove an exercise in futility," the Hizb supremo said.

Mr Salahuddin recalled that the Hizbul Mujahideen and all other freedom fighting organizations had unanimously termed the cease-fire a "trap" and said it was aimed at releasing pressure and giving a respite to the physically and mentally exhausted Indian troops besides winning the sympathies of the Muslims in India and elsewhere.

On the one hand it (Indian government) paints itself a champion of peace and on the other hand there is no letup in killings and atrocities at the hands of its' soldiers in Kashmir, he added.

"We believe the APHC cannot suggest the mujahideen to respect the so-called cease-fire because it does not have any mandate for that," he said, and added that the cease-fire was worthless unless India made a categorical declaration that "Kashmir is a disputed territory and she is ready to resolve it through meaningful tripartite talks. Till that happens, the operations of the mujahideen against the occupation forces would continue. Rather we would intensify and stretch them," he declared.

He said, the cease-fire was not a pre-requisite for the resolution of the issue through meaningful talks. In this connection, the Hizb chief cited the examples of Afghanistan Northern Ireland and Vietnam where, according to him, talks and militancy ran simultaneously. "Dialogue is a separate process and (freedom fighters') actions are a separate thing," he said.

He said the mujahideen were not interested in holding talks by themselves. But, he added, they (the mujahideen) wanted to ensure that the negotiators (from the Kashmiris' side) must enjoy their trust. "The negotiators stand should reflect the aspirations of the people of Kashmir. They would not be allowed to take any short cut," said the Hizb supremo, without elaborating.

He was of the view that the mujahideen who in fact were offering their blood in the battlefield had full rights to "monitor" the talks. "We have trust in the recognized leadership of Kashmir but the people who shed their blood have right to hold talks either by themselves or through any other person(s).

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 01 January, 2001)

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K O V I E W

Hokersar killings

Hours after security forces claimed to have killed three militants near Hokersar on the outskirts of Srinagar on Wednesday, the families of those killed alleged that the slain youth were not militants. The families who protested outside the police control room said the youth had left home just a day before the encounter. Two of the three, according to them, were students who had come to Srinagar for admission in an institution. The development has come as a throwback to the aftermath of the encounter at Amshipora in Shopian three months ago, where also the security forces had claimed to have killed three militants but who later turned out to be innocent labourers when their families protested. However in case of Hokersar encounter, the Army is holding its ground saying the three youth were militants and were planning a big attack along Srinagar-Baramulla highway. Similarly police has said that although the three youth were not listed as militants in police records, they were part of the militancy. So far no probe has been initiated into the incident as demanded by National Conference and the PDP. After the families had cast doubt about the identity of the youth killed in the encounter, the probe was in order.

That said, the killing of three more youth, one of them studying in Class 11 is tragic. Such killings have become a routine affair in the Valley, almost being pursued for their own sake. There's now no effort to address this hopeless state of affairs. The central government has long given up on a political outreach to the Valley. Under Lieutenant Governor's rule, the security agencies are in the thick of an all-out operation against militancy. The objective of the campaign is to eliminate insurgency by attempting to kill all the militants within a specific timeframe. Viewed from that perspective, the security agencies have been exceptionally successful over the last several years. An average of over 200 militants have been killed every year. It is expected that the killings of the militants at this rate could drastically reduce their number. This, in turn, is expected to alter the political dynamics in the Valley and usher in peace. But the deeper factors underpinning the current state of affairs will linger on and can be expected to create conditions for yet another phase of violence and unrest. This has been the case over the past three decades. The militancy has gone through its crests and troughs but never been wiped out.

What does the near future, therefore, hold for Kashmir? A lingering uncertainty. Security experts hope that should the current uptick in the killings continue, they would have substantially reigned in the militancy in a given time period. But killings have hardly been a deterrent in the Valley. Though local recruitment could be expected to dwindle somewhat, it is unlikely to stop. And for that to happen, Centre will have to reach out... But is New Delhi even interested in such an approach? It isn't. Kashmir needs a drastic shift in mindset in New Delhi about Kashmir. One hopes such realization dawns sooner than later.

O T H E R O P I N O N

Vaccine Rollout Lessons

In the fortnight between December 14, when the first American received a coronavirus vaccine, and December 29, the United States vaccinated 2.13 million people. The country has done more vaccinations than any other across the world, and its tally represented close to 50% of the inoculations carried out globally till Tuesday. In itself, reaching 2.13 million people over 14 days is not a small order – but it is one that falls short of expectations. American authorities expected to vaccinate 20 million people by the end of 2020. Instead, rollout has been hobbled by time lost in quality checks, managing vaccination reporting tools and planning distribution flows.

The first month of vaccine rollout has not been smooth elsewhere too. In Germany, delays were reported at several sites after temperature logs showed some of the vaccine boxes did not maintain the temperatures required for the Pfizer-BioNTech dose – potentially damaging stocks. In Canada, which approved two vaccines, supplies came in a slow trickle. In the United Kingdom, where Pfizer estimated four million doses were made available, only 800,000 have been administered. Teething troubles are not uncommon in any exercise with such a number of moving parts — the factory-to-syringe process includes a range of people and modes of transportation — but they can be costly at a time when we are racing against the pandemic.

These experiences hold important lessons for India. The country did well to begin mock drills, giving its digital management platform as well as human resource training an early shakedown. The exercise covered seven districts in four states and exposed crucial areas that need improvement well in time. But, in a country over 1.3 billion people, such dry runs must quickly be replicated in more districts. Officials must look at the experiences in other countries and keep open the scope to tweak or overhaul protocols, including how India selects and prioritises the groups of people who are first in line for a dose. Just like its early legwork on the delivery side, the government must now intensify efforts to ensure supplies by announcing its first purchase deals. Regulatory processes are expected to reach crucial breakthroughs shortly (a key meeting was scheduled for Wednesday afternoon), which should give the government the confidence to commit to purchases.

Hindustan Times

Re-Plan and Re-think
Water Scarcity in Himalayas



SARVESH KUMAR SHAHI

A new study has revealed that glaciers in Kashmir have receded by 28 percent in the last four decades. The findings of the study indicated that there is a strong influence on altitude, aspect, slope, and climate on glacier recession in the Kashmir Himalaya. So, if the shrinking of glaciers continues in the future, it will adversely affect the availability of water in the valley, especially during the summers

Winters are at its peak in the northern region of India and the effects of climate change are being felt in the mountains too. According to an International study (Importance and vulnerability of the world's water towers - published on December 09, 2019), 1.9 million people are at risk of water supply problems as mountain glaciers, snow-packs and alpine lakes are run down by global heating and rising demand. As a result, in northern India, falling snow levels and glacial retreat is impacting livelihoods and access to water.

As per NITI Aayog's working group on "Inventory and Revival of Springs of Himalaya for Water Security" report of August 2018, half of the mountain springs in the Himalayan region are drying up. "Nearly 60% of low-discharge springs that provided water to small habitations in the Himalayan region have reported a clear decline during the last couple of decades."

Over a billion people across Asia rely on Himalayan water. There are five million springs in India, of which close to three million are in the Indian Himalayan Region – which is spread across 12 states and is home to over 50 million people. These springs are the primary source of water for rural households in the region and, for many, the only source. A number of urban communities too depend on these water bodies. The drying up of springs will affect the flow of these rivers. The drying springs will further add to the work burden of women since they are forced to manually carry water from springs below their village during the lean season. Destinations such as Shimla, Mussorie, Nainital and even Gangtok often face acute water crisis.

Indus is the most important and vulnerable "water zone" due to runoff from the Karakoram, Hindu Kush, Ladakh, and Himalayan mountain ranges, which flow downstream to a densely populated and intensively irrigated basin in Pakistan, India, China and Afghanistan.

Recently, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organisations, has taken an initiative to promote the significance of springs in the Indian Himalayan Region and undertook pilot to recharge and revive springs with the technical support of CHIRAG (rural development organization based in the Kumaun region of Uttarakhand in India) under the National Mission of Himalayan Studies (NMHS) supported project entitled 'Coping with Uncertainties: Building Community Resilience and Ecosystem Based Adap-

tation to Climate Change in the Indian Himalayan Region'.

Recent decades have seen a drastic decline in snowfall, with glaciers across the Himalayas losing a total of 8 billion tons of ice every year. The ice on the mountain is getting smaller and summers are getting longer. There is less water.

Reduced snowfall and receding glaciers are a phenomenon impacting the whole of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. A recent report of June 14, 2019 from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that in lower altitude mountainous regions such as Spiti, "glaciers will lose more than 80% of their current mass by 2100." The report further predicted that even if global warming is limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels as set out in the Paris Agreement, over one-third of glacial ice in the region will have disappeared by the end of the century, with the most negative scenarios in the eastern Himalaya pointing towards a near-total loss of glaciers.

In Ladakh, water shortages have already caused a few villages to migrate. The inhabitants of Kumik in Zaskar were forced to relocate in 2014 after the river which they depended on for water dried up. Agriculture is the main source of income here and if the situation continues then yes, there would be villages which would migrate out. The only temporary solution is pumping up river water and preventing run-off, however, it might not be a sustainable solution.

Shimla, the capital and the largest city in Himachal Pradesh and a tourist haven, is facing a water crisis of gigantic proportions. The crisis is especially acute in towns that bear the strength of summer tourist traffic, as well as towns that are in the path of religious pilgrimages and tourism. What used to be difficult to access locations are much easier to get to, and most of the existing infrastructure is not adequate to cope with this demand.

A new study by 'Springer Nature' on August 24, 2020, has revealed that glaciers in Kashmir have receded by 28 percent in the last four decades. The study used a series of satellite images (1980-2018) to determine the glacier health, which is critical for nurturing and sustaining the rivers that originate from the area. It has been found that glaciers have reduced from 101.73 km square in 1980 to 72.41 km square in 2018 showing a recession of about 28% during the last four decades. The findings of the study indicated that there is a strong influence on altitude, aspect, slope, and climate on glacier recession in the Kashmir Himalaya.

So, if the shrinking of glaciers continues in the future, it will adversely affect the availability of water in the valley, especially during the summers.

As far as government's effort is concerned, in 2014, the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Eco-System, under India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, had suggested a state-wide programme for rejuvenation of Himalayan springs and protection of high-altitude lakes. It had also suggested creating an inventory of mountain springs—active and dormant—along with detailed geological mapping to identify the spring recharge zone.

"Pani Pahar- Waters of the Himalayas", a collaborative research project and a curriculum has also been initiated between the University of Cambridge, The Centre for Ecology Development and Research in India (CEDAR) and South Asia Institute for Advanced Studies in Nepal (SIAS) for for students and teachers across India. This collaborative project explores the changing landscapes and escalating water crises of the Indian Himalayas.

The curriculum will help students understand water resources, sustainability, and how these are affected by climate change. The lessons have been planned in a way to help students reflect on and research the human causes of water scarcity and effects of environmental change of humans and our shared resources.

So, I personally feel that it is high time that these issues be communicated more widely. The broad objective should be to depict water through the landscape, from source to tap, and the really different communities that come into contact with it, take from it and modify it, in order to bring attention to long-term questions around the sustainability of water sources and their use in the Himalayas.

Remember, successful solutions almost always derive through community participation and stakeholder engagement. Solutions that come from a community perspective, for example, rejuvenation of springs (where communities are using some of their knowledge and coming together to do something collectively), always work.

Thus, Himalayan region has the diversity of these very productive natural landscapes. But if managed badly, they can become a curse.

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

Sarvesh Kumar Shahi, Assistant Professor, School of Law, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India



OBSERVER
MAIL

All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name and address, even if a pseudonym is used. Letters are edited as clarity, space and accuracy of expression require. Our publishing a letter does not mean we agree with everything or even anything in it. -EDITOR

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Women Shouldn't Relinquish Right to Inheritance

This is in reference to the recently released National Family Health Survey 2019-20 (NFHS-5) fact sheet for Jammu and Kashmir which states that only 57.3% women in the UT own a house and/or land, alone or jointly. Even though these figures might be read as "at least more than half women own property" but given that all women are coparceners in one or the other way, it should raise questions. J and K is a Muslim majority region and Islam entitles a sister to inherit half of what a brother gets as a coparcener. Despite this fact, the number of women owning a property is almost half of

that of men.

Women asking for their coparcenary rights is considered taboo and a lot of women seem to have internalized that asking for inheritance rights will break their relationship with other members of the family, especially brothers. As a result, they sign relinquishment deeds without giving a second thought about it. This inheritance of property is mostly seen as a matter of money and wealth, but it goes beyond that, at least for women. Economically speaking, ownership of any kind of property by women is a very important determinant in the quest for

women empowerment. In the realist world wherever everyone is responsible for their own survival, women should not expect their male relatives to care for them. Unless women do not attach economical value to their lives, they will have no power. This is especially true for unemployed women who do not have financial independence. Since inheritance of property is a given-however small value it may have, they do not have to get an education or work for getting it. The only thing they need to do is not to sign the relinquishment deed.

Relinquishment of coparce-

nary rights militates against women empowerment. It is high time that women ask for their inheritance rights that the constitution as well as the religion gives them. The right to inheritance also seems one of its kind means to women empowerment where people peddling religiosity may not find a reason to oppose it. Women should know that signing a relinquishment deed may lose them a lifetime opportunity for leading a respectful life in this patriarchal world.

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The Deus Ex Machine of 2020

Tooba Towfiq

“In our heads, certainly, a calamity of this proportion wouldn’t have been missed by an age of awareness. Surely, with the right-wing running their regimes of roughness; who would have thought that in a godless reign, a deus ex machina would knock our doors and puncture our infallibility?”

The pandemic was bad news when it dropped in our mailboxes. A news, so out of the ordinary, that many of us did not even believe it could possibly be true. Why would we? Most of our self fashioning had digitised our brains into thinking that ours was a millennial of the unstoppable. In our heads, certainly, a calamity of this proportion wouldn’t have been missed by an age of awareness. Surely, with the right-wing running their regimes of roughness; who would have thought that in a godless reign, a deus ex machina would knock our doors and puncture our infallibility?

For the world, the pandemic was a divine jest pulled at the cost of the idiosyncrasies our age. An age which had us all put blinkers on and dream its dream. When we stopped with an uncertainty so grandiose that hope would come only to the religious or else the unwise; we had no option but to look back and find ourselves far away from things that truly matter.

Cautiously, I must tread this narrative, cautiously! For it may just be a sisyphean reasoning to take any meaning out of the madness.

The loss. In the disbelief that persists till date, we lost those who came closest to the reality of a deadly infection. Fighters. We all lived as we fought the virus with resilience. Those we lost were our comrades in this war. The martyrs. We must remember them and we will.

In this year, closeted in our homes and hidden behind our masks; we had truths coming out, clear and prominent. The Governments and the Superpowers. We came face to face with the reality that all these years of progress were anything but equitable or egalitarian. Our healthcare was embarrassing. Our politics was partisan. Our prejudices were deadly.

Yet, values shone through. Our resilience and resistance was spellbinding. To my generation which grew up reading Harry Potter, this was the scene of the final fight. Nothing but sheer love, care, kindness, righteousness and selfness saved the day, when it did.

This was also the year, when the glitter and the glamour lifted off. We could finally see the damage that our privileges have done over the years and even the privileges that have missed so many of us. For once, we looked behind and not ahead. We saw people taking one step at a time to survive. Deprivation was the ordeal when all stopped. The deserted streets were screaming



“The loss. In the disbelief that persists till date, we lost those who came closest to the reality of a deadly infection. Fighters. We all lived as we fought the virus with resilience. Those we lost were our comrades in this war. The martyrs. We must remember them and we will”

back at us with the bodies that we had possibly crushed by a verbose nonchalance of “success”, “wealth” and “comfort”.

Now, we’ve all collectively witnessed the grotesque reality of life. It missed no one. There are some still protected by their privilege but none can now claim ignorance. We have all come closest to knowing what is truly valuable. The mirage will soon cover the world yet again, the only path ahead will seem to be the path alone and the path towards some unattainable idea of fulfillment.

But what our future needs is quite clear, atleast to the ones who lost or had the heart to see the world with honesty. Wellbeing, happiness and success should never be defined by an age. It is a timeless feeling that requires something intrinsic yet collective. Going forward, we must be winners in wisdom. You can achieve anything and everything that the world has to offer materially. But would you really be rich?

Castles, though big, are often empty and lonely. They always open in streets and alleyways filled with the poor. Don’t let your life be this castle.

The author is the Opinion Editor of Kashmir Observer

Adieu 2020, Welcome 2021

Asad Mirza

Perhaps the humans have awaited no other year’s end so eagerly across the world as that of 2020. Similarly, no other event in the recent history has had such a far-reaching impact as that of the coronavirus pandemic, on the world and its inhabitants.

The year 2020 had so many time-tested patterns and living styles changed and set many new paradigms, affecting virtually every sphere of our living, that it could be easily termed as the harbinger of a new living style.

New style of living and working

2020 taught us how we could maintain a safe distance from each other and yet pursue our daily routine easily. This included working from home, learning at home and even socialising at home: all through the net access. The pandemic forced us to have a limited number of guests at weddings and other family functions. It also resulted in a realisation that how much we are spending on unproductive and uncalled for activities. Instead, if we have so much extra, then we could easily share it with the needy and the poor.

The lockdown forced commercial organisations to adopt new techniques and work styles adhering to the social distancing and other safety measures. Work from home (WFH) became the norm and companies realised that instead of spending so much on their infrastructure maintenance, employee transportation costs and meetings and conferences and exhibitions; novel ways could be found to still achieve the results. It also resulted in better mental health of the employees as they didn’t have to bear the daily toll of commute and instead could devote more time to productive activity.

Pristine Nature

Just like a two-sided coin, Coronavirus too brought unprecedented alarm and panic, besides immediate counter measures to manage it across the world. It also forced us to pause for a while and think about how we are managing our affairs with nature.

While the news about Coronavirus’s devastation continued during 2020, along with the resulting world-wide Lockdown, some positive stories about the natural changes also started appearing, which certainly brought a smile to our faces. Paradoxical as it



“Mentally or spiritually, the lockdown gave us enough time to ponder over those spiritual issues about which we always wanted to read and study in depth but were never able to focus on. Now, we were able to ponder over questions related to our existence, our role and duties as a human being, and what we are getting and giving back to the society”

may sound, but it could be surmised that Coronavirus might be a timely wellness program for our environment and planet earth and even us.

There were reports from several European countries of better air, clean atmosphere, sparkling water in canals and rivers, birds and animals appearing at places where they have not been seen for a while. In Wuhan, where the outbreak initially began back in December ‘19, the sky, which is usually home to dangerous air pollution levels, has turned natural blue. The change has been attributed to travel bans and the pause in factory work.

Similarly in India, there were reports of a cleaner Ganga in Kanpur and Varanasi-two cities where it is the most polluted, a cleaner Yamuna in Delhi, residents of foothill cities in Punjab were able to see the majestic Himalayan mountain ranges from their rooftops besides birds chirping and animals wandering into human habitats at night in foothill towns.

Self-healing

While nature gave mother earth the time to heal, it also gave humans a break from their busy daily routine, to allocate not just some time, but full time to self. This happened at physical,

mental and spiritual levels.

What we fail to realise is that perhaps nature gave us this time, to take a break from our daily humdrum and ponder over those issues, for which we earlier never used to find time.

Mentally or spiritually, the lockdown gave us enough time to ponder over those spiritual issues about which we always wanted to read and study in depth but were never able to focus on. Now, we were able to ponder over questions related to our existence, our role and duties as a human being, and what we are getting and giving back to the society.

In most cases, these spiritual

pursuits involved family too. We had more time to interact with and take guidance from our elders and transfer it to our kids and clarify their doubts about our faith. All this helped us to establish a stronger bond with our elders, youngsters and kids; besides also providing them an opportunity to grow spiritually or study matters related to their faith. And the end result was a healthy and stronger family both physically and spiritually.

In addition, the pandemic also forced many to adopt healthy habits. Surveys carried out in many European nations reveal that a vast percentage of people are now in favour of travelling by cycle or walking for their daily commute to the office, instead of using the public transport.

Similarly, the “stay at or near home” culture has led to a boom in online shopping and home deliveries is likely to stay, with 58% of shoppers in the UK determined to continue their support to local groceries and food stores.

Human Migration

The lockdown and its aftermath also showed us pictures which left the whole nation and the world aghast - the pictures of a vast multitude of ordinary Indians fleeing the large metropolises, in particular Delhi, leading to many unanswered questions about the shape in which our country has transformed into.

The ordinary Indian citizen was forced to ponder why these migrants and poor labourers and their families decided to flee the cities? As the end result of an announcement which put the whole country into an unexpected lockdown, without any background preparation on how to manage the emerging chaos resulting out of it, or it was due to our collective apathy towards those who are less fortunate than us.

However, the exodus also bought the indomitable and collective spirit of the Indians to the fore. Many social organisations and individuals rising to the challenge, started community kitchens, helping those who were stranded or those who were not able to get two square meals a day.

The author is a Political commentator based in New Delhi, India

Largest Study Of Asia's Rivers May Help Predict Changes In Region's Water Cycle: Scientists

'Mega-droughts' of the past have often simultaneously hit sites that are currently home to power production along Asian rivers, says the largest study of the continent's river systems which may help predict long term changes in the region's water cycle.

The study, published in the journal Water Resources Research, noted that the findings have important implications for water management and power production, especially when a country's economy depends on multiple river basins.

"Our records show that 'mega-droughts' have hit multiple power production sites simultaneously, so we can now use this information to design a grid that is less vulnerable during extreme events,"

to design a grid that is less vulnerable during extreme events," said study co-author Stefano Galelli from Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD).

According to the research, rivers in Asia behave in a coherent pattern, with droughts stretching as far as from the Godavari in India to the Mekong in Southeast Asia, explained study first author Nguyen Tan Thai Hung from SUTD.

As the region is home to many populous river basins which provide water, energy, and food for more than three billion people, the scientists said it is crucial to understand past climate patterns in the Asian Monsoon region to better predict long term changes in the water cycle and its

impact on the water supply.

Following two years of analysing tree rings to reconstruct the courses of streams in the continent, the scientists produced data on 813 years (from 1200 to 2012) of annual river discharge at 62 stations in 41 rivers flowing through 16 countries, including India.

The researchers also obtained data from a previously published study of an extensive network of tree ring data sites in Asia and prehistoric drought record called the Monsoon Asia Drought Atlas (MADA).

Based on an analysis of the underlying tree ring data, the scientists extracted the most important climate signals that influence river discharge in the continent.

While earlier research had already found that droughts in Asian rivers are influenced by temperatures of the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans, the new study revealed that this ocean-river connection is not constant over time.

According to the researchers, rivers in Asia were much less influenced by the oceans in the first half of the 20th century compared to the 50 years before, and 50 years after that period.

"This research is of great importance to policymakers – we need to know where and why river discharge changed during the past millennium to make big decisions on water-dependent infrastructure," Galelli added.

Press Trust Of india



Our records show that 'mega-droughts' have hit multiple power production sites simultaneously, so we can now use this information to design a grid that is less vulnerable during extreme events,"

New Research May Explain Severe Virus Attacks On Lungs

In some cases, immune cells in the lungs can contribute to worsening a virus attack. In a new study, researchers at Karolinska Institutet in Sweden describe how different kinds of immune cells, called macrophages, develop in the lungs and which of them may be behind severe lung diseases.

The study, which was published in Immunity, may contribute to future treatments for COVID-19, among other diseases.

The structure of the lungs exposes them to viruses and bacteria from both the air and the blood. Macrophages are immune cells that, among other things, protect the lungs from such attacks. But under certain conditions, lung macrophages can also contribute to severe lung diseases, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and COVID-19.



To date, research on the development of human lung macrophages has been limited.

Macrophages can have different origins and develop, among other things, from white blood cells, monocytes, that are divided into different genetically determined main types. In humans, two of these are "classical" CD14+ monocytes and "non-classical" CD16+ monocytes.

In a new study at Karolinska Institutet, researchers have used a model to study the development of lung macrophages directly in a living lung. This has been combined with a method to study gene activity in individual cells, RNA sequencing, and thereby discovered how blood monocytes become human lung macrophages.

"In our study, we show that classical monocytes migrate into airways and lung tissue and are converted into macrophages that protect the health and function of the lungs. We have also identified a special kind of monocyte, HLA-DRhi,

which is an intermediate immune cell between a blood monocyte and an airway macrophage. These HLA-DRhi monocytes can leave the blood circulation and migrate into the lung tissue," says Tim Willinger, Associate Professor at the Department of Medicine, Huddinge, Karolinska Institutet, who led the study.

The non-classical monocytes, however, develop into macrophages in the many blood vessels of the lungs and do not migrate into the lung tissue.

"Certain macrophages in the lungs probably have a connection to a number of severe lung diseases. In respiratory infections, for example, monocytes in the lungs develop into macrophages, which combat viruses and bacteria. But a certain type of macrophage may also contribute to severe inflammation and infections," says the study's first author Elza Evren, a doctoral student in Tim Willinger's research team.

In infection with the novel coro-

navirus, SARS-COV-2, which causes COVID-19, researchers believe that protective, anti-inflammatory macrophages are replaced by pro-inflammatory lung macrophages from blood monocytes.

"The existence of these blood monocyte-derived macrophages has been shown in other studies to correlate with how severely ill a person becomes in COVID-19 and how extensive the damage to the lungs is. Patients with severe COVID-19 also have fewer HLA-DRhi monocytes in their blood, probably because they move away from the blood into the lungs. Given their important role in rapid inflammatory responses, our results indicate that future treatments should focus on inflammatory macrophages and monocytes to reduce lung damage and mortality from severe COVID-19," says Tim Willinger.

Agencies

Scientists Explore Deficits In Processing Speed In Individuals With Spinal Cord Injury

A team of rehabilitation researchers has studied processing speed deficits in individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI). They found that the SCI group and older controls had similar activation patterns, but the SCI group differed significantly from their age-matched controls.

The scientists have compared SCI patients and their brain activation patterns with those of healthy age-matched controls, and older healthy individuals.

The article, "The neural mechanisms underlying processing speed deficits in individuals who have sustained a spinal cord injury: A pilot study" was published by Brain Topography. The authors are scientists with expertise in research in cognitive rehabilitation and SCI rehabilitation: Glenn Wylie, DPhil, Nancy D. Chiaravalloti, PhD, Erica Weber, PhD, Helen Genova, PhD, and Trevor Dyson-Hudson, MD, from Kessler Foundation, and Jill M. Wecht, EdD, from the James J. Peters VA Medical Center.

Individuals with chronic SCI have an increased risk for cognitive deficits that resemble the deficits associated with the aging process, giving rise to the theory of "accelerated cognitive aging." As reported previously by this team, the deficits affect processing speed, new learning and memory, and verbal fluency, which are the domains affected during aging. This study is the first to examine the neural mechanisms of higher order cognitive tasks of individuals with SCI. The focus was on processing speed, which is known to be affected by SCI and aging, and is integral to cognitive function and everyday life activities.

The 30 participants were participants of a larger

study who underwent optional neuroimaging studies at the Rocco Ortenzio Neuroimaging Center at Kessler Foundation -- 10 individuals with cervical SCI, 10 age-matched controls, and 10 healthy older individuals. In addition to traditional neuropsychological testing methods, processing speed was tested in the scanner, using timed letter comparison tasks during functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). This study was the first to use the modified letter comparison test.

Significant differences in brain activation were found between the SCI group and the age-matched control group, but the SCI and older groups had similar patterns, including activation of the hippocampal, frontal and parietal areas. "This suggests that individuals with SCI are compensating for deficits in processing speed by relying on the areas of the brain involved in executive control and memory," noted Dr. Chiaravalloti, "which supports the theory of accelerated brain aging after SCI."

Despite the limitations of sample size and level of injury, the study is an important contribution to our understanding of the impact of SCI on cognition, according to Dr. Wylie, director of the Ortenzio Center. "Our ability to observe brain activation while the individual performs specific cognitive tasks provides new information on the mechanisms that underlie the cognitive deficits that we now know affect a substantial proportion of the SCI population," Dr. Wylie said. "Developing treatments targeted to these deficits depends on our pursuit of this line of research, which may benefit other populations affected by delayed processing speed."

Agencies

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER DEPARTMENT OF FLORICULTURE KASHMIR SRINAGAR

e-NIT No: 84of 2020-21 Dated:30.12.2020.

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Union Territory, J&K, 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 and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

| S. No | Name of Work | Est. Cost (Rs. In lacs) | Cost of T/Doc. (In Rs.) | Earnest Money (In Rs.) | Time of completion | Class of Contractor |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 01. | Upgradation and beautification of Tulip Garden Sgr. (SAKURA PROJECT) park B construction of open Air cafeteria , Kehwa/ coffee point. | 82.74 | 2500/- | 165480/- | 45days | AAY |

Position of AAA : Accorded

Position of funds : Available

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.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

| | | |
|----|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Period of downloading of bidding document | 31/12/2020 from 10:00 AM to 11/01/2021 up to 04:00 PM |
| 2. | Bid submission Start Date. | 31/12/2020 from 10:30 AM |
| 3. | Bid submission End date | 11/01/2021 up to 04:00 PM |
| 4. | Date and time of Opening of Tenders (Online) | 12/01/2021 at 02:00 PM |

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of e-challan/copy of receipt from treasury favouring of Executive Engineer, Floriculture Department Srinagar (tender inviting authority) indicating name of work by crediting the requisite charges to the MH: 0406-02-112-Public Gardens (Floriculture Department Kashmir) in favour of Executive Engineer (tender inviting authority) and Earnest money/Bid security in shape of fresh CDR/FDR pledged to Executive Engineer Department of Floriculture Kashmir Srinagar (tender receiving authority).

2. The date and time of opening of technical Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The Financial bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer Department of Floriculture Kashmir Srinagar (tender receiving authority).

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

4. The earnest money shall be forfeited , if:-

a. Any bidder/ tenderer withdraw his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or make any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.

b. Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time

c. Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

DIPK-11140/20

No: EE/FD/2545-50

Dated:30.12.2020

Sd/-

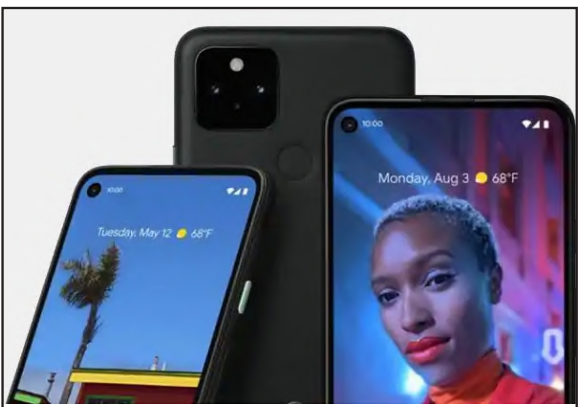
Executive Engineer

Deptt: of Floriculture, Kashmir.

Google takes away wide-angle astrophotography from Pixel phones

Google Pixel 5 and 4a 5G users can no longer use their ultra-wide cameras to take pictures of the stars. The company apparently removed the lens's astrophotography capabilities with the Google Camera 8.1 update.

According to The Verge, the feature was a selling point of the Pixel 4 and was available on the regular and telephoto cameras. When the 4a 5G and 5 were announced with new wide-angle lenses, the feature was added



to those as well. Now it's been taken away.

On Pixel 4a (5G) and Pixel 5, astrophotography only works on zoom settings equal to or greater

than 1x.

The astrophotography feature lets users capture the night sky by pointing their phone up and keeping it still, either by balancing it on a nearby object or putting it on a tripod.

The feature is still available on the phones' other cameras, but if you go to Night Sight mode and switch to the ultra-wide-angle camera a user will now get a warning saying "Zoom to 1x for astrophotography".

Agencies

26 Arrested After Hindu Temple Torched By Mob In Pakistan: Report



Agencies

PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN: At least two dozen people, including several Muslim clerics, were detained Thursday after a mob attacked and set fire to a Hindu temple in northwest Pakistan, police said.

Around 1,500 Muslims on Wednesday descended on the temple -- which was destroyed in similar circumstances in 1997 -- after staging a protest against renovations at an adjoining building owned by Hindus.

The temple is located in a remote village in Karak district, some 160 kilometres (100 miles) southeast of Peshawar.

"We have arrested 26 people including local clerics for destroying a place of worship and inciting people to riot", local police official Fazal Sher told AFP.

He added police were looking for a further 50 people identified from videos of the attack.

Discrimination and violence against religious minorities are commonplace in Pakistan, where Muslims make up 97 per cent of the population and Hindus around two percent.

Irfanullah Khan, the district police chief, also confirmed the arrests.

He told AFP that a house adjacent to the temple was recently bought by the Hindu community and was being renovated, which offended locals.

Hindus have not lived in the area since the partition of British-ruled India in 1947 when

Pakistan was created, but Hindu devotees occasionally visit the temple and the tomb of the Hindu saint Shri Paramhans, who according to Hindu faith died in the village in 1919.

"These people have brought a bad name to our area and tarnished the image of the state," one local resident, Ameen Pash-teen, told AFP.

In Karachi, the capital of Sindh province and where the majority of the country's Hindus live, more than 200 people protested outside the Supreme Court calling for justice.

"You must respect other people's religion. We are Pakistanis, and for God's sake, nobody needs to give us a certificate of loyalty", said Mangla Sharma a Hindu member of Sindh's provincial assembly.

Gopal Kamuary, president of the Pakistan Hindu Council, accused local authorities of standing by as the attack happened.

"In the video of the attack, the administration is just watching silently as the mob dismantles the temple. What kind of justice is that", Kamuary said.

Earlier this month, the United States placed Pakistan on a list of "countries of particular concern" for religious freedom violations.

"The destruction of the Hindu temple in Karak is yet another example of persistent discrimination faced by the beleaguered Hindu community in Pakistan", said Rimmel Mohyidin, Pakistan campaigner at Amnesty International.

Nawaz Sharif's Passport Will Be Cancelled On Feb 16, Says Pakistan Minister



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government on Wednesday said it will cancel the passport of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on February 16.

Sharif, 70, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supremo, has been living in London since November last year after the Lahore High Court granted him permission to go abroad for four weeks for treatment.

The three-time former prime minister, who was convicted in two corruption cases -- Avenfield properties and Al-Azizia -- was declared a proclaimed offender earlier this month by the Islamabad High Court after he failed to appear before it despite several warnings.

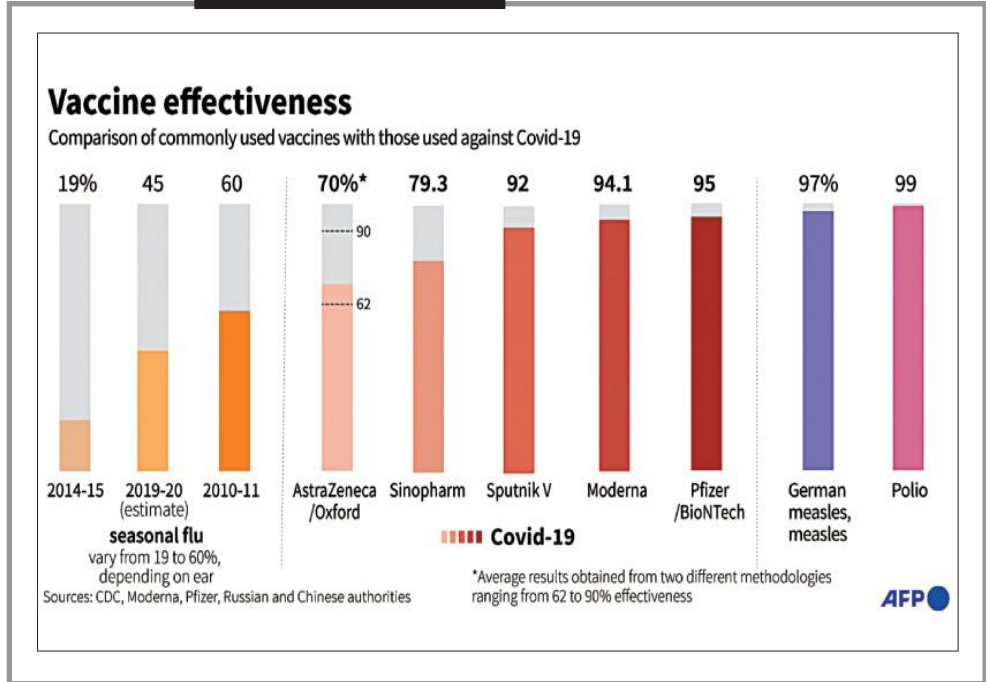
"(We) will cancel Nawaz Sharif's passport on February 16," Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid

Ahmed told reporters here in response to a query. He, however, did not provide any further details.

Meanwhile, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior, Mirza Shahzad Akbar, said Pakistan had asked the British authorities to deport Sharif who was convicted by the courts.

Pakistan currently has no extradition treaty with Britain. Prime Minister Imran Khan in October had said he would contact his British counterpart Boris Johnson, if needed, to discuss Sharif's deportation.

Sharif resigned as Pakistan prime minister in 2017 after the Supreme Court disqualified him from holding public office and ruled that graft cases be filed against the beleaguered leader and his children over the Panama Papers scandal.



UK Watchdog Approves Use Of 'Vaccine For The World'

Agencies

LONDON: Britain authorised an easy-to-handle coronavirus vaccine on Wednesday and decided to stretch out the time between doses to allow more people to get some level of protection faster as infections surge.

The first green light for the shot dubbed the "vaccine for the world" brought a measure of hope that the pandemic could be brought under control.

The vaccine developed by Oxford University and drugmaker AstraZeneca is expected to be relied on in many countries because of its low cost and the fact that it can be kept in refrigerators rather than at the ultra-cold or freezer temperatures some other vaccines require.

"This wonderful news brings renewed hope at a time of rising infections and unprecedented pressure on health services in the UK and beyond. It is now critical that this hope can be shared by all nations," said Anna Marriot, Health Policy

Manager at Oxfam aid agency.

Even as the authorisation was welcomed as a significant development in efforts to contain the virus that has killed nearly 1.8 million, the change in British policy on administering the shots drove home concerns about a new, potentially more contagious variant that authorities blame for rising hospitalisations in Britain. The new variant has been found in several countries, including the US.

Because infections are spreading so rapidly in the UK, officials are now recommending prioritising delivering a first dose to as many people as possible for both of the vaccines authorised for use in the country: the AstraZeneca one and another from Pfizer-BioNTech. Officials say both protect people even after just one of the two recommended doses and that increasing the time between doses might even have a benefit.

"The immediate urgency is for rapid and high levels of vaccine uptake," Wei Shen Lim,

chair of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, told reporters on Wednesday.

"This will allow the greatest number of eligible people to receive vaccine in the shortest time possible, and that will protect the greatest number of lives."

Hundreds of thousands of people in the UK have already received at least one shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. British Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the rollout of the AstraZeneca one will start on Jan 4.

The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, which recommended the AstraZeneca vaccine for emergency use, did not endorse one vaccine over the other. The regulator also updated its guidance on the Pfizer-BioNTech shot to say that pregnant women and women who are breastfeeding can get it after a consultation with a health professional about the benefits and risks. Previously, the agency had not recommended the shot for pregnant women.

China Deploying "En Masse" Underwater Drones In Indian Ocean: Report

Agencies

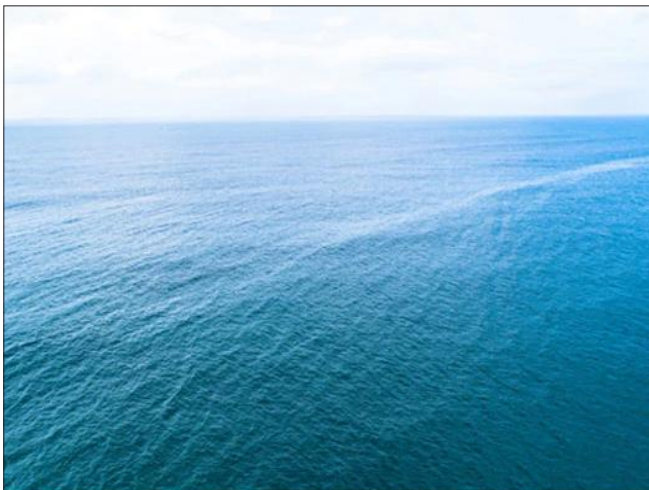
NEW JERSEY: China has deployed a fleet of underwater drones called Sea Wing (Haiyi) glider in the Indian Ocean, which can operate for months on end and make observations for naval intelligence purposes, according to defence analyst HI Sutton.

Writing for the Forbes magazine, HI Sutton said that these sea gliders, which the Chinese are deploying "en masse", are a type of Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle (UUV) which were launched in mid-December 2019 and recovered in February after making over 3,400 observations.

Citing the government sources, HI Sutton in his report said that these gliders are similar to those deployed by the US Navy, one of which was seized by Beijing in 2016 to ensure "safe navigation of passing ships."

"Taken at face value, it may be surprising that China is now deploying these types of UUV en masse in the Indian Ocean. China has also deployed the Sea Wing from an ice breaker in the Arctic," HI Sutton wrote.

According to the defence expert, reports from December last year suggested that 14 would be employed in the Indian Ocean mission but only 12 were used. HI Sutton said that these gliders are unpowered with large wings to glide that can run for long periods of time, adding that they are not fast or



agile, however, they are employed for long-range missions.

Furthermore, the defence analyst said these Chinese gliders that are placed in the Indian Ocean were reportedly gathering oceanography data, which "sounds innocuous" however, is commonly gathered for naval intelligence purposes."

Noting the rising challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat earlier this month had said the world is witnessing a race for strategic bases in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), adding that it is only going to gain momentum in the times to come.

"Of late along with geostrategic competition in the Indo-Pacific, we are also witnessing a race for strategic places and bases in the

Indian Ocean region which is only going to gain momentum in the times to come," General Rawat had said while delivering a keynote address at the Global Dialogue Security Summit.

CDS Rawat had said, "In the military field, technology must be a means of deterrence not a source of destruction. Our approach to security hence needs to shift from unilateral to the multi-lateral mode which mandates increasing training engagements with partner nations in order to fortify the future."

He said that based on the challenges that India face, "we require structured long term planning for capacity building and capability development of our defence forces."

Yemen: Massive Blast At Aden Airport Kills 25, Wounds 110



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A large explosion struck the airport in the southern Yemeni city of Aden, shortly after a plane carrying the newly formed Cabinet landed there, security officials said.

At least 25 people were killed and 110 wounded in the blast.

Yemen's internationally recognised government said Iran-backed Houthi rebels fired four ballistic missiles at the airport.

Rebel officials did not answer phone calls from The Associated Press seeking comment.

No one on the government plane was hurt.

The officials later reported another explosion close to a palace in the city where the Cabinet members were transferred following the airport attack.

The Saudi-led coalition later shot down a bomb-laden drone that attempted to target the palace, according to Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV channel.

The Cabinet reshuffle was seen as a major step toward closing a dangerous rift between the government of embattled Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, and southern separatists backed by the United Arab Emirates.

Hadi's government and the separatists are nominal allies in Yemen's years-long civil war that pits the Saudi-led, US-backed military coalition against the Houthis, who control most of northern Yemen as well as the country's capital, Sanaa.

AP footage from the scene at the airport showed members of the government delegation disembark-

ing as the blast shook the grounds.

Many ministers rushed back inside the plane or ran down the stairs, seeking shelter.

Thick smoke rose into the air from near the terminal building.

Officials at the scene said they saw bodies lying on the tarmac and elsewhere at the airport.

Yemeni Communication Minister Naguib al-Awg, who was on the plane, told the AP that he heard two explosions, suggesting they were drone attacks.

Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed and the others were quickly whisked from the airport to the Mashiq Palace.

Military and security forces sealed off the area around the the palace.

"It would have been a disaster if the plane was bombed," al-Awg said, insisting the plane was the target of the attack as it was supposed to land earlier.

Prime Minister Saeed tweeted that he and his Cabinet were safe and unhurt. He called the explosions a "cowardly terrorist act" that was part of the war on "the Yemeni state and our great people." Foreign Minister Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak blamed the Houthis for the attacks.

His ministry said in a statement later that the rebels fired four ballistic missiles at the airport, and launched drone attacks at the palace, the Cabinet's headquarters. They did not provide evidence.

Health Minister Qasem Buhaibuh said in a tweet the attacks at the airport killed least 25 people and wounded 110 others, suggesting the death toll could increase further because some of the wounds were serious.

Tehran To Pay \$150,000 To Every Family Of Downed Plane Victims

Agencies

TEHRAN: Tehran will pay \$150,000 to every family of the 176 victims killed when a Ukrainian passenger plane was mistakenly shot down by Iran in January, the presidency said on Wednesday.

Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 crashed shortly after taking off from Tehran's airport on Jan 8, killing all 176 people on board.

Tehran admitted three days later that its forces had accidentally shot down the Kiev-bound Boeing 737-800 plane after firing two missiles, amid heightened US-Iran tensions.

"The cabinet approved the provision of \$150,000, or the equivalent in euros... for the families and survivors of each of the victims of the Ukrainian plane crash as soon as possible," Iran's presidency said.

"This compensation does not prevent the prosecution of the case before the competent judicial authority," the statement added.

Many of those killed were Iranians and Canadians, with 85 Canadian citizens or permanent residents, some dual nationals.

Iran's civil aviation authority

has said the misalignment of an air defence unit's radar system was the key "human error" that led to the plane's downing.

Tehran's air defences had been on high alert at the time in case the US retaliated against Iranian strikes hours earlier on American troops stationed in Iraq, which in turn had been in response to the US assassination of Iran's top commander, General Qasem Soleimani.

Ukraine's foreign minister said in July that he hoped to obtain as much financial compensation as possible in order to alleviate "the pain and mourning" of the victim's relatives.

A Ukrainian delegation visited Tehran in October for talks on possible financial compensation.

The Iranian foreign minister then indicated that the negotiations had focused in particular on "compensation for families and the airline."

On Wednesday, Mohammad Eslami, Iran's transport minister, said the final crash report would be "soon" made public, including a version in English.

"The owner of the plane, Ukraine, and Boeing were present for the investigation," Eslami said.

NEWS MAKERS

"I Am French", Says Boris Johnson's Father, Applying For Citizenship

Agencies

PARIS: The father of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Thursday he was in the process of applying for a French passport to maintain his ties with the European Union after Brexit.

Stanley Johnson, a former member of the European Parliament who voted Remain in Britain's 2016 referendum, told RTL radio he wanted to become a French citizen because of strong family links to France.

"If I understand it correctly, I am French. My mother was born in France, her mother was totally French as was her grandfather. So for me it is about reclaiming what I already have. And that makes me very happy," said the 80-year-old Johnson, who was



speaking in French.

"I will always be a European, that's for sure. One cannot tell the British people: you

are not Europeans. Having a tie with the European Union is important," he added.

His son Boris was the public face of the Leave campaign in the 2016 referendum and says Britain can "prosper mightily" as a fully sovereign nation outside what he sees as an overly bureaucratic EU.

But on Wednesday the prime minister sounded a more conciliatory note as parliament approved a new trade deal with the EU, saying: "This is not the end of Britain as a European country. We are in many ways the quintessential European civilisation... and we will continue to be that."

The United Kingdom officially leaves the EU's orbit on Thursday night, after an often strained 48-year liaison with the European project.

Spy Pollard Gets Hero's Welcome In Israel

JERUSALEM: Jonathan Pollard, an American jailed in the United States in 1985 for spying for Israel, landed in the Jewish state on Wednesday to a hero's welcome led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Pollard, 66, served 30 years in prison for passing on classified documents when he served as a US Navy intelligence analyst, and had been confined to the United States under his parole terms since his 2015 release.

After years of Israeli lobbying to allow Pollard, a Jewish American, to leave, the US Justice Department removed the terms



and conditions last month.

Pollard and his wife Esther arrived in Israel before dawn and were seen walking off a plane towards a waiting Netanyahu, who raised his hand in welcome, in a video distributed by the prime minister's office.

Pollard, with a kippa skull-

cap and a long white beard, then removed his face mask, got down on his hands and knees and kissed the ground, with Esther following suit.

Netanyahu and Pollard said traditional Jewish blessings before the premier handed an Israeli identity card to the old

spy, who was granted citizenship in 1995.

"You're home," the Israeli premier told the two.

'Ecstatic to be home'

Pollard's arrival was widely celebrated, with President Reuven Rivlin and other politicians sending welcome tweets.

The authority in charge of Ben Gurion airport, near Tel Aviv, released a recording of the pilot requesting permission to land.

The Pollards flew in on a private jet owned by Jewish-American casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, which touched down just before 3am, said journalist Itay Blumental.

Real Kashmir Cup 2020-2021: JKPDC XI Beats Jammu United FC 2-0

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: JKPDC XI defeated Jammu United FC by 2 goals to nil on Thursday in the ongoing Real Kashmir Cup here at TRC Ground in Srinagar.

Both goals for PDC XI came in the second half with Sheikh Talib scoring the first and Imad scoring the second. Sheikh Talib was named man of the match.

18 Premier division teams from Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and

other states of the country have been competing in the knockout tournament since December 27.

Real Kashmir FC has organized the Cup jointly with JAKFA (J&K Football Association), AIFF (All India Football Federation) and also in collaboration with JKSC (JK Sports Council). The Real Kashmir Cup is Jammu and Kashmir's first-ever, national-level football competition with the organizers labelling the tournament as a show of unity, solidarity and peace.

J&K Team For Syed Mushtaq Ali T-20 Tournament Announced

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) has announced the 20-member squad that will participate in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T-20 Tournament, which begins January 10 in Bangalore.

The team will be captained by star cricketer Parvez Rasool with Shubham Khajuria as vice-captain.

The 20 man squad also includes left arm spinner Dorje Kalyan, a cricketer from Leh region of Ladakh. Making him the first ever cricketer from Leh to play for J&K's senior cricket team.

The team includes: Parvez

Rasool (C), Shubham Khajuria (VC), Suryansh Raina (WK), Qamran



Iqbal, Jiyaad Nazir Magrey, Abdul Samad, Usman Pandit, Henan Malik, Puneet Kumar, Dorje Kalyan, Abid Mushtaq, Amir Aziz,

Umer Nazir, Ram Dayal, Auquib Nabi, Umran Malik, Mujtaba Yousuf, Nawaz ul Muneer (WK), Ahmed Omar Bandy and Shubham Singh Pundir, while, Paras Sharma, Ankush Bandral, Vivrant Sharma, Yasir Ahmed and Adil Rashid have been kept on standby. The squad was selected after simultaneous trials were held in Jammu and Kashmir provinces.

The squad will reach Bangalore on January 2nd where the players will have to undergo a mandatory 7-day quarantine period.

J&K will play its first match against Karnataka on January 10. Kept in an Elite Group, the J&K team will play all its matches in Bangalore.

Court Road FC Pays Tributes To Fayaz Bhat

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

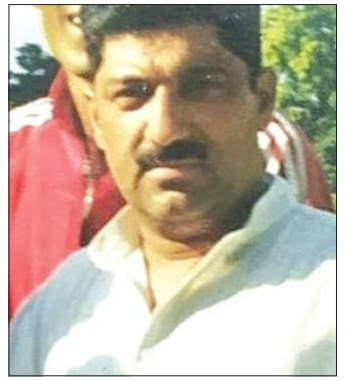
SRINAGAR: Court Road Football Club on Tuesday held a meeting to discuss the future strategy of the new football team.

The club also paid rich tributes to Fayaz Ahmad Bhat, ex-player cum manager, who passed away recently.

They said that the deceased was a player par excellence with a vast experience.

While recalling his qualities and contribution, the club said the deceased was known for his sincerity, nobleness and trustworthiness.

The club also condoled the demise of the cousin of Chairman Jan Mohammed. They offered their condolences and solidarity with



the bereaved families. The club prayed to Almighty Allah to grant deceased persons the highest place in Paradise.

ICC Test Rankings : Kane Williamson, Pat Cummings Take First Positions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai: India captain Virat Kohli held on to his second position while stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane broke into the top 10 after gaining five places in the latest ICC men's Test batting ranking released on Thursday.

Rahane climbed to the sixth spot after scoring 112 and 27 not out to inspire India's eight-wicket series-leveilling win in the second Test against Australia in Melbourne. It is just one below his career-best ranking of fifth attained in October last year.

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, too, was rewarded for his five-wicket haul at the MCG as he gained two places to the seventh spot, while pacer Jasprit Bumrah rose to the ninth position.

Ravindra Jadeja, who scored a crucial 57 and captured three wickets in the second Test, remained at number three but reduced the gap with Jason Holder to seven points in the all-rounder's ranking. He, however, gained 11 and four positions to reach a career

best-equaling 36th and 14th positions in batting and bowling respectively.

MCG debutants Shubman Gill and Mohammad Siraj made notable entries in 76th and 77th positions in the list for batsmen and bowlers, respectively.

Gill scored 45 and 35 not out opening the innings, while Siraj finished with five wickets in the match. India's batting mainstay Cheteshwar Pujara's lack of form saw him lose two spots to slip to the 10th place.

Australia left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc's four wickets in the match helped him reach a career best-equaling fifth position.

Matthew Wade's scores of 30 and 40 as opener helped him reach 50th among batsmen from 55th, while Cameron Green gained 36 slots to reach 115th position.

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson, meanwhile, ended the year at the top position after he dethroned Australia's Steve Smith, who slipped to the third spot after managing scores of 0 and 8 in the two innings at MCG.

Williamson, who had briefly occupied the top spot towards the end of 2015, was rewarded for his player of the match effort in the first Test against Pakistan in Tauranga, which New Zealand won by 101 runs.

Williamson gained 13 rating points for his effort of 129 and 21 to go 11 points clear of Kohli, who is on paternity leave, and 13 ahead of Smith.

Ross Taylor (up three places to 14th) is another New Zealand batsman to move up, while 26-year-old fast bowler Kyle Jamieson reached the top 30 after just five Tests, following his hauls of three for 35 and two for 35 in Tauranga.

For Pakistan, Fawad Alam's valiant second-innings century has lifted him 80 places to 102nd position while wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan's scores of 71 and 60 have helped him advance 27 places to a career-best 47th position.

Left-arm fast bowler Shaheen Afridi has moved from 35th to 33rd after grabbing four wickets in the first innings.

In Centurion, a knock of 199 by Faf du Plessis saw him not only win the player of the match award but also gain 14 places to reach 21st position, one behind team-mate Dean Elgar, who too gained four spots after a knock of 95. Lungi Ngidi gained four places and is 56th among bowlers.

For Sri Lanka, Dinesh Chandimal's knocks of 85 and 25 have lifted him three places to 38th while Dhananjaya de Silva (up nine places to 34th) and Kusal Perera (up four places to 60th) have also made notable gains among batsmen. Left-arm fast bowler Vishwa Fernando has gained two slots to reach 45th position after his three-wicket haul.

In the ICC Test team rankings, New Zealand are in line to wrest the top spot from Australia, who remain fractionally ahead since the Test team rankings are updated only at the end of each series.

Even a draw in the second Test against Pakistan could see New Zealand take the top spot.

Former Umpires Sue ECB Over Alleged Racial Discrimination

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON: The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has been sued by former umpires John Holder and Ismail Dawood for alleged racial discrimination during their time in the board's employment, a report said.

The duo had accused the ECB of institutional racism and demanded an independent inquiry into the lack of match officials from ethnic minority groups in the country last month.

"Holder lodged his claim at the London central office of the employment tribunal two days before Christmas," according to a report in 'The Guardian'.

A former Hampshire cricketer, Holder has officiated in 11 Tests and 19 ODIs in a career spanning almost three decades. "The legal action against the ECB relates to his employment as a first class umpire between 1983 and 2009.

"Holder was dropped from the ECB's Test match list in 1991,

a few weeks after he reported an incident of alleged ball-tampering by an England player in a Test against West Indies at the Oval," the report said.

Holder and former U-19 cricketer Dawood "are seeking compensation and a recommendation on the ECB's future conduct under s.123 (3) (b) of the 2010 Equality Act."

Dawood, who has played for Northamptonshire, Worcestershire, Glamorgan and Yorkshire but could never make umpiring a career after failing to win promotion to the panel following the end of his playing career in 2005, said that there were "systematic failings."

"I was told I was going to get promoted one year in an appraisal, it was verbal. It didn't transpire," Dawood told 'Sky Sports News'.

"On six different occasions I was superseded in terms of getting promotion. My reports and statistical data by various different people who do the reports and were all of a sound manner and

I wasn't given the opportunities to gain promotion, which of course I felt aggrieved about.

"I still don't know why my career was cut short. We believe there has been systematic failings within, a type of bullying, harassment and cronyism which I was involved with in terms of the umpiring fraternity, was terrible," he added.

An ECB spokesperson, in response said: "We are not aware of the detail of this claim from John Holder and are therefore unable to comment upon it. The ECB is absolutely committed to ensuring there is no place for discrimination, of any kind, in our sport.

"As with all areas of our game, we want our match officials to represent and reflect everyone who supports and plays cricket.

"...we have been arranging to meet with John Holder and others to listen to their experiences so as to better inform our future approach to recruiting and developing umpires and match officials."

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

What Makes Kashmir's 'Nuclear'

report his case—after his parents, one day, reprimanded him, 'Just avoid those spoiled brats and focus on your studies.'

Even his banker mother would leave him behind under the supervision of their maid. This third-person nourishment badly altered the kid's behavior and made him indifferent towards his parents with time.

"I never bothered about his behaviour until the Covid lockdown enforced a strict indoor on us," Khan continues to detail his son's changed mannerism.

"As I could see it, my son had become cheerless and withdrawn. Those signs worried me. As someone who grew up in the harshest lockdown of nineties, I never had these issues."

But then, unlike his kid, Khan was living in a packed house where everyone—his uncles, aunts and cousins—would share each other's sorrows and joys.

In that amiable setup, Khan always had a shoulder to cry on and agency to share his anguish with. That empathetic joint family system of Kashmir has since then disintegrated into now normalized nuclear families.

"In most of these homes, children are left at the mercy of caretakers, as many working parents don't have much time to attend to them," says Salika Hameed, a sociology teacher from Sopore.

"Even in countryside, nuclear homes have multiplied now, and with them, the growing social seclusion has come to haunt children."

In Srinagar, Malik Siraj happens to be an avid scholar studying the behaviour changes in kids. His previous findings make one believe that children from nuclear families are more vulnerable to delinquency, drug abuse and dependency personality.

"Let's understand this fix with a simple example," Siraj, an eloquent scholar, tries to explain the nuclear family impact on children. "In the name of freedom, when you leave your kid behind four-walls, it grooms him in a different manner. It makes him sullen, sad and sentimental. So freedom, in this case, comes with the fear of deviation and unregulated behaviour."

But in the joint family system, the core family values and ethics would act as behavior filters, the scholar says, and groom children for "Do's and Don'ts" in life.

"Contemporary Kashmir might claim to be progressive in life, but we are only becoming digital-driven cavemen in reality," Siraj says with a smirk. "In the name of privacy, we are simply raising kids bereft of street logic and larger identity consciousness. Even if many of these kids turn out to be sharp and smart later on, but what about the silent majority grappling with the nuclear family complexities?"

In fact, he says, raising kids by feeding them YouTube cartoons right from childhood can give parents some moments

of respite, but this "mindless parenting" only makes children oblivious of the real world in the long run.

The immediate upshot of such 'private parenting', as Siraj calls it, is the mushrooming of half-baked behavioral beings—who often find themselves at the crossroads in their careers and lives.

"On the contrary, children from joint families grew up as sharp and directional in life," the scholar says based on his research. "They may not always be prospering professionals, but they mostly are sound personalities, street-smart and crisis managers."

But, he rues, such is not the case with the children of nuclear families.

"They are being raised as some factory-line products, wherein thrust is given on their careers rather than their cultural values," Siraj says. "And this is the reason why most of them remain oblivious of their roots and cultural moorings."

Siraj's words find resonance with the case of Misbah Hameed.

For most of her life, Misbah couldn't know her cousins and uncles. Given her father's bent for seclusion way of life, this commerce graduate grew up as aloof and geek.

"Life has always been about books and grades," Misbah, an introvert girl, says. "After living a withdrawn life from my large clan, I'm not able to relate with my aunts and cousins now, especially during those special family occasions."

Such cases don't surprise someone like Mohsin Mehraj, who's doing his research on the impact of nuclear families in Kashmiri society.

"Most of the kids from these families don't relate with the larger society," Mehraj says. "They live in a manicured setup where their worldview is shaped through a selective caretaking and grooming process."

To further understand the impact of such family setups on Kashmiri children, I met Saima Mufti, a social-care professional working on the child and women welfare issues.

"The celebrated hospitality trait in Kashmiris was there for a reason," Mufti told me in her Srinagar office.

"Most of us would watch each other's back in the joint family. We always had someone to counsel and correct us. This would create a compassionate ecosystem in our homes."

"But now, we don't have many people to rely on in the nuclear families fighting their own demons today. I think that's the reason why sense of care and compassion is faltering today."

Even scholars and sociologists say that joint Kashmiri families were more resilient.

"Many big families in Kashmir take pride in the fact that they could exist due to joint family culture during the harsh-

est periods of persecution, poverty and plagues," Irtiza Amin, a sociology lecturer from Anantnag, says.

"Besides grooming young lots for tackling the emergency situations in their homeland, these joint families would serve as the primary learning centres for our kids."

In her research papers published in many Indian journals, Amin has adopted the chronological phases of family research in Kashmir as the mode of presentation. She attributes fast disintegration of the social setup in Kashmir to the blind pursuit for nuclear families in the name of "seeking privacy and staying away from the so-called prying eyes in the joint setups".

But unlike the larger Indian society, where family plurality has been an essential feature, Kashmiri, she argues, had a strong sense of shared family values.

"For the region infested with the foreign domination throughout its history, the natives had a strong sense of togetherness," Amin says.

"So, in a way, Kashmiri households were the mini-resilient fronts against the enforced offensive in their backyard from time to time."

While much of that shared spirit has waned now, many don't seem to complain as they call it the need of the hour.

When Hilal Daggia started living with his wife and two children in a separate house in Srinagar's Habak area some decade back, he says, he finally breathed easy.

Before that, he had lived forty years of his life in his ancestral house shared by his three other siblings along with their own families.

"In think there comes a time when even cavemen move out of their cave in search of a better space and shelter," Daggia, a government official, says. "And I don't think it creates any different in children's lives and mindsets. Change has to happen and that's how we grow in life."

Seconding Daggia, Rifat Altaf argues that nuclear families are better childcare units.

"There aren't much hassles and interventions in nuclear families," Rifat, a nurse by profession, says. "Children from such families are more focused, ambitious and practical. Had it been such a problematic thing to have a nuclear family setup, then westerners wouldn't have let their children to live their own lives after they turn 18. This practical approach of life is the reason why they're progressing in every sphere of life."

But then, many say, such societies have their own deprivations and underbellies, too. Among them is Mushtaq Khan, the cloth merchant of Hyperdora.

"This Covid lockdown might have created havoc in the world, but for me, it has come as a blessing in disguise," Khan says. "It has made me better father, who's aware of his child's needs today."

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