



Maximum : 07°C
Minimum : -4°C
Humidity : 72%

SUNSET
Today 05:42 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 07:37 AM



News Digest

Moderate Earthquake Jolts Kishtwar

Jammu: A moderate intensity earthquake of magnitude 5.1 hit Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district on Monday, an official of the Meteorological Department said. A police official said there was no immediate report of any damage in the earthquake which caused panic among the people who rushed out of their buildings. The tremors were felt at 7.32 pm and lasted for a few seconds, the official said. The earthquake had a depth of five kilometer and the epicentre was at latitude 33.34 degrees north and longitude 75.47 degrees east.

Two OGWs Arrested In Pulwama: Police

Srinagar: Government forces on Monday claimed to have arrested two overground workers of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) from Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Police along with Army and CRPF arrested two militant associates of proscribed outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad from Awantipora area who are involved in providing shelter, support and logistics," a police official said. He said the arrested persons were also transporting arms and ammunition of the militants in Awantipora and Tral areas of the district and passing sensitive information to the **● P06**

Bandipora Teacher Dies Of Cardiac Arrest

Srinagar: A middle-aged private school teacher died of a cardiac arrest on Monday in Ajas area of north Kashmir's Bandipora district. 50-year-old Mohammad Ramzan Rather suffered a massive cardiac arrest at his residence Sheikh Mohalla in Ajas area of the district on Monday morning. He was immediately taken to the health centre Sumbal by his family. However, on reaching there, the doctors declared him brought dead.

Man Stabbed To Death In Khanyar

Srinagar: A man was killed while another was injured in a scuffle in Khanyar area of Srinagar on Monday, reports said. Some unknown persons attacked the duo at Dastgeer Sahib shrine Khanyar in Srinagar on Monday evening, news agency KNO reported. One among the duo identified as Ziyaan Chisti of Rainawari was stabbed to death while another person accompanying him identified as Faizan Fida Bhat of Ellahi Bagh area of Srinagar was injured, the report said. The report said that both the persons were taken to SMHS Hospital Srinagar. Medical **● P06**

Thief Caught Red-Handed In Kupwara

Kupwara: A thief was caught red-handed while stealing goods from a provisional store at Ganipora market in Kupwara district of North Kashmir late last night, officials said on Monday. Wearing a Camo jacket, the thief was caught by locals and police around midnight, concerned Station House Officer Zahoor Ahmad said. A police official identified the thief Bilal Ahmad Khan of Halmarpora Kupwara. Further investigations are underway, the police said.



AN ELDERLY MAN walks through the compound of snow-covered Hazratbal shrine on Monday.

KO Pic: Abid Bhat

Highway Closed For 5 Days After Road Caves In

Press Trust Of India

BANIHAL: The 270-kilometre Jammu-Srinagar national highway, the tenuous lifeline for the Kashmir valley, was closed for traffic after a portion of the strategic road caved in near Ramban town, officials said on Monday, adding the repair work would take at least five days to restore the arterial route.

A portion of the road near Kela Morh, about four km ahead of the Ramban district headquarters, sank after a concrete retaining wall of the bridge collapsed, leading to the sinking of the road on Sunday evening, the officials said. "The construction company concerned has started the restoration work on the damaged portion of the road but it will take at least five days to complete the work," Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic), National Highway, Jatinder Singh Jowhar said.

He said a 16-metre retaining wall of a bridge collapsed, which led to the sinking of a 15-metre road, rendering the highway unsafe. The officers of the Ramban district administration along with officials of the National Highways Authority of India (NHA) rushed to the spot, which is located adjacent to an under-construction tunnel, to devise a strategy for an early restoration of the highway, the only all-weather **▶▶PAGE 06**

Gulmarg Coldest In Valley At Minus 9.6 Degree Celsius



KO Pic: Abid Bhat

SRINAGAR: There was some respite for residents of Srinagar from intense cold as minimum temperatures rose at most places in Kashmir on Monday, officials said.

Srinagar city recorded a low of minus 0.2 degrees Celsius up from minus 2.6 degrees Celsius the previous night, the officials said.

The minimum temperature in Gulmarg tourist resort settled at minus 9.6 degrees Celsius down from minus 7.2 degrees Celsius the night earlier.

Gulmarg was the coldest recorded place in the valley. Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 4.6 degrees Celsius, up from minus 5.9 degrees Celsius a night earlier. **▶▶PAGE 06**

THE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY CONCERNED HAS STARTED the restoration work on the damaged portion of the road but it will take at least five days to complete the work,"

Govt Cuts Down Valley's Foodgrain Quota: Report

Store Keepers, Fair Price Shop Dealers Agnostic

Agencies

SRINAGAR: In a move that could prompt fair shop dealers to down their shutters, the government has reportedly curtailed rice and wheat quota for Kashmir Valley by over one lakh quintals.

Over 120371.62 quintals of foodgrain, both rice and wheat have been curtailed to Kashmir Valley as store keepers and fair price shop dealers have virtually locked their stores demanding supply of rice as per the desired quota, local news agency KNT reported Monday.

Quoting official sources, the report says that under National Food

Security Act (NFSA), Government of Jammu and Kashmir, Directorate of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Kashmir has allocated 210849.89 quintals of foodgrain for the month of January 2021.

Last year in October, 331221.51 quintals of foodgrain had been allocated for Valley.

"This is a deficit of 120371.62 quintals of foodgrain and it is a huge margin that will affect people badly," said an official on condition of anonymity.

For the month of January 2021, under Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) category, 30457.95 quintals of rice (50595.74 **▶▶PAGE 06**

India Returns Captured PLA Soldier To China

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Indian Army on Monday handed back to China a soldier of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), three days after apprehending him at the southern bank of Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh, official sources said.

The soldier was returned to China at the Chushul-Moldo border point in eastern Ladakh at 10.10 am, they added.

The Chinese soldier was captured at the southern bank of Pangong lake in the early hours of

THE PLA SOLDIER HAD TRANSGRESSED across the LAC and was taken into custody by Indian troops deployed in this area.

Friday after he transgressed across the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

"The PLA soldier, who was apprehended on January 8, was handed back to China at Chushul-Moldo at 10.10 am on Monday," a source said.

Indian and Chinese troops are locked in a tense border standoff in eastern Ladakh for over eight months. The faceoff began in May last year, following a clash between the two sides in the Pangong lake area.

"The PLA soldier had transgressed across the LAC and was taken into custody by Indian troops

Army Rejects Police Charges Against Accused Captain

No System Of Cash Rewards For Acts In Combat Situations: Col Kalia

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: The Army on Monday denied that its captain, who is facing disciplinary proceedings for an alleged fake encounter in Amshipora, was "driven" by a Rs 20-lakh reward for killing militants, virtually contradicting the charge sheet filed by Jammu and Kashmir in the case.

A brief statement by Srinagar-based defence spokesperson Col Rajesh Kalia said there was no system of cash rewards for Army personnel for any acts in combat situations or otherwise in the line of duty. "There are media reports quoting that Amshipora encounter actions were driven by a Rs 20 lakh

award for the killing of militants. It is clarified that the Indian Army has no system of cash awards for its personnel for any acts in combat situations or otherwise in the line of duty," it said.

The statement said the reports are "not based on facts of the processes internal to Indian Army". Three youths, who were dubbed as militants, were killed in a fake encounter in July last year.

The Special Investigation Team constituted by the Jammu and Kashmir police to probe the incident stated in its charge sheet that "by staging the encounter" the accused Capt. Bhoopinder Singh and two other civilians --Tabash Nazir and Bilal Ahmed Lone **▶▶PAGE 06**

PDP Youth Leader Para Arrested Again

Political Vendetta For Raising Voice Against Delhi's Onslaught: Mehbooba

SRINAGAR: PDP youth wing president Waheed Para, who was granted bail by an NIA court Saturday, was arrested again on Monday by the Jammu and Kashmir Police over a case related to an alleged nexus involving politicians and militants, officials said.



The case was registered by the Criminal Investigation (Kashmir) range which **▶▶PAGE 06**

No Avian Death In Hokersar Wetland: Govt

SRINAGAR: No bird deaths have been reported from Hokersar wetland -- Kashmir largest and the most prominent wetland -- even as a sustained surveillance and monitoring campaign for bird flu has been launched in the valley, officials said on Monday.

A team of experts from the Institute of Animal Health and Biological Products (IAH&BP), Zakura, Animal Husbandry Department, Kashmir, in coordination with the Wildlife Protection Department, Kashmir, visited the wetland Monday to set in motion sustained surveillance and monitoring for bird

Panic In Uri After Birds Fall Dead

As the threat of bird flu looms large over Jammu and Kashmir, several crows and eagles were found dead in Uri area of Baramulla district from the last two days, reports said Monday. According to locals, **● P06**

flu (Avian Influenza) here, an official spokesman said.

He said the team from IAH&BP collected 21 samples in **▶▶PAGE 06**

SKIMS Bemina Resumes Non-Covid Services

SRINAGAR: The Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Medical College is all set to resume non-COVID activities from January 12 while all departments along with IPD services will be started from January 15.

An order issued by the administration has stated that as a follow up of de-notifying of SKIMS Medical College as COVID designated hospital, the non-COVID activities of the hospital shall be initiated w.e.f. 12/01/2021 and subsequently all departments along with IPD services shall be started in full w.e.f. 15/01/2021.

The authorities in order **● P06**

In FOCUS

KASHMIR In Capital: Pashmina Threads In Nizamuddin

Romaan Arora

At a stone's throw from Nizamuddin Markaz, "The Art of Kashmir" is a small window of the valley in the sizzling souk of South Delhi.

Its owner, Abdul Rasheed, has been trying to uphold the capital's craft reputation since mid-nineties after he introduced the art of embroidery and shawl-making from Kashmir.

"It was difficult in those days," says Rasheed, who came to Delhi as a struggler in 1995.

"I was 35 at that time. I came here by road, and it was the first time I had gone outside the valley to earn." In the beginning, he worked as a hawker under the hostile sun, car-



rying a bundle of shawls to every nook and cranny of the capital. But the different culture, language and

habits became barriers for him. Once he overcame those initial hitches, he started visiting embassies

to sell his shawls and suits to diplomats. "I would interact with foreign tourists in Srinagar, so I applied that experience here," Rasheed recalls. "It worked for me in Delhi."

It went for around 5 years till 2000. After that, he realized there's nothing much to gain from high commissions.

"So I changed my target location and started hawking around South Delhi. And it proved to be a good decision," the Pashmina seller says.

But to create a niche in Nizamuddin wasn't a pushover for Rasheed. It was more about setting and cementing his base based on the local trust and contacts.

After years of slog, his efforts finally paid off in 2008, when he

opened his Pashmina store. He shortly rose to become a prominent Kashmiri trader in town.

Apart from selling "good quality products", there was also the first-mover advantage and a blend of good business practices.

"If I'm here today," Rasheed says, "it's only because of my constant hard work."

But since Kashmiri shawls stay in Delhi market for four months only, from November to March, Rasheed has to grapple with the eight-month-long workless period.

Even in the ongoing Covid-marred season, his customer base has badly shrunk. People from different states would arrive in Delhi on vacations during winters and buy his Pashmina stock.



"Apart from Indian clientele, I used to cater customers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and other foreign countries," Rasheed says.

These tourists used to visit Nizamuddin Markaz (Islamic Centre for the religious congregation) during winters. "But that winter rush has ended

after Markaz was declared as the "Corona hotspot" and closed down," the trader says.

Markaz was one of his main sources of income, and its closure has made the whole market suffer in an unprecedented manner. "It's deserted now," **▶▶PAGE 06**

HEAD OUTDOORS

To Keep Lockdown Blues At Bay, Suggests Study

If you want to attain higher levels of happiness during the period of COVID-19 restrictions, spending time outdoors and switching off our devices is the key -- suggest the findings of a new study.

Previous academic studies have indicated how being outdoors, particularly in green spaces, can improve mental health by promoting more positive body image, and lowering levels of depression and anxiety.

Jointly led by academics from Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in the UK, the Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences in Austria, and Perdana University in Malaysia, this new research examined how levels of happiness during a national lockdown were affected by being outdoors, the amount of daily screen time (use of TV, computer and smartphone) and feelings of loneliness.

Using an experience sampling method (ESM), the researchers measured levels of happiness amongst a group of 286 adults three times a day, at random intervals, over a 21-day period. This allowed the participants to provide data in real-time rather than retrospectively, helping to avoid recall biases.

The research, published in the Journal of Happiness Studies, was carried out in April 2020, when the Austrian participants were allowed to leave their homes only for specific activities, which included exercise.

It found that levels of happiness were higher when participants were outdoors rather than indoors. In addition, more daily screen time and higher levels of loneliness were both associated with lower levels of happiness. The impact of loneliness on happiness was also weaker when participants were outdoors.

Co-lead author Viren Swami, Professor of Social Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), said: "While lockdowns can help slow down the transmission of research has also shown that prolonged periods of lockdown take their toll on mental health.

"Our results are important in this context because they show that being able to spend time outdoors under conditions of lockdown has a beneficial impact on psychological wellbeing. Being outdoors provides opportunities to escape from the stresses of being confined at home, maintain social relationships with others, and engage in physical activity -- all of which can improve mental health.

"Our findings have practical health policy implications. Given that further lockdown restrictions have now become necessary in the UK, public health messages that promote getting some fresh air instead of staying indoors and staring at our screens could really help to lift people's mood this winter." --Agencies

OUR RESULTS ARE IMPORTANT IN THIS CONTEXT BECAUSE they show that being able to spend time outdoors under conditions of lockdown has a beneficial impact on psychological wellbeing. Being outdoors provides opportunities to escape from the stresses of being confined at home, maintain social relationships with others, and engage in physical activity -- all of which can improve mental health.

Brain Cancer Linked To Tissue Healing

Researchers have found that the healing process that follows a brain injury -- from trauma to infection and stroke -- could spur tumour growth.

"Our data suggest that the right mutational change in particular cells in the brain could be modified by injury to give rise to a tumour," said Peter Dirks, Professor at the University of Toronto.

The finding, published in the journal Nature Cancer, could lead to a new therapy for glioblastoma patients who currently have limited treatment options with an average lifespan of 15 months after diagnosis, the researchers said. "Glioblastoma can be thought of as a wound that never stops healing," Dirks said.

"We're excited about what this tells us about how cancer originates and grows, and it opens up entirely new ideas about treatment by focusing on the injury and inflammation response," he added.

The researchers applied the latest single-cell RNA sequencing and Machine Learning (ML) technologies to map the molecular make-up of the glioblastoma stem cells (GSCs), which Dirks' team previously showed are responsible for tumour initiation and recurrence after treatment.

They found new sub-populations of GSCs that bear the molecular hallmarks of inflammation and which are commingled with other cancer stem cells inside patients' tumours.

It suggests that some glioblastomas start to form when the normal tissue healing process,



which generates new cells to replace those lost to injury, gets derailed by mutations -- possibly many years before patients become symptomatic, Dirks said.

Once a mutant cell becomes engaged in wound healing, it cannot stop multiplying because the normal controls are broken and this spurs tumour growth, according to the study.

The team collected GSCs from 26 patients' tumours and expanded them in the lab to obtain sufficient numbers of the rare cells for analysis. Almost 70,000 cells were analyzed by single-cell RNA sequencing, which detects what genes are switched on in individual cells -- an effort led by Laura Richards, a graduate student in Pugh's lab.

The data confirmed extensive disease heterogeneity, meaning that each tumour contains mul-

tiply sub-populations of molecularly distinct cancer stem cells, making recurrence likely as existing therapy is unable to wipe out all the different sub-clones.

A closer look revealed that each tumour has either of the two distinct molecular states -- termed "Developmental" and "Injury Response" -- or a gradient between the two.

According to the researchers, the developmental state is a hallmark of the glioblastoma stem cells and resembles that of the rapidly dividing stem cells in the brain before birth.

But the second state came as a surprise. The researchers termed it "Injury Response" because it showed an upregulation of immune pathways and inflammation markers such as interferon and TNFalpha, which are indicative of wound healing processes. --Agencies

Religious People Cope Well With Anxiety, Depression: Study

A new study has revealed that religious people are making use of some of the same tools that psychologists have systematically identified as effective in increasing well-being and protecting against distress, anxiety and depression.

Religious people look for positive ways of thinking about hardship, a practice known to psychologists as "cognitive reappraisal." They also tend to have confidence in their ability to cope with difficulty, a trait called "coping self-efficacy." Both have been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, said



the team from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in the US.

"This suggests that science and religion are on the same page when

it comes to coping with hardship," said Florin Dolcos, a professor of psychology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

The research was prompted in part by earlier studies demonstrating that people who are religious tend to use a coping strategy that closely resembles cognitive reappraisal.

For example, when somebody dies, a religious person may say, "OK, now they are with God," while someone who isn't religious may say, "Well, at least they are not suffering anymore."

In both cases, the individual finds comfort in framing the situation in a

more positive light, said Dolcos in a paper published in the Journal of Religion and Health.

To reach this conclusion, the researchers recruited 203 participants with no clinical diagnoses of depression or anxiety. Fifty-seven of the study subjects also answered questions about their level of religiosity or spirituality. The researchers asked participants to select from a series of options describing their attitudes and practices.

The researchers also evaluated participants' confidence in their ability to cope and asked them questions designed to measure their symptoms of depression and anxiety.

IBM Uses Light For Ultra-Fast Computing In AI Systems

IBM researchers have developed a way to dramatically reduce latency in Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems by using light, instead of electricity, to create ultra-fast computing.

The IBM team, along with scientists from the universities of Oxford, Muenster and Exeter, achieved this by using photonic integrated circuits that use light instead of electricity for computing.

The light-based tensor core could be used, among other applications, for autonomous vehicles.

In a Nature paper, they have detailed combination of photonic AI -- demonstrating a photonic tensor core that can perform computations with unprecedented, ultra-low latency and compute density.

"Our tensor core runs computa-



tions at a processing speed higher than ever before. It performs key computational primitives associated with AI models such as deep neural networks for computer vision in less than a microsecond, with remarkable areal and energy efficiency," IBM said in a blog post.

In 2015, researchers from Oxford University, the University of Muenster and the University of Exeter developed a photonic phase change memory device that could be written to and read from optically.

The new photonic tensor core can perform a so-called convolu-

tion operation in a single time step. Convolution is a mathematical operation on two functions that outputs a third function expressing how the shape of one is changed by the other.

"We use a measure called TOPS to assess the number of Operations Per Second, in Trillions, that a chip is able to process," said Abu Sebastian from IBM Research.

This is just the beginning. "We expect that with reasonable scaling assumptions, we can achieve an unprecedented PetaMAC (thousand trillion MAC operations) per second per mm2," IBM said. In comparison, the compute density associated with state-of-the-art AI processors is less than 1 TOPS/mm2, meaning less than a trillion operations per second per mm2," IBM said. --Agencies

Deliver Political News With Some Humour To Woo Young Adults

If you want social media-savvy young adults and millennials to listen to hard news, deliver the content with a pinch of humour as this will help them more likely to remember and share it on various digital platforms.

New research, published in the Journal of Communication, suggests that humour may help keep people informed about politics.

The team from the University of Pennsylvania and the Ohio State University found that when compared to non-humorous news clips, viewers are not only more likely to share humorously presented

news, but are also more likely to remember the content from these segments.

"For democracy to work, it is really important for people to engage with news and politics and to be informed about public affairs," says senior author Emily Falk, Professor of Communication, Psychology, and Marketing at University of Pennsylvania.

"We wanted to test whether humour might make news more socially relevant, and therefore motivate people to remember it and share it." The researchers recruited young adults (18-34 years old) to watch a variety of news clips, which they designed to vary, so that some ended with



jokes and others did not.

In addition to collecting data on participants' brain activity using fMRI technology, the researchers administered a memory test to determine how much information participants retained from watching the clips.

The researchers also asked participants to answer questions about how likely they would be to share the news clips with others.

Participants were more likely to remember information about politics and government policy when it was conveyed in a humorous rather than non-humorous manner and were more willing to share the information online.

FOR DEMOCRACY to work, it is really important for people to engage with news and politics and to be informed about public affairs," says senior author Emily Falk, Professor of Communication, Psychology, and Marketing at University of Pennsylvania.

The findings showed that humorous news clips elicited greater activity in brain regions associated

with thinking about what other people think and feel, which highlights the social nature of comedy.

"The findings show that humor stimulates activity in brain regions associated with social engagement, improves memory for political facts, and increases the tendency to share political information with others," says lead author Jason Cornel, Assistant Professor of Communication at Ohio State.

This is significant because entertainment-based media has become an important source of political news, especially for young adults.

"The results suggest that humour can increase knowledge about politics," the authors noted. ---Agencies

Municipal Heads, DDC Members Call on LG

Observer News Service

JAMMU: A delegation of municipal heads from Jammu province today called on Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha here at Raj Bhavan.

The members of the delegation led by Rajinder Singh Chib submitted a memorandum of demands and issues to the Lt Governor pertaining to services of engineering wing; rationalising Safai Karamcharis in all Municipal Committees/ Councils; delegation of powers and other concerning issues.

The Lt Governor gave a patient hearing to the issues and demands put forth by the delegation and observed that the UT Government is taking comprehensive measures for redressal of civic issues and

aspirations of recently formed municipal bodies.

In another meeting, Er Aijaz Hussain, elected DDC member from Srinagar met with the Lt Governor and thanked the Government for the recently announced New Industrial Development Scheme for J&K and other policies, particularly benefiting the youth.

He further apprised the Lt Governor about the promotion of local industries, especially those engaged in making carpets, and pashmina shawls. He also shared various development issues of his constituency with the Lt Governor.

The Lt Governor assured that all the genuine issues raised by him would be taken up for examination and urged him to continue working for the advancement of public welfare.

252 structures damaged in snowfall in Kulgam

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Government today said 252 structures have been reported damaged so far in Kulgam district.

Officials said assement of the damage is in progress.

They added that out of 441 roads in Kulgam district, most have been cleared of snow,

Officials said two snow cutters along with other snow clearing machines were pressed into service to carry out the clearance operations.

They said all the receiving stations are functioning properly and the electricity has also been restored in all parts of the district.

Newly elected Councilors administered oath

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The recently elected ULB Councilors were today administered oath by Assistant Commissioner (Revenue) Anantnag, Syed Yasir during a ceremonial function held here.

On the occasion, elected Councilors of 4 Municipalities viz 5 Councilors of MC Anantnag, 12 of MC Seer Hamdan, 4 of MC Achabal and 2 of MC Mattan pledged to work with loyalty and honesty and to uphold sovereignty and integrity

of the country.

While addressing the gathering, the ACR said that these elected Councilors have got the mandate for local plan formulation and its implementation. He hoped that they will deliver their best for strengthening democracy at grass roots level.

Among others, the ceremony was attended by President MC Anantnag, Hilal Ahmad Shah, Tehsildars of Anantnag and Mattan besides other officers and officials.

Dr Farooq visits Hazratbal

Srinagar: National Conference president Dr. Farooq Abdullah on Monday paid obeisance at Asar-e-Sharief Dargah Hazratbal. According to a NC spokesman he "prayed for increased prospects of peace and prosperity" in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Party president prayed for bountiful provisions from Almighty and for protection of the people of Jammu and Kashmir from the prevailing COVID-19 crises and weather

vagaries during the ongoing winter season", he said.

Later Farooq paid a visit to Naseem Bagh and offered Fateha at the final resting places of his parents Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah and Begum Akbar Jehan.

Later Dr Farooq visited the bereaved family of late Ghulam Mustafa Shahdad, who breathed his last on Sunday at his residence, Shahdad Bagh, Habak.



In view of security arrangements ahead of Republic Day, a cop stopping a vehicle for checking on a Srinagar Road on Monday.

Motorists, Commuters Face Tough Time on City Roads

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: As the normal work resumed in government offices and markets following days of heavy snowfall Srinagar witnessed massive traffic jams on Monday.

The jamming was particularly witnessed during the peak hours in the morning and from late afternoon.

Even as the main roads have been cleared of the snow, heavy rush of traffic slowed down the movement of vehicles leading to jamming. The distance on some roads, which used to be covered in minutes, took over an hour. Commuters were caught in jams for hours in biting cold.

Major city roads including Batmalu-Jehangir Chowk stretch, Residency Road, Maulana Azad Road, Dalgate crossing, Nowpora-Nowhatta and beyond were clogged with traffic for hours.

While those heading towards Rawalpura, Budgam, Hyderpora and Channapora via Flyover heaved a sigh of relief but those moving towards Batamalu had to

face problems at Civil Secretariat Crossing, Fire Services headquarter crossing, Karan Nagar and Bemina crossing.

The jamming was again witnessed ahead of Sanat Nagar Crossing with vehicles moving at snail's pace.

The scenario was no different at Abdullah Bridge, where it took long for the drivers to cross the bridge to reach Raj Bagh. Reports of frequent traffic jamming were also received from some other areas of the city including Hawal.

There were reports of drivers of ambulances, carrying patients, facing tough times on roads due to jamming.

Traffic officials were seen trying to regulate the traffic movement amid heavy rush. But they seemed to find it difficult with roads not fully cleared of snow.

Vehicles parked on roads also caused traffic jamming. Traffic police had recently asked the people not to park their vehicles on roads and requested them to keep the vehicles in parking areas. The police had stated that the

roads were cleared after snowfall only for movement of vehicles and not for parking. However many designated parking spaces remained closed as snow had not been cleared.

"The traffic jamming caused a lot of inconvenience to people today, Lot of time was wasted on roads. Traffic officials cannot be wholly blamed today for this jamming as snowfall too had its effects. The administration has cleared main roads but dumped it on sideways narrowing the road length," said Waleed Mushtaq of Parraypora, a student.

A traffic official who did not wish to be named, said slowing down of traffic should not be misinterpreted as traffic jamming. He said it is a routine that during peak hours the rush of vehicles increases on roads." We try our level best to manage the traffic but we do face difficulties at times. Snowfall added to our problems and we are trying to overcome the problems," the cop said. He hoped that scenes on roads would improve in the coming days.

Patients, Attendants Stage protest

Work Hit in Anantnag Hospital As Doctors Go On Strike

SRINAGAR; Patients and attendants in government medical college hospital and Maternity and Child Care Hospital (MCCH) Anantnag held protest after doctors went on a two hour ling strike against disciplinary action by local administration against their colleagues for allegedly remaining absent from duty.

The doctors also closed the OPDs during the strike.

It may be recalled here that Deputy Commissioner Anantnag, K K Sidha, during a 'surprise visit' found

17 doctors of the Maternity and Child-care Hospital (MCCH) absent from their duties yesterday. These doctors were found absent despite the fact that directions were passed asking all public offices to remain open in view of post snowfall situation on Sunday.

The doctors at GMC and MCCH Anantnag went on strike as a result patients and attendants too staged protest against these doctors saying they have been suffering due to callous attitude of these medicos. "These medicos closed OPDs in both hospital and cared

a fig for the patient care. We were left with no option but to protest," said an attendant who was part of the protest at Jangalati Mandi Anantnag.

These protesters blocked the road for not getting treatment in the hospitals. Meanwhile, Doctors at Sub-District Hospital Kokernag also observed two hours pen down strike as a mark of protest for yesterday's action against medicos by District Development Commissioner Anantnag. The strike caused inconvenience to patients who were waiting for the treatment.

DIAL-EMMA



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS

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



HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI

CALENDAR

27 Jumada al-Awwal

1442

PRAYERS

FAJR 6: 08

ZUHR 12: 39

ASR 4:04

Magrib 5:45

ISHA 7:10

This Day In History

- 475 - Basiliscus becomes Byzantine Emperor, with a coronation ceremony in the Hebdomon palace in Constantinople.
- 1528 -Gustav I of Sweden "father of the nation" crowned King of Sweden. Rules 37 years.
- 1552 - Dutch west coast hit by heavy storm, 100s killed.
- 1806 - French evacuate Vienna.
- 1816 - France decrees Bonaparte family excluded from the country forever.
- 1836 - Battle of Wetumka, Fla.
- 1915 - US House of Representatives rejects proposal to give women right to vote.
- 1916 - Britain proclaims Gilbert & Ellice Islands as a colony in Pacific.
- 1940 - World War II: Soviets bombs cities in Finland.
- 1942 - National War Labor Board created
- 1944 - Churchill & de Gaulle begin a 2-day wartime conference in Mar-rakesh.
- 1945 - German forces in Belgium retreat in Battle of Bulge.
- 1945 - The Soviets begin a large offensive against the Nazis in Eastern Europe.
- 1948 - Mahatma Gandhi begins his final fast.
- 1950 - USSR re-introduces death penalty for treason, espionage & sabotage.
- 1959 - Rediscovery of the Caves of Nerja in Spain
- 1961 - UN genocide pact goes into effect.
- 1962 - Operation Chopper begins, America's first combat mission in the Vietnam War.
- 1970 - Biafran War ends, Biafra surrenders to Nigeria.
- 1970 - Boeing 747 makes its maiden voyage.
- 1971 - Negotiations over price of petroleum begin in Tehran between 6 OPEC Persian Gulf states and 22 oil companies.
- 1974 - Libya & Tunisia announces they are merging as "Islamic Arab Republic".
- 1976 - UN Security Council votes 11-1 to seat Palestine Liberation Or-ganisation.
- 1977 - Anti-French demonstrations takes place in Israel after Paris released Abu Daoud, responsible 1972 -Munich massacre of Israeli athletes.
- 1986- 24th space shuttle (61-C) mission-Columbia 7-launched.
- 1990-Romania bans Communist party (1st Warsaw Pact member to do so).
- 1991 - US Congress gives George H. W. Bush authority to wage war against Iraq.
- 1992-Algeria's general elections canceled after strong gains by Islamic Salvation Front in the 1st round.
- 1992- A new constitution, providing for freedom to form political parties, is approved by a referendum in Mali.
- 1995 - Major earthquake kills 5,092 in Kobe Japan.
- 1996 - Russian troops arrived in Bosnia (joint operation with US).
- 1997 - Space Shuttle STS 81 (Atlantis 18), launches into space
- 1998 - Nineteen European nations agree to forbid human cloning.
- 2004 - The world's largest ocean liner, RMS Queen Mary 2, makes its maiden voyage.
- 2005 - Deep Impact (space mission) launches from Cape Canaveral on a Delta 2 rocket.
- 2006 - A stampede during the Stoning the Devil ritual on the last day at the Hajj in Mina, Saudi Arabia, kills at least 362 Muslim pilgrims.
- 2006 - Turkey releases Mehmet Ali A ca from jail after he served 25 years for shooting Pope John Paul II.
- 2006 - The French warship Clemenceau reaches Egypt and is barred access to the Suez Canal. Greenpeace activists board the ship.
- 2006 - The foreign ministers of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany declare that negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program have reached a dead end and recommend that Iran be referred to the United Nations Security Council.
- 2007 - Comet McNaught reaches perihelion becoming the brightest comet in more than 40 years.
- 2010 - Earthquake occurs in Haiti killing 230,000 and destroying the majority of the capital Port-au-Prince.
- 2010 - Colombia officially leaves the recession after achieving 2% economic growth in the last quarter of 2009
- 2013 A failed attempt to rescue a French hostage in Bulo Marer, Soma-lia, results in 18 deaths
- 2013 - Beijing's level of air pollution is declared to be at levels that are hazardous to human health.

From KO Archives

Mobile Phones In JK soon

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Centre has agreed in principal to extend the mobile telephone service to Jammu and Kashmir. Announcing this at the inauguration of the state's first Software Technology Park (STP) here today, the Union Minister for Information Technology, Pramod Mahajan, dismissed the Idea that security of the state would be adversely affected if the mobile services were allowed here. He said he was not convinced with the argument and had discussed this with the Prime Minister & Ministers of Home & Defence who have all agreed to his suggestion of extending the facility in J&K. He asserted that mobile telephone had nothing to do with the security of the country adding, nobody In the government Of India is saying 'no' to it. He said contrary to the belief of risk to the security, the mobile facilities would help in tracking down the militants.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 12 January, 2001)

Sad Demise

We inform you the sad demise of Mo-hammad Ashraf Khan S/ o Abdul Ra-him Khan R/o Green view colony Al-locha Bagh Srinagar who passed away for heavenly adobe on 10 January 2021 Sunday.

Fateh khwani will be held on 13 January 2021 Wednesday at their graveyard at Umerabad Rehmat lane 5 opposite Noora hospital.

Bereaved Family

A-KO



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR

NOTICE

Whereas an application has been recieved from one. Shri : Manzoor Ahmad Mir S/o: Ghulam Ahmad Mir R/o: Mohalla Kamal Khumani Chowk Srinagar owner of vehicle bearing Registration No: JK04F 2523 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S Tata Motors Finance B/U Srinagar.



Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed cancellation of hire purchase Agreement shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publica-tion of this notice in the daily newspaper .

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.2076
Dated : 31/12/2020

Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

MCB

Government of Jammu and kashmir

Office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical, Sheri-i-Kasmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura, Srinagar, Kashmir.

Short Term Tender Notice

Gist of NIT No. 61 of 2020-21 dated: 09-01-2021 for and on behalf of Lt. Governor U.T. Of Jammu and Kashir, Executive Engineer, Mechanical SKIMS, Soura, Srinagar, invites manual tender in two (02) cover system from Registered/reputed and Experienced firms having expertise as details expertise as detailed in the tender document for the following works

S No	Name of the work	Est Cost
1	Various Mechanical Works carried out for connecting of Pump-ing equipments at Pump House-I SKIMS, Soura	50000/-

Interested bidders/ tenderers can have tender document from Executive Engineers Mechanical SKIMS, Soura. Tender Document contains qualifying criteria for bidders. Specifications, bills of Quantities, & terms and conditions of the contract and other relevant details.

i	Date and time of sale of tender documents (starting date)	11-11-2021 11:00 Hour (on wards)
ii	Last date and time of Sale of tender Documents (Ending)	18-01-2021 UTP 14: 000 9 Hours)
iii	Last date of submission of tender document/ commercial bid.	19-11-2021 11: 000 Hours (or next convenient day)
iv	Date and time of commercial / technical bid (cover-I) Opening)	20-01-2021 11: 00 Hours (or next convenient day)
v)	Cost of tender document in shape of bank draft pledged to Director Finance , SKIMS or to be deposited in account NO CD-34 at JK Bank Branch office SKIMS,	Rs 100/- (Rupees one hundred only)
vi)	Amount of Earnest Money deposit (CDR/ FDR)	Rs 100/- Rupees one thousand only
vii	Completion Time	10 Days
viii	Budget Head	M&R (Non-plan) for the year 2020-21

No: SIMS 139 EX. 531/ 20- 3546-52-5918-20
Dated: 9-01-2021

Executive Engineer
Mechanical, Skims

KASHMIR
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K O V I E W

Help these women

The Pakistani wives of former Kashmiri militants who returned to J&K under a rehabilitation scheme for surrendered militants have once again urged the Governments to address their grievances on humanitarian grounds. On January 4, a group of these women held a press conference in Srinagar to press their demand for deportation to PaK if the government was not ready to consider them the citizens of J&K. The women said their plight shouldn't be politicised and which, sadly, has been the case. Despite their intermittent protests, the central and the state governments have chosen not to respond to their demands.

Recently, the authorities even stopped counting of votes in two District Development Council seats as the two women who contested from there belonged to PaK. This despite the fact that the union government treats PaK as a part of India. In 1994 the parliament passed a resolution to this effect.

The women came to Kashmir in the years after 2010 as part of the rehabilitation policy announced by the then National Conference-Congress government for the Kashmiri youth who had crossed over to Pakistan or PaK for arms training and wanted to return to a normal life in the state.

Around 450 youth had returned, many of them with their wives, under the rehabilitation policy. The state government had opened "channels" for them to return without arms and resume normal life. Government had selected four entry points – Poonch-Rawalakote (Poonch), Uri-Muzaffarabad (Uri), Wagah (Punjab) and Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi from where the youth could enter the state following necessary clearance. But after 2014 when the BJP was elected to power at the centre, the plan was all but shelved. This, despite the fact, that the then Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti who headed a coalition government with the BJP had suggested "legalising Nepal route" for those Kashmiri youths who had now shunned the path of violence and wished to return to their homes.

But the wives of these youth have since been disallowed to return to Pakistan and PaK, even on an occasional visit. They complain of having no travel documents and also that their children are not being admitted in local school as they hail from the other part of Kashmir.

Also, many of these women live in miserable conditions after being divorced by their husbands. This has left them without any property and documents. According to an estimate, around fifty of these women have been divorced by their husbands.

Though their repeated protests and pleas to the government to address their demands should have by now elicited a response, nothing of the sort has happened. The government has chosen to neither reject nor agree to the demands. As a result, the miserable plight of these women has only worsened. Their situation is inherently humanitarian in nature and deserves an earnest redressal. Here's hoping that the government finally wakes up to their plight.

O T H E R O P I N O N

Anti-social media

In November 2016, days after Donald Trump was elected US President, Facebook Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg rejected the idea that content on the company's platforms influenced elections. "I think it's a pretty crazy idea... Voters make decisions based on their lived experiences," he said. On January 6, after the US Capitol was stormed by Trump supporters, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Twitch suspended the president's account to prevent him, ostensibly, from inciting more violence. The move is too little, and coming after a mob egged on by the US President laid siege to the Capitol, it is too late. In times when "lived experiences" are increasingly online, the social media giants have been much too slow in acknowledging their responsibility and addressing real-world consequences.

Trump has a long record of sharing falsehoods and bigotry on social media, beginning with his assertions that his predecessor Barack Obama was not born in the US, to sharing anti-Muslim and White supremacist posts and videos. As recently as the Black Lives Matter protests last year, he tweeted, "when looting starts, shooting starts". Trump and his falsehoods, though, are only a part of a larger digital ecosystem that has devalued facts, created "communities" of conspiracy theorists and, at times, even contributed to violence. Long before the pro-Trump mob stormed the Capitol, WhatsApp and Facebook have been used to pedal falsehoods and incite mobs in countries like Burma and Sri Lanka. These outcomes are an unfortunate consequence of the algorithms and user experience and user interface that follow a "persuasive design" model. In essence, the algorithm is meant to keep users glued to the screen and get more of the same. For example, someone watching "flat earth" videos, or "the history of forced conversion in India" or, more recently, the bizarre conspiracy theories about a film star's suicide, could well be led to something like a QAnon page (a group that believes Trump is saving the US government from a corporate "deep state") or to fake news that whips up prejudice against minority groups.

The Indian Express



View From The Foyer

Land Grabbing

R. R A J R A O

Of course, to the union government's way of myopic thinking, this will significantly alter the character of what was once a war zone to a popular vacation hangout. Perhaps, film crews will return to shoot in the valley, as they did in the 1960s, when Shammi Kapoor romanced Sharmila Tagore in Kashmir ki Kali, or Shashi Kapoor romanced Nanda in Jab Jab Phool Khile

One of the implications of the abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35 A in the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir is that outsiders can now buy land in Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh. This, surely, can open up a Pandora's Box. Not just wealthy Indians from mainland India, but more undesirably, commercial hawks, such as builders and hoteliers, can eye land in the region to make a quick buck to fill their coffers. This has already happened in many other hill stations like Simla, Mussoorie, Naini Tal, Ooty and Kodaikanal, and beach places like Goa, leading to air pollution, water shortages, traffic snarls and the strewing of litter. Two summers ago, there was such intense water scarcity in Simla, that the parched town stank and went thirsty, making life hell for local residents who have been living there for generations.

Potentially, the same thing can happen in the Kashmir valley and Ladakh, as wealthy Delhiwallahs, and even tourists from far off Bombay and elsewhere can now drive to the two union territories in their fuel-guzzling SUVs to stay in fancy hotels, or in their own holiday homes, erroneously referred to as "farm houses". In the bargain, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh will lose their sanctity. Of course, to the union government's way of myopic thinking, this will significantly alter the character of what was once a war zone to a popular vacation hangout. Perhaps, film crews will return to shoot in the valley, as they did in the 1960s, when Shammi Kapoor romanced Sharmila Tagore in Kashmir ki Kali, or Shashi Kapoor romanced Nanda in Jab Jab Phool Khile.

Land-grabbing has a notorious history in India. There was a time in the not-so-distant past when avaricious real estate developers eyed old properties situated on prime land in our towns and cities, and forcibly evicted octogenarian and nonagenarian residents who lived in these houses, often at gunpoint, only so that they could demolish the houses and build high-rise commercial complexes on the stolen land. The residents, old and decrepit, had no option but to give in to the

threats of the builders and their hoodlums. They were paid a pittance for their properties and made to shift from their comfort zones to godforsaken neighbourhoods, regardless of the fact that there were no facilities, including health care, in the vicinity. Many of them could not withstand their ordeal and died of grief. This phenomenon, incidentally, is evocatively represented in Govind Nihalani's 1999 film Takshak, starring Ajay Devgan, Tabu and Rahul Bose.

A more insidious side to land grabbing, however, now exists in a concept known as redevelopment. Here, a housing society approaches

a builder on its own accord and gives him the permission to tear down a perfectly good building, not in danger of collapsing, to construct it anew. This gives unscrupulous builders a veritable carte blanche to do as they please. On paper, the builder may lure residents with more floor space area than their existing flats possess. He may also promise them more amenities, such as elevators, club houses, swimming pools and gymnasiums. At the end of the day, though, the builder is in the business for his own profit, not for charity or social work. Flats on higher floors with better views are reserved for new buyers to whom the builder can sell the flats at market rates. Existing residents become second class citizens who have no option but to accept what is offered. Very often, a residential building is converted into a full-fledged commercial complex; members who own flats in the building are persuaded to sell their flats and leave.

What is more alarming, however, is that a builder may renege on his word and not deliver the reconstructed building on time. To protect residents from thus being duped, some states have introduced a Real Estate Regulation Act (RERA) that makes it mandatory for builders to hand over redeveloped buildings to members within a stipulated time, which may vary

from 18 to 24 months. But RERA isn't a panacea for all ills; developers can easily find loopholes to circumvent the law.

Indians also tend to be aesthetically challenged. The notion of heritage sites and of town planning is virtually non-existent in India. The character of city streets is determined by its houses. If houses of a certain vintage are pulled down to replace them with modern structures, it affects the overall appearance of a street. Can one imagine Bombay's Marine Drive, picturesquely known as the Queen's Necklace, to have skyscrapers instead of the five-floor pre-indepen-


dence buildings that it has always had? In Marine Drive where I grew up, the watchword is restoration, not redevelopment.

Arvind Adiga's novel Last Man in Tower, portrays a lone resident who opposes a redevelopment proposal in his building, and is murdered as a result. The builder in question obviously has a vested interest in taking over the building, and has no qualms about employing thugs to eliminate anyone who frustrates his plans. We are back to the criminality of the past, in which the man's neighbours become complicit in his killing.

The union government must ensure that rather than passing laws that facilitate land grabbing, the rights of ordinary citizens are safeguarded.

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

Dr. R. Raj Rao is an internationally known Indian English novelist, poet and critic. He was Professor and Head of the Department of English at the University of Pune in Maharashtra. He has also been a Visiting Professor at universities in Canada and Germany

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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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Pregnant Women in Winters

This is in reference to the news item titled "Pregnant Woman Walks 5 Km for Medical Check-up" published in this newspaper on 6 January 2021. A simple Google search "Pregnant woman amid snow in Kashmir" reveals a pattern how every year in winter Kashmiri pregnant women make a few headlines in local as well as national media. Most of these headlines are from far-flung areas in Kashmir and involve the rescue of pregnant women by the Indian Army. For example, a tweet by PRO Udhampur, Ministry

of Defence on 7 January 2021 containing a video of a pregnant woman being carried by army personnel on a stretcher says "heavy snow in Kashmir brings unprecedented challenges for citizens, especially in higher reaches. Watch the Soldier & Awam fighting it out together by evacuating a patient to the nearest PHC for medical treatment." This consistent need for pregnant women in the snow to seek help from the army should raise questions. It should raise questions as to why be there a need for the army's help in the first place? Why was not

the civil administration able to help? Why was no medical facility available for these women in their own village or locality? Why was the snow from roads not cleared? Since only pregnant women make it to the news, it is interesting that there must be a lot of other kinds of patients in these places who might need medical attention, what happens to them? Do they get help from anyone?

All these incidents expose the failure of civil administration in Kashmir. The failure to clear roads of snow in time tends to block people's

easy access to medical help and puts a large number of lives in danger. While we only get to hear the story of those who were rescued, there must be a lot of people who could not get any help. There is a need for civil administration to speed up their snow clearance operations and at least make roads to necessary medical facilities accessible.

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The Magical Reality of Rantas

Every few years, newspapers flutter in the breeze with the news of someone escaping from the captivity of a rantas. The story is archetypal.

ARIF AYAZ PARREY

Under the canopy of winter's enormous burqa, a million stories twinkle like stars, and we can see and meet beings which are invisible to us in the blinding light of the day. Today, we are going to reacquaint ourselves with one such creature, the rantas.

LIKE in all Central Asian countries, the days and nights in Kashmir engage in a game of maazrat not witnessed in the tropics. During the summers, the evenings set out an elaborate dastarkhaan for the sun, grab it by its arm and do not let go, as if telling it, "Muone marrun chhu, aaz behiv toih yeth." The sun cannot leave before making a promise that, "Ba khoda chem zaroori kaem, bu yim bae pagah subhai, koker baangi, wallah." And it does.

Consequently, the days bulge, with daylight spreading between before five in the morning and after eight in the evening. During the winters, the night puts on a Kosher burqa and goes door-to-door in the evenings and mornings, delivering titbits of warmth, intimacy and wisdom, so that people have no reason to step out of their homes with the frequency of summer.

As a result, darkness starts to pull a blanket over 5 o'clock in the evening and does not pull it down until the alchemy of the clock changes the time to seven in the morning.

Under the canopy of winter's enormous burqa, a million stories twinkle like stars, and we can see and meet beings which are invisible to us in the blinding light of the day. Today, we are going to reacquaint ourselves with one such creature, the rantas.

If you are a Koshur girl, chances are you have been called a rantas more than once in your lifetime. In fact, one can judge how badass you are from how frequently you get referred to as a rantas.

Generally speaking, the more often you are called a rantas, the more spirit of rebellion you will have in you.

If you are a Koshur boy and have called the women in your life rantas more times than you can count, consider yourself lucky, you are surrounded by truly cool women—or, perhaps, you are just an ass who cannot deal with independent women!

Boy or girl, you will have noticed that most commonplace comparisons with a rantas are made in four situations. One, if a woman is being stubborn, which means she refuses to do the bidding of others, or rejects their logic. Two, if a woman is being rapacious, and eats or drinks like a glutton. Three, if a woman is messy, with unkempt hair and dirty clothes. Four, and the only negative one, if a woman is being evil, saying or doing things which might harm others.

But who—or what—is a rantas and why are firebrand women likened to her?

As you most probably know, a rantas (plural rantse) is a female humanoid creature whose natural habitat is the poat-van—deep forests—on the mountains and hills around Kashmir.

Rantse are almost one-and-a-half times the size of an average human being. They are characterized by long, dishevelled hair, as wild as the rantse themselves; wings that fold around the front of their bodies, from the neck down to their knees, and are the only thing they cover their bodies with, made of an enchanted material which has the capacity to change its odour as per their wishes; and feet with heels at the front and toes at the back.

Once a rantas passes into adulthood, her mother gifts her a comb which she wears in her hair for the rest of her life. The comb is the seat of a rantas's magical abilities and gives her many powers and great strength, but it also renders her vulnerable to another kind of sorcery—love.



It is said that the comb makes a rantas emotional, and once it has been bequeathed to her, she begins to yearn for a companion. If she finds a worthy partner, she will offer him her comb, thus bestowing upon him the clout to curb her magical powers.

In their search for a companion, rantse travel across the length and breadth of Kashmir, particularly during the winter, when poat-van is very cold and bare.

Not much is known about the male of the species. Some speculate that male rantse turn into yechh, but it seems very unlikely, given that yechh, in their natural state, are feline creatures, while rantse are flying beings. Others conjecture that rantse give birth to only female rantse. This might be closer to the truth. After all, while human beings produce male and female children in an almost equal proportion, it is not the only ratio in which offspring are produced in the natural world.

A queen bee, for example, produces a much larger number of female bees compared to male bees (drones). However, the most likely scenario is that rantse kill their male offspring. Conceivably, they even cannibalize them or feed them to their female offspring.

In any case, the truth of the matter is that rantse roam around human habitations in search of a companion. If they like someone, they stand outside his house at night and shout out his name. If he comes out of the house, they lift him up and fly away to their cave in the poat-van. There, they beget children with the companion. If they suspect he will run away, they block the entrance of their cave with a big boulder when they leave to hunt for food.

Food consists of the various herbs growing in the forests of Kashmir as well as animals like deer, rabbits, markhor, etc. If meat is hard to come by, rantse are known to raid villages and towns, stealing sheep and goats, even kidnapping women and children for food. They do not eat men.

Every few years, newspapers flutter in the breeze with the news of someone escaping from

the captivity of a rantas. The story is archetypal. The man, usually in his early to mid-thirties, has been a rantas's prisoner "for more than ten years". Since he has not shaved, had a haircut or even taken a bath in that time, he looks like a forest creature himself.

The newspaper then goes on to narrate his ordeal, with special attention paid to his lucky escape. Usually, it is a case of him winning the confidence of the rantas after which she is not as thorough with sealing the entrance of the cave as she used to be. Then he waits for a window of opportunity, quite literally, and makes the great escape. The story is always told with the slightest patina of humour, as if the reporter cannot believe the escapee did not enjoy his incarceration.

On the other hand, there are parochial stories about someone or the other in an area being loved and stalked by a rantas. The man becomes a sort of a legend in his own right. People admire him for being a rantas's choice, but, at the same time, they keep warning him about the dire consequences were he to lower his guard and come out of his house during the dark hours. The love of a rantas is a special type of curse as well.

Koshur men will continue to secretly love and publicly fear rantse. Koshur women will continue to use such trivial excuses to call each other a rantas as to make one suspect that they enjoy mentioning and hearing the name. A new generation of Koshur girls and boys—you—will continue to unravel the meaning of a rantas's existence.

In the meantime, rantse will keep combing their long hair, smell all the fragrances of the world in their wings, and think about taming unloving men.

This piece first appeared in Zaanvun Lokchaar magazine as Part II of the "Creatures of the Winter" series. It has been slightly edited for consistency.

After the chaos in the US Capitol, stoked largely by rhetoric from President Donald Trump, Twitter has permanently suspended his account, which had 88.7 million followers, citing "risk of further incitement of violence".

Facebook and Instagram had earlier locked Trump's accounts — with 35.2 million followers and 24.5 million, respectively — for at least two weeks, the remainder of his presidency. This ban was extended from 24 hours.

The locks are the latest effort by social media platforms to clamp down on Trump's misinformation and baseless claims of election fraud.

They came after Twitter labelled a video posted by Trump and said it posed a "risk of violence". Twitter removed users' ability to retweet, like or comment on the post — the first time this has been done.

In the video, Trump told the agitators at the Capitol to go home, but at the same time called them "very special" and said he loved them for disrupting the Congressional certification of President-elect Joe Biden's win.

That tweet has since been taken down for "repeated and severe violations" of Twitter's civic integrity policy. YouTube and Facebook have also removed copies of the video.

But as people across the world scramble to make sense of what's going on, one thing stands out: the events that transpired today were not unexpected.

Given the lack of regulation and responsibility shown by platforms over the past few years, it's fair to say the writing was on the wall.

The real, violent consequences of misinformation

While Trump is no stranger to contentious and even racist remarks on social media, Twitter's action to lock the president's account is a first.

The line was arguably crossed by Trump's implicit incitement of violence and disorder within the halls of the US Capitol itself.

Nevertheless, it would have been a difficult decision for Twitter (and Facebook and Instagram), with several factors at play. Some of these are short-term, such as the immediate potential for further violence.

Then there's the question of whether tighter regulation could further incite rioting Trump supporters, by feeding into their theories claiming there's a large-scale "deep state" plot against the

Twitter Trump Ban

TIMOTHY GRAHAM



president. It's possible.

But a longer-term consideration — and perhaps one at the forefront of the platforms' priorities — is how these actions will affect their value as commercial assets.

I believe the platforms' biggest concern is their own bottom line. They are commercial companies legally obliged to pursue profits for shareholders. Commercial imperatives and user engagement are at the forefront of their decisions.

What happens when you censor a Republican president? You can lose a huge chunk of your conservative user base, or upset your shareholders.

Despite what we think of them, or how we might use them, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube aren't set up in the public interest.

For them, it's risky to censor a head of state when they know that content is profitable. Doing it anyway involves a complex risk calculus — with priorities being the shareholders, the companies' market value and their reputation.

Walking a tightrope

The platforms' decisions to not only force the removal of several of Trump's posts, but also to lock his accounts, carries enormous potential loss of revenue. It's a major and irreversible step.

They are now forced to keep a close eye on one another. If one appears too "strict" in its censorship, it may attract criticism, lose user engagement and ultimately profit. At the same time, if platforms are too loose with their content regulation, they must weather the storm of public critique.

You don't want to be the last organisation to make the tough decision, but you don't necessarily want to be the first, either — because then you're the "trial balloon" who volunteered to potentially harm the bottom line.

For all major platforms, the past few years have presented high stakes. Yet there have been plenty of opportunities to stop the situation snowballing to where it is now.

From Trump's baseless election fraud claims to his false ideas about the coronavirus, time and again platforms have turned a blind eye to serious cases of mis- and disinformation.

The storming of the Capitol is a logical consequence of this and has arguably been a long time coming.

During the coronavirus pandemic, while Trump was partially censored by Twitter and Facebook for misinformation, the platforms failed to take lasting action to deal with the issue at its core.

In the past, platforms have cited constitutional reasons to justify not censoring politicians. They have claimed a civic duty to give elected officials an unfiltered voice.

This line of argument should have ended with the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, in August 2017, when Trump responded to the killing of an anti-fascism protester by claiming there were "very fine people on both sides".

An age of QAnon, Proud Boys and neo-Nazis

While there's no silver bullet for online misinformation and extremist content, there's also no doubt platforms could have done more in the past that may have prevented the scenes witnessed in Washington DC.

In a crisis, there's a rush to make sense of everything. But we need only look at what led us to this point. Experts on disinformation have been crying out for platforms to do more to combat disinformation and its growing domestic roots.

Now, in 2021, extremists such as neo-Nazis and QAnon believers no longer have to lurk in the depths of online forums or commit lone acts of violence. Instead, they can violently storm the Capitol.

It would be a cardinal error to not appraise the severity of the neglect that led us here. In some ways, perhaps that's the biggest lesson we can learn.

By arrangements with The Conversation

Political Parties In PAGD Finding Ways To Get Rid Of Each Other: Bukhari

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party chief Syed Mohammed Altaf Bukhari on Monday claimed that the political parties in the Peoples' Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) have been finding ways to "get rid of each other" following the recently-held DDC polls in the union territory.

Bukhari was speaking at a party function organised to welcome several prominent people, including retired deputy director, Indian System Medicine, Rohit Gupta into the party fold here.

"The truth has come to fore post the District Development Council polls the PAGD leaders have been finding ways to get rid of each other. They had created a smoky screen before the public to mislead them but they have exposed themselves," Bukhari said.

Seven mainstream parties, including the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), have joined hands under the banner of the PAGD and swept the DDC polls last year



File Pic

by winning 110 seats.

The PAGD has accused the JKAP of using "nasty methods" to grab power in the valley by "hook or crook" by resorting to "witch-hunting and intimidation" of the newly-elected DDC members.

The JKAP had won 12 seats in the eight-phased DDC elections for 280 constituencies in November-December last year.

"The PAGD has misled the people and now they are not able to fulfil their promises. To avoid

embarrassing situation, they are hiding from people," Bukhari, a former minister, said.

On the contrary, he said that his party contested elections on the name of development, restoration of statehood, employment, protection of land and job rights in the union territory.

"We never played divisive politics. We want unity of J&K and brotherhood among the community for a prosperous society," Bukhari said. **PTI**

PAGD Not For Petty Electoral Gains, But For Restoration Of Special Status Of J-K: Mehbooba

SRINAGAR: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Monday asserted that the formation of Gupkar Alliance was not for petty electoral gains, but for the restoration of special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Amidst all the unnecessary speculation about PAGD, I'd like make a few things absolutely clear. The purpose of this grand alliance is not for petty electoral gains. It exists for a much larger cause & purpose i.e to restore J&Ks special status," she said in a series of tweets.

The PDP leader was appar-

ently referring to reports in certain sections of media which claimed that some PAGD leaders were holding secret meetings with senior BJP leaders and Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party founder Altaf Bukhari.

"A lot of baseless theories are being deliberately floated to discredit PAGD amongst masses since they overwhelmingly voted for us in the DDC elections. Regardless of who fought how many seats, our purpose to deny BJP & its proxies democratic space has been achieved," she said.



File Pic

The People's Alliance for Gupkar declaration (PAGD) is an amalgam of several main-

stream political parties seeking the restoration of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Mehbooba also said that the Centre was "deeply rattled" by PAGD, and warned that the situation might worsen with respect to the alliance leaders.

"Delhi is deeply rattled by PAGD so I expect this false campaign to intensify in the coming days. Many PDP leaders are already arrested & I expect the situation to worsen. But this will not break our resolve to stand united & fight for what's rightfully ours," she added on Twitter.

Govt Signs MoU For Skill Development

SRINAGAR: The Government has taken skill development as a mission to create a pool of skilled workforce in the Union Territory, who can serve the nation both on local as well as on national levels.

For this purpose, Skill Development Department is exploring every possibility to get trained the local educated youth especially the students of different colleges and universities in the technologies having good market demand and accordingly, signed MoUs with

several reputed National level organizations. In this endeavour, the Government Polytechnic College (GPC), Baramulla has already established a Centre for Invention, Innovation, Incubation, and Training (CIIT) in collaboration with Tata Technologies Ltd. Pune, for providing integrated training on technical and skill development and other disruptive technologies conforming to industry

Now the GPC, Baramulla has entered into an MOU with Islamic

University of Science & Technology, Awantipora (IUST) aimed to up-skill the undergraduate and diploma students of IUST for providing high end practical oriented training, leading to their higher employability. The purpose of this MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) is also to promote the culture of innovation, incubation, and entrepreneurship among the students, which will lead to the development of new products and technologies in the UT of J&K.

On behalf of the Skill Development Department, the MoU was signed by Er. Imtiaz Ahmad Shaw, Principal, Govt. Polytechnic College Baramulla while Prof. A.H. Moon, Dean, School of Engineering and Technology, signed it on behalf of IUST, in presence of the Vice-Chancellor IUST, Prof. Mushtaq A. Siddiqi, Director, Skill Development Department, Mr. Sajad Hussain Ganai, Registrar, IUST, Prof Naseer Iqbal and H.O.D, Govt. Polytechnic College, Baramulla, Er. Pervaiz Bhat.

From Front page...

Highway Closed For 5...

road linking Kashmir with rest of the country.

The SSP said the restoration work is going on in full swing and all out efforts are being made to ensure the traffic operation on the highway is resumed early.

The highway was opened for traffic only on Sunday after remaining closed for seven days following heavy snowfall and multiple landslides triggered by incessant rains.

Most of the Kashmir-bound vehicles had reached their destination when the road caved in near Ramban, leaving only a few hundred vehicles stranded, the officials said, adding most of them, including trucks carrying essential supplies to Kashmir, were stopped at various places including Jammu and Udhampur districts.

The SSP said there is no restriction on the movement of traffic between Jammu-Doda-Kishtwar, Jammu-Ramban, Magerkot-Banihal and Banihal-Qazigund stretches.

The officials said commuters were seen crossing the damaged portion on foot to reach their destinations.

The traffic was supposed to ply from Srinagar to Jammu on Monday but was suspended in view of the incident, they said.

The traffic on the highway plies alternatively from the twin capitals of Jammu and Srinagar to facilitate a smooth movement of vehicles in view of the ongoing work on the four-laning highway project.

Gulmarg Coldest In Valley At Minus 9.6 Degree Celsius

Qazigund recorded a minimum of 0.2 degrees Celsius, Kupwara, in the north, minus 1.0 degrees Celsius and Kokernag minus 2.0 degrees Celsius.

The weatherman has predicted generally dry weather over the next few days.

Kashmir is currently under the grip of 'Chillai-Kalan' -- the 40-day harshest winter period when a cold wave grips the region and the temperature drops considerably leading to the freezing of water bodies, including the famous Dal Lake here as well as the water supply lines in several parts of the valley.

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

Teen Injured In Cross-LoC...

the exchange of firing between the two sides lasted till 12.50 pm, the officials said.

Pakistani troops again resorted to unprovoked firing and shelling at around 4 pm and the cross-border firing was going on when last reports were received.

Elderly Man Dies Of...

Srinagar district with 451 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (365), Baramulla (172), Budgam (111), Kupwara (94), Pulwama (88), Anantnag (84), Doda (64), Bandipora (61), Udhampur (57), Kulgam (53), Rajouri (55), Kathua (50), Ganderbal (46), Shopian (39), Samba (39), Poonch (24), Ramban (21), Kishtwar(22), and Reasi (15).

Meanwhile, J&K reported 113 fresh Covid-19 cases including 13 travellers in the last 24 hours, taking the total case count to 122651, officials said. While 67 cases were reported in Kashmir Valley, the remaining 46 were confirmed by officials in Jammu division.

Giving district wise details, officials said, Srinagar reported 42, Baramulla 1, Budgam 7, Kupwara 5, Pulwama 4, Anantnag 2, Bandipora 3, Ganderbal 1, Kulgam 1, Shopian 1, Jammu 35, Udhampur 5, Rajouri 2, Kathua 2, Kishtwar and Poonch one each new case of coronavirus.

Moreover, officials said, 355 more Covid-19 patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals— 169 from Jammu Division and 186 from Kashmir Valley. (With GNS inputs)

Army Rejects Police Charges...

-- also "purposefully destroyed evidence of the real crime that they have committed and also have been purposefully projecting false information as part of a criminal conspiracy hatched between them with the motive to grab prize money of Rs 20 lakh".

The army had ordered a Court of Inquiry into the incident.

The charge sheet was filed by the police before Chief Judicial Magistrate Shopian on December 26, 2020.

PDP Youth Leader Para...

has been probing militancy cases and has filed over two dozen FIRs.

Para was produced before a court in Jammu which remanded him to police custody till January 18, the officials said, adding he would be brought to Srinagar for questioning.

He was arrested by the NIA on November 25 in a case related to his alleged links with Hizbul Mujahideen militants.

Para, who recently won District Development Council (DDC) polls from his hometown in Pulwama district of south Kashmir, was granted relief on a surety bond of Rs 1 lakh and a personal bond of the like amount, the officials said.

However, he was whisked away by sleuths of a security agency

as he came out of the Jammu district jail upon being released, but it was not immediately clear whether he was wanted in any other case or detained for questioning.

PDP president and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti had expressed concern over his detention and sought intervention of Lt Governor Manoj Sinha for securing his release. She also alleged that Para's arrest was an act of political vendetta against her party for raising voice against "Delhi's onslaught".

"Despite NIA court granting bail to @parawhid after thorough court proceedings, he has now been detained by CIK in Jammu. Under what law & for what crime has he been arrested? This is brazen contempt of court. Request @manojsinha_ji to intervene so that justice is served," Mehbooba had said in a tweet.

"After getting bail from NIA Court due to lack of evidence, @parawhid has now been booked under UAPA by CIK on fabricated charges in a terror case yet again. This is purely political vendetta against PDP for raising our voice against Delhi's onslaught," Mehbooba tweeted.

No Avian Death In Hokersar...

accordance with the laid down guidelines and standard operating procedures for avian influenza which are being forwarded to High Security Animal Disease Lab, Bhopal and RDRL Jalandhar for further testing.

The spokesman said a wildlife veterinarian, accompanying the team, informed that no deaths in birds were reported from the Hokersar wetland -- the largest and most prominent of wetlands in Kashmir.

The team made an awareness presentation to the staff posted at Hokersar and advised them to remain vigilant for immediate reporting of any signs/symptoms of avian influenza or deaths in the wild birds that have migrated to Kashmir valley presently, the spokesman said.

He said the Wildlife Warden for wetlands, Hokersar, Ifshan Dewan, informed the team that almost 1.5 lakh birds of different species are presently stationed at Hokersar for breeding as well as winter nesting.

Meanwhile, surveillance samples were also taken from the Dal Lake and adjoining areas for testing, the spokesman added.

Panic In Uri After Birds Fall...

the crows and eagles were found dead in villages like Chollan, Dani Seydan and Paranjillan, triggering panic among locals.

The locals requested the local administration to send the teams to the villages to ascertain the cause of deaths.

Chief Animal Husbandry Officer Baramulla Dr Syed Mohammad Anwar Andrabi said that there was no need to panic.

"They might have died due to starvation or cold. We are looking into it," he said, adding, "A team will be sent to these villages tomorrow. They will also be collecting the samples for testing." **GNS**

SKIMS Bemina Resumes...

to implement the fresh decision has ordered that all the roasters in connection with handling with COVID patients shall be treated null and void with immediate effect except Consultant, Registrar and JR Roster of General Medicine issued vide number SKIMS/MCH/20/8132-36 dated 19/12/2020 & SKIMS/MCH/20-21/79-82 dated 04-01-2021.

"As such, all the staff off the hospital shall resume their duties w.e.f. 12/01/2021," the order reads.

It added that all the staff-Doctors, Registrars, Junior Residents, Nursing Staff (supervisors and In-Charges), Pharmacists Ministerial Staff, Technicians, Store Keepers, Orderlies, lab attendants, Nursing aids, Casual Labourers etc are hereby repatriated to their original place of posting existing in March, 2020.

The order also directed the Head of Departments and Sectional heads of the concerned departments to make roster of their doctors and staff w.e.f. 12/01/2021 for In-Patient admissions in their respective wards, adding that they shall ensure proper implementation of COVID-19 guidelines in their respective wards and departments.

Govt Cuts Down Valley's ...

quintals in Nov 2020) have been procured. Under the same category 1321.60 quintals of wheat has been allocated while the figure in November 2020 was 1488.11 quintals.

AAY type of ration card is given to impoverished families that do not have stable income. Unemployed people, women and old aged people fall under this category.

For the month of January 2021, under Priority Household (PHH) category, 98035.79 quintals of rice (155941.69 quintals in Nov 2020) have been procured. Under the same category 6620.00 quintals of wheat has been allocated for the current January month while the figure in November 2020 was 8207.46 quintals. The families not covered under AAY, come under the PHH. The Government identifies priority household families under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

For the month of January 2021, under Non- Priority Household (NPHH) category, 70701.04 quintals of rice (109239.08 quintals in Nov 2020) have been allocated. Under the same category 3713.51 quintals of wheat has been allocated for the current January month while the figure in November 2020 was 5749.43 quintals. Quoting insiders, the report said that the field staff involved in distribution of foodgrain process is reluctant to supply ration to the consumers as they have also been directed to make sales

through Adhar Cards.

"The fact is that only 60% population has Adhar Cards in Kashmir Valley. You can't deprive those from ration who are not Adhar Card holders. We are scared of following new directions and unable to face people," said a Store-Keeper.

Insiders added that today field staff and store keepers of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Kashmir in North Kashmir's Sopore observed a strike demanding full quota of foodgrain. They said higher ups are reluctant to respond to the communiqué sent by the Director Food, urging them to supply full quota and stop forcing store-keepers to offer ration to the Adhar Card holders only.

Director, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Bashir Ahmed said that curtailment of foodgrain is a part of the system. "Sometimes we procure more and sometimes less," he said.

In response to another question, the Director said 100% of the population in Kashmir is Adhar Card holders.

India Returns Captured PLA...

on Saturday.

It was the second such incident of India capturing and subsequently returning a Chinese soldier in the last three months. Indian troops had captured Corporal Wang Ya Long of the PLA on October 19 last year after he "strayed" across the LAC in Ladakh's Demchok sector. The corporal was handed back to China at the Chushul-Moldo border point following the laid-down protocols. The areas around the Pangong lake along the LAC have remained tense in the last few months.

Around four months ago, Indian troops occupied a number of strategic heights in the Mukhpari, Rechin La and Magar hill areas around the southern bank of the Pangong lake, after the Chinese military attempted to intimidate them in the area on the intervening night of August 29 and 30 last year.

Chief of Army Staff Gen. MM Naravane visited various high-altitude forward areas in eastern Ladakh last month, including certain positions on the south bank of the Pangong lake, and reviewed India's overall military preparedness.

Nearly 50,000 troops of the Indian Army are currently deployed in a high state of combat readiness at various mountainous locations in eastern Ladakh in sub-zero temperatures as multiple rounds of talks between the two sides have not yielded a concrete outcome to resolve the standoff. China has also deployed an equal number of troops, according to officials.

The two countries held another round of diplomatic talks last month under the framework of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China border affairs.

The eighth and last round of military talks between the two sides took place on November 6 last year, during which both sides had broadly discussed disengagement of troops from specific friction points.

India has all along been maintaining that the onus is on China to carry forward the process of disengagement and de-escalation at the friction points in the mountainous region.

Following the sixth round of military talks, the two sides had announced a slew of decisions, including not to send more troops to the frontline, refraining from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground and avoiding taking any action that may further complicate matters.

This round of talks was held with a specific agenda of exploring ways to implement a five-point agreement reached between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi at a meeting in Moscow on September 10 on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) conclave. The pact included measures like quick disengagement of troops, avoiding action that could escalate tensions, adherence to all agreements and protocols on border management and steps to restore peace along the LAC.

CDS Rawat Reviews Military...

state of combat readiness in various mountainous locations in the region amid the eight-month-long border standoff.

Official sources said on Monday that Gen Rawat will be briefed by Lt Gen PGK Menon, the commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps, popularly known as Fire and Fury Corps, and other senior military officials on the dynamic security matrix in eastern Ladakh. The visit of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) to Ladakh comes days after he toured several key installations including "forward most air maintained" posts in Dibang Valley, Lohit sector and Subansiri valley near the Line of Actual Control(LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh. "The CDS will review the overall security scenario in the eastern Ladakh region," said a source.

Gen Rawat is also expected to travel to Kashmir from Ladakh on Tuesday.

The Army and the Indian Air Force(IAF) have been maintaining a high state of operational readiness along the nearly 3,500-km LAC with China in view of the military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

Nearly 50,000 troops of the Indian Army are deployed in various locations in eastern Ladakh as multiple rounds of military and diplomatic talks between the two sides have not yielded any concrete outcome to resolve the faceoff. China has also deployed an equal number of troops, according to officials.

The eighth and last round of military talks had taken place on November 6 during which India and China broadly discussed disengagement of troops from specific friction points.

The CDS has been part of the top military brass framing strat-

egies to enhance India's military prowess in view of the Sino-India standoff.

Last month, Chief of Army Staff Gen MM Naravane had visited eastern Ladakh to review the ground situation in the region that is also experiencing harsh winter.

The standoff erupted on May 5 last year following violent clashes between the troops of the Indian Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army(PLA) in the Pangong lake area. The incident in Pangong Tso was followed by a similar incident in north Sikkim on May 9.

IAF Chief Tours Landing...

view of the eight-month-long border standoff between India and China, officials said.

The Chief of Air Staff interacted with field commanders and was briefed on the operational readiness as well as the status of deployment of forces at the high-altitude airbases, they said.

The Daulat Beg Oldi Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) is located close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at an altitude of 16,700 ft and is known as the highest airfield in the world. The Nyoma airfield is located at a height of around 13,000 feet.

Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria also interacted with Indian Army personnel deployed at these locations, they added.

"During his visit to Thoise, he reviewed the ongoing logistic operations for support and sustenance of troops in the winter season," the IAF said in a statement

It said he also visited Daulat Beg Oldie and Nyoma ALGs where he was given a security overview.

At Daulat Beg Oldie, Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria laid a wreath in honour of the fallen heroes.

Prior to his departure, the Chief of Air Staff joined Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat for a comprehensive discussion on operational matters with senior IAF and Indian Army Commanders at Leh air force station, the IAF said.

"The Chief of Air Staff conveyed his deep appreciation for the exceptionally high levels of morale and dedication with which all personnel continue to maintain operational preparedness despite the harsh weather and an inhospitable terrain," it said.

The Army and the Indian Air Force (IAF) have been maintaining a high state of operational readiness along the nearly 3,500-km LAC with China in view of the eastern Ladakh row.

Nearly 50,000 troops of the Indian Army are deployed in various locations in eastern Ladakh as multiple rounds of talks between the two sides have not yielded concrete outcome to resolve the faceoff that began in early May.

China has also deployed an equal number of troops, according to officials.

The eighth and last round of military talks had taken place on November 6, during which both sides broadly discussed the disengagement of troops from specific friction points.

Last month, Chief of Army Staff Gen MM Naravane too had visited eastern Ladakh to review the ground situation in the region that has been experiencing harsh winter.

The faceoff began on May 5 last year following violent clashes between the two armies in the Pangong lake area. The incident in Pangong Tso was followed by a similar incident in north Sikkim on May 9.

KASHMIR In Capital: Pashmina...

the Shalimar-born trader says. "So one can only imagine our plight, as a major share of our sale has gone."

But Rasheed appears to be quite optimistic about future.

"If God wills, the Markaz shall start functioning again after March 2021," he hopes. "So I am quite hopeful of a new and powerful start."

Despite these twists and turns in the capital, the Kashmiri trader's goodwill has earned him the local trust and support.

Rasheed praises the "helpful" people of Nizamuddin—considered as a "second home" to many Kashmiris. The nearby Bhogal area has a locality called Kashmiri Park named after the ethnicity of the majority of its residents.

"People here don't discriminate against Kashmiris," he says. "We never faced any sort of trouble here in the recent past when Kashmiris were facing hate attacks in different parts of India. The locals always came to our support whenever we needed them or whenever there was any issue."

It's because of this connection that he doesn't regret his Delhi decision.

He still prefers staying in the capital because he can't sustain the cold weather in Srinagar.

"My son Bilal is an engineer, who married a local girl and is settled here," Rasheed says.

"But despite living here with my family, Kashmir is always in my heart."

Two OGWs Arrested In...

The arrested persons have been identified as Shezaan Gulzar Beigh and Waseem-ul-Rehman Sheikh.

The official said incriminating material, including explosive material and ammunition, have been recovered from the arrested duo.

Man Stabbed To Death...

Superintendent of SMHS, Dr. Nazir Choudhary said that one among the duo was brought dead to the hospital, while another is being treated upon and his condition is stable—(KNO)

Power Restored In Pakistan After 18 Hours Of Nationwide Blackout

Agencies

Islamabad: Power supply was restored across Pakistan Sunday after the country was hit by a massive electricity blackout, officials said.

The electricity distribution system in the nation of more than 210 million people is a complex and delicate web, and a problem in one section of the grid can lead to cascading breakdowns countrywide.

The latest blackout, which lasted roughly 18 hours in most areas, was caused by "an engineering fault" in southern Pakistan at 11:41 pm local time on Saturday (1841 GMT), which tripped the system and caused power plants to shut down, power minister Omar Ayub Khan told a press conference in Islamabad.

Experts were however trying to determine the precise details of what happened as well as "the exact location of the fault," the power minister said, adding that it would take time as the area was still covered in dense fog.

A spokesman from the National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) reported that "all 500KV and 200KV grid stations and transmission lines have started supplying electricity" and that "the power supply has been restored across Pakistan."

Jokes and memes flooded Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp, mostly ridiculing Prime

Minister Imran Khan's government and its performance after the breakdown.

"Power breakdown in Pakistan is blackmailing Imran Khan," tweeted Musarrat Ahmedzeb in reference to the premier's recent statement accusing Shiite protesters of blackmailing him after the killing of 10 miners.

"What a start for the new year... let us seek Allah the Almighty's mercy," read another tweet, while a message on WhatsApp said: "new Pakistan sleeps in a night mode".

There were no immediate reports of disruption at hospitals, which often rely on back-up generators.

Netblocks, which monitors internet outages, said web connectivity in the country "collapsed" as a result of the blackout.

Connectivity was at "62 percent of ordinary levels", it said in a tweet.

The outage marked Pakistan's second major power breakdown in less than three years. In May 2018, power was partially disrupted for more than nine hours.

In 2015, an apparent rebel attack on a key power line plunged around 80 percent of Pakistan into darkness.

That blackout, one of the worst in Pakistan's history, caused electricity to be cut in major cities nationwide, including Islamabad, and even affected one of the country's international airports.



These U.S. Troops Survived One Of The Greatest Crises Of The Trump Era. A Year Later, They're Still Coping.

Dan Lamothe | Washington Post

Washington: The U.S. soldiers scrambled from one bunker to the next, stumbling past charred wreckage, 30-foot-wide craters and puddles of diesel fuel. A barrage of ballistic missiles had briefly knocked some of them unconscious, and more were on the way.

Maj. Alan Johnson struggled to focus after absorbing the monstrous blast waves of several explosions, including one that missed his bunker by about 60 feet, he recalled.

"I still have anxiety," Johnson said. "I still have recurring nightmares of incoming — just that sound of those things coming in."

The United States stood at the precipice of full-scale war a year ago when Iran launched 16 missiles at U.S. forces in Iraq. Eleven struck Ain al-Asad Air Base in the western part of the country, another landed outside the northern city of Irbil, and four malfunctioned, the military said.

After months of escalating confrontation, Iranian-backed forces had laid siege to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad about a week earlier. The Trump administration responded a few days later by launching a drone strike in Baghdad that killed an Iranian general, Qasem Soleimani, a longtime U.S. nemesis.

Facing the gravest international security crisis of his presidency, President Trump suddenly shifted gears. "All is well!" he tweeted within hours of the attack on Jan. 8, 2020.

A year later, service members who endured the attack described how close the United States and Iran came to greater calamity.

No U.S. troops were killed despite Iran's use of weapons that were each about 40 feet long and carrying 1,600 pounds of explosives, more powerful than any weapon launched at Americans in a generation.

But 110 survivors were ultimately diagnosed with traumatic brain injuries, some requiring long hospitalizations and intensive therapies at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center outside Washington. The military disclosed the injuries days after the strike, saying that an earlier Trump announcement that there were "no casualties" was based on the best information the Pentagon had at the time.

In reality, 29 service mem-

bers, including Johnson, were injured seriously enough to receive Purple Hearts in the strike, which the Iranians called Operation Martyr Soleimani.

The attack left some with feelings of anger and helplessness. Survivors are still pondering a night that increasingly seemed overlooked in a year that went on to include the coronavirus pandemic, a fraught national conversation about race and one of the most contentious presidential elections in American history.

"I can't think that anyone has walked away from this without some sort of effects, psychologically or emotionally, because of how traumatic the event was," said Lt. Col. Johnathan Jordan, the operations officer for an Air Force unit present that night.

Palestinian scouts take part in a ceremony in Gaza City on



Jan. 4 marking the anniversary of the killing of Iranian Revolutionary Guard commander Qasem Soleimani.

Preparing for attack

Almost immediately after the strike on Soleimani, U.S. troops across the Middle East started preparing for possible Iranian revenge.

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Samuel Levander, a crew member for a Special Operations aviation squadron temporarily assigned to al-Asad, said civilian employees hired to cook food on base even stopped showing up for work.

His unit began assessing how many people they could pack into their aircraft, a CV-22, if a quick escape was needed.

It was Jan. 7 when the severity of the threat became clear: Iran wasn't planning to attack with rockets, which can kill a couple of people at a time, but with much more powerful missiles launched from miles away across the Iraqi border.

"We were expecting just total devastation at that point," Jordan recalled.

Elsewhere on the base, scores of U.S. Special Operations troops prepared to leave on three CV-22 aircraft, each with 24 seats. Levander's team calculated they could pack in many more, ultimately removing 194 people, according to an award citation first reported by the Air Force Times.

Others had to stay.

Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Noal Yarnes took cover in a fortified structure, telling the airmen under his supervision to bring their gas masks — just in case. The missiles, he knew, were capable of carrying chemical weapons. Johnson, working with soldiers on another part of al-Asad, decided to record a video message for his son, Jack, now 7. He wanted to leave behind some last words, he said, just in case "something bad happened to Dad."

'Incoming, incoming!'

The airfield was quiet as midnight arrived — "almost like a ghost town," said Tech. Sgt. Bryan Moody, part of an Air Force security forces team on duty. Moody, a member of the Kentucky Air National Guard, and his colleagues drove around in a mine-resistant truck, making sure the base was secure. Other troops stood watch in guard towers, vigilant in case a ground attack also materialized, while nearly everyone else left on the base sheltered in place.

The warning rang out over loudspeakers after 1 a.m.: "Incoming! Incoming! Take cover!"

The first missile exploded at 1:34 a.m. about 100 yards from the mine-resistant vehicle that Moody's team was driving, casting debris on the hood. The reinforced doors were blown open by the concussive blast of missiles, which landed about 300 yards away but sounded much closer, said Staff Sgt. Drew Davenport, another member of the team.

Indonesia Plane Likely Broke Apart When Hitting Waters, Says Investigator

Agencies

Jakarta: An investigator with Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee (KNKT) said the Sriwijaya Air jet that crashed into the Java Sea with 62 people on board

"We don't know for sure, but if we look at the debris, they're scattered in an area that is not too wide," Nurcahyo Utomo told Reuters on Monday.

"It possibly ruptured when it hit waters because if it had



over the weekend possibly broke apart when it hit waters based on debris found so far.

exploded midair, the debris would be distributed more widely," he added.

Saudi, World's Top Oil Producer, Launches City With No Cars



Vivian Nereim | Bloomberg

Riyadh: Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman unveiled his latest vision for Saudi Arabia's future beyond oil: a city with no cars, roads or carbon emissions.

The 170 kilometer-long (106 mile-long) development called "The Line" will be part of the \$500 billion project called "Neom," the crown prince said in a televised speech on Sunday. Construction is planned to start in the first quarter.

A news release described The Line as a walkable "belt of hyper-connected future communities, without cars and roads and built around nature." It said the city would have 1 million residents and create 380,000 jobs by 2030. The infrastructure will cost \$100 billion to \$200 billion, the crown prince said.

Neom is the crown jewel of Prince Mohammed's plan to diversify the economy of the world's largest crude exporter. Announced in 2017, the project spans more than 10,000 square miles in a remote area of the country's northwest. It's described on its website as "a bold and audacious dream" that will become a hub for new technologies and businesses.

The project has been

plagued by skepticism and political controversy since its launch. Analysts question if it's realistic and can attract the investment needed.

"The backbone of investment in The Line will come from the \$500 billion support to Neom by the Saudi government, PIF and local and global investors over 10 years," the prince told reporters in Al-Ula, referring to Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund.

The announcement on Sunday shows the extent to which Prince Mohammed is thinking about life after oil for the kingdom, which earned over half of government revenue from crude in 2020. The project was the first major development to be announced within Neom.

"Why do we accept sacrificing nature for development?" the prince said, citing rising sea levels and carbon emissions in a manner rare for a Saudi official. The city, he said, would be a "revolution for mankind" with "zero cars, zero streets, zero emissions."

No journey within The Line will be longer than 20 minutes, he said. The city would be built around "ultra-high-speed transit and autonomous mobility solutions," according to the statement.

US designating Yemen's Houthis a 'terrorist' group



Agencies

Washington: The United States will designate Yemen's Houthi rebels as a terrorist group, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, a late-term move that aid groups fear will worsen the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

With just 10 days left before President-elect Joe Biden takes office, the announcement on Sunday could complicate the new US administration's efforts to restart diplomacy with Iran, which has ties to the Houthis and to reassess the US relationship with Saudi Arabia, which has led a brutal offensive in Yemen.

"The designations are intended to hold Ansar Allah accountable for its terrorist acts, including cross-border attacks threatening civilian populations, infrastructure and com-

mercial shipping," Pompeo said in a statement, using the official name of the Houthi movement.

It has led a campaign that has "killed many people, continues to destabilize the region and denies Yemenis a peaceful solution to the conflict in their country," he added.

Pompeo pointed to a December 30 attack on an airport in Yemen's second city Aden, which killed 26 people and was blamed by the Saudi-backed government on the Houthis.

The rebel group controls much of Yemen and is already under US sanctions.

But a designation as a terrorist group is expected to scare away outside actors from carrying out many transactions with Houthi authorities, including bank transfers and buying food and fuel.

NEW S M A K E R S

Johannesburg: The South African government will store the 1.5 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine that it will receive from India in the next few weeks at a secret place because of the risk of theft for sale at black market prices, according to a media report.

"The vaccines are a highly-rated commodity once they're stolen and reach the black market," Department of Health spokesperson Popo Maja told the weekly City Press on Sunday, adding that if this occurs, there is a risk that the prices of these illegally-obtained vaccines will be hiked significantly.

"There will be a central place where the con-



South Africa To Store COVID-19 Vaccines At Secret Place For Fear Of Theft: Report

signment will be stored and from where we will distribute it to hospital and clinic pharmacies that can store it," Popo Maja said.

"There's a security issue too because

countries which have already begun rolling out the vaccines have warned us that there is a huge theft of it, so we may not even disclose where it is being centrally stored," Popo

Maja said.

Health Minister Zweli Mkhize said during an address to the South African parliament last week, that the government had secured 1.5 million doses

of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine from India as South Africa battles exponentially rising infections and deaths daily amid a second wave of the coronavirus and a new variant of the virus.

Overnight on Sunday, there were over 21,600 new infections and 399 more deaths.

A million doses are expected from India before the end of this month and a further 500,000 in February, with health-care workers in both government and private facilities being prioritised for vaccination.

Mkhize also allayed concerns that the vaccine to be supplied by India had not yet been approved by South African regulators.

Arnold Schwarzenegger Likens Capitol Mob To Nazis, Opens Up About Father

Washington: Former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appealed for unity Sunday after the violent attack on the US Capitol, which he described as an attempted coup by President Donald Trump, drawing comparisons to Nazi Germany.

In a video posted on Twitter that quickly went viral, the Hollywood star compared the attack by Trump supporters to Kristallnacht, or the "Night of Broken Glass," when Nazis carried out pogroms in Germany in 1938 that included breaking the windows of Jewish-owned stores.

"Wednesday was the Day of Broken Glass right here in the United States," said Schwarzenegger gravely, sitting at his desk between the US and California state flags.



"The broken glass was in the windows of the United States Capitol. Growing up, I was surrounded by broken men, drinking away their guilt over their participation in the most evil regime in history," continued Schwarzenegger, who was born in Austria in 1947.

My message to my fellow Americans and friends around

the world following this week's attack on the Capitol. pic.twitter.com/blOy35LWJ5

"I have never shared this so publicly because it is a painful memory, but my father would come home drunk once or twice a week and he would scream and hit us and scare my mother."

The actor, known for his roles in the "Terminator" franchise and "Conan the Barbarian," did not explicitly say his father had been a Nazi, but said "my father and our neighbors were misled also with lies, and I know where such lies lead."

"President Trump sought to overturn the results of an election and of a fair election. He sought a coup by misleading people with lies," Schwarzenegger said.

AUS Vs IND 3rd Test Day 5

India Pulls Off Memorable Draw After Resolute Batting Performance At SCG

Press Trust of India

SYDNEY: Ravichandran Ashwin and Hanuma Vihari battled pain and a hostile Australian bowling attack while resolutely displaying the largely extinct art of Test-saving batsmanship to snatch a remarkable draw for India after Rishabh Pant had raised visions of an improbable win here at the SCG on Monday.

Chasing a herculean target of 407, Pant (97 off 118 balls) and the ever-steady Cheteshwar Pujara (77 off 205 balls) produced an amazing 148-run stand before India were forced to down the shutters finishing on 334 for 5 in 131 overs when players shook hands.

The series stands at 1-1 going into the fourth Test in Brisbane but an Indian team which has turned into a 'mini-hospital' would be walking away with a lot of pride. They put up a proper fight in adverse circumstances already soured by racist chants and abuses from the crowd here during the course of the game.

Pant's innings will be remembered for a long time but none can forget that Ashwin (39 no, 128 balls) and Vihari (23 off 161 balls), battling a hamstring injury, put their bodies on line to save a game which could have been lost in a jiffy after their two best batsmen were gone on the day.

"Our talk coming this morning was to show character and fight till the end. Not to think about the result. Really happy with the way we fought especially today but also throughout the game," skipper Ajinkya Rahane said at the post-match presentation.

Pat Cummins (26-6-72-1), Josh Hazlewood (26-12-39-2), Mitchell Starc (22-6-66-0) and Nathan Lyon (46-17-114-2) threw everything they had, peppering them with short balls, hitting the patches with a few jumping.

"...this one's a tough one to swallow. Our bowlers were superb, Lyon bowled



well. Just that we (especially me) didn't hold onto our catches," said Australian skipper Tim Paine after the match.

The duo, in 42.4 overs, scraped their way for a 62-run stand, which certainly would have made Rahul Dravid proud on his 48th birthday.

Vihari hobbled with a torn hamstring but defended dourly, Ashwin got hit on the ribs but carried on manfully while also engaging in some chatter with Tim Paine and close-in fielders.

Catches landed in no man's land and that was the slice of luck they needed. When Marnus Labuschagne was brought in the 112th over, one knew that they had done their job.

The great Neville Cardus had once said "Scoreboard is an ass" and many years down the line, it probably won't highlight what Vihari and Ashwin endured and what they did for the team.

The dressing room will however always know that and respect them for the bruised ribs and torn hamstring.

Perhaps, it was the was the best way to honour the brilliance of Pant and the assuredness of Pujara. So much so that Ravindra Jadeja, with his broken thumb, was all gloved up and ready to go in if need be.

There was method to madness in Pant's exhilarating innings during which he hit 12 fours and three sixes off 118 balls. His 'cat and mouse' game with the world's best off-spinner Nathan Lyon was one for the ages.

But it was Lyon, who had the last laugh when Pant's desperation to get to the three-figure mark before the second new ball saw him try to hit the spinner against the turn.

The result would have horrified his partner Pujara, who looked far more purposeful during his 205-ball knock.

He got a beauty from Josh Hazlewood and was bowled in the manner he has often been - playing inside the line to a delivery that moves a shade after pitching.

Pant was promoted above Vihari as playing the surviving game wouldn't have helped on this track at least in the first session and also the left-right combination needed to be in place.

Pant defended for the first 35 odd balls but then, suddenly in a couple of overs from Lyon, hit him over long on for a six and three fours using his feet to perfection.

Tim Paine then decided to change Lyon's end from Randwick to Paddington but the result was two more sixes - one over long-off and other over long-on.

This sudden attack did force Paine to again change his end back to 'Randwick'. Pujara also seemed to

OUR TALK COMING THIS MORNING WAS TO SHOW CHARACTER AND FIGHT TILL THE END. Not to think about the result. Really happy with the way we fought especially today but also throughout the game," skipper Ajinkya Rahane said at the post-match presentation.

AUS Vs IND 3rd Test Reaction

'India Planned To Fight Till End,' Says Rahane While Paine Rues Missed Chances

Press Trust of India

SYDNEY: The talk going into day five was to fight till the end without thinking about the result, said India skipper Ajinkya Rahane after his team pulled off a memorable draw against Australia in the third Test here on Monday.

Before Hanuma Vihari and Ravichandran Ashwin batted out the entire evening session to deny the home team, India were even in contention for a win when Rishabh Pant (97) and Cheteshwar Pujara (77) were in the middle.

"Our talk coming this morning was to show character and fight till the end. Not to think about the result. Really happy with the way we fought especially today but also throughout the game," Rahane said at the post-match presentation.

"Even in the first innings when Australia were 200 for 2 and getting them all out for 338 was really good," he added.

Pant came ahead of Hanuma Vihari at number five, a move that was made keeping the left-right



combination in mind, said Rahane.

"There are few areas we can improve (ahead of fourth Test) on but special mention to Vihari and Ashwin. The way they batted in the end and showed character was really good to see. Credit to him (Pant) for the way he played," said the skipper.

Australia skipper Tim Paine rued the dropped chances for which he had only himself to blame. He dropped Pant twice and Vihari once.

"I thought we created enough chances to win the game, this one's a tough one to swallow. Our bowlers were superb, Lyon bowled well. Just

that we (especially me) didn't hold onto our catches," he said.

"Looking forward to Brisbane now. We didn't play our best in the last two games, but we were somewhat good with the bat in this Test. There were a few positives for us, our bowlers created plenty of chances."

However, Paine praised the efforts of debutant Will Pucovski and fellow rookie Cameron Green.

"I think having two young kids (Pucovski and Green) playing Test cricket, it's a great thing as they were sensational. I thought Green was fantastic yesterday," he said referring to his 84.

SCG Racism Row: Captain Tim Paine Says Australia Stands With Indian Players



Press Trust of India

SYDNEY: Australia cricket team skipper Tim Paine, who had won hearts for joining the Indian team huddle after racial slurs were hurled at its players on day four of the third Test, on Monday said he did so to "make sure that the visitors knew that he and his team were against any sort of abuse".

Play was halted on Sunday

for a few minutes after India pacer Mohammed Siraj complained of racial abuse from a section of the crowd, leading to expulsion of some spectators and an unreserved apology from Cricket Australia.

Paine, who was batting at that time, was asked about the incidents that marred the Test during the post-match press conference.

"I think it's bitterly disappointing. Cricket Australia and the Australian cricket team, we don't condone any sort of abuse, particularly racial abuse," the wicket-keeper-batsman said.

"I just wanted to let the Indian team know we were with them on that. Like I said, it's not condoned by any of us and really disappointed that that happens when teams come to Australia and we want it to stop."

"Just wanted to make sure the Indian boys knew we are also against it and we support them," the captain elaborated.

The incident on Sunday had taken place a day after a drunk spectator at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) allegedly directed racial abuse at Jasprit Bumrah and Siraj.

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