



Maximum : 4°
Minimum : -3°
Humidity : 63%

SUNSET
Today 05:43 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 07:37 AM



News Digest

Pak Summons Indian Envoy

Islamabad: Pakistan on Tuesday summoned a senior Indian diplomat to register its protest over alleged ceasefire violations by Indian forces along the Line of Control (LoC). The Foreign Office alleged that a 10-year-old boy sustained injuries due to the firing in the Nezapir Sector on Monday. The Indian side was called upon to respect the 2003 Ceasefire Understanding; investigate this and other such incidents of ceasefire violations and maintain peace along the LoC and the Working Boundary, it said in a statement.

CDS Rawat, LG Discuss Security Situation

Jammu: Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat and Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Tuesday discussed the present security situation in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Rawat called on LG here at Raj Bhavan on Tuesday, an official spokesperson said. Besides discussing various issues concerning the present security situation in J&K, they also discussed about the important issues pertaining to the internal and external security management in the Union Territory, he said. General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) Northern Command, Lt Gen Y K Joshi was also present in the meeting.

2 Porters Injured After Falling Off Hill

Srinagar: Two army porters were injured on Tuesday after they slipped from a hill in Uri area of Baramulla district. 17-year-old Mohammad Rameez Poswal and 21-year-old Mohammad Ramzan Poswal slipped from the hill when they were taking some load towards the army's forward in village Nawarunda Uri, reports said Tuesday. Both the youth, reports said, sustained injuries due to the fall. They were shifted to sub-district-hospital (SDH) Uri for treatment, reports said. However, the doctors there referred them to GMC Baramulla for specialized treatment.

Bus Mows Down Student In Bandipora

Srinagar: A teenage student on Tuesday was crushed to death by a bus in Saderkoot Payeen area of Bandipora district. 15-year-old Liyaqat Ahmad of Chak Garoora area was critically injured when a bus (JK13- 3813) hit his motorbike at Saderkoot Payeen area on the Srinagar-Bandipora highway on Tuesday afternoon, news agency KDC reported. The bus driver, the report said, managed to flee from the spot while the injured student was rushed to CHC Sumbal, where doctors declared him dead. Meanwhile, police have filed a case FIR no 05/2020 under section 279-337 and 427 of Indian Penal code at the police post Ajas and started further investigations in this regard.

Two Held For Raping Minor In Jammu

Jammu- Two men were arrested here on Monday for allegedly raping a minor girl, police said. Jammu residents Balbir Kumar and Rahul Kumar were arrested on a complaint lodged by the victim's mother with Arnia police station, they said. The girl's mother alleged in her complaint on Sunday that the two men raped her daughter after kidnapping her, said police.

Highway Restoration May Take 10 Days

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: The traffic authorities on Tuesday said that the restoration work on the portion of damaged road along the Srinagar-Jammu highway might take nearly ten days to make the strategic surface link motorable.

"Jammu-Srinagar National Highway shall remain closed due to sudden collapse of retaining wall of a bridge near Kela Morh, Ramban on January 10 at 6:20 p.m. Repairing by concrete filling and settling of the concrete for making it motorable may take approximately 10 days as per NHAI," a statement issued by traffic police headquarters read.

It further said that in the interim, to restore connectivity a Bailey bridge is being launched by the border roads organisation (BRO).

The statement further said that Jammu-Doda-Kishtwar, Jammu-Ramban, Gool Sangaldan, Magerkot-Banihal, and Banihal-Qazigund stretches are open for local traffic.

The 270-kilometre Jammu-Srinagar highway was closed for traffic after a portion of the road caved in near Ramban town on Sunday, hours after it was thrown open for traffic after remaining closed for seven days.

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



Picture Courtesy: Twitter

on Sunday evening.

While most of the Kashmir-bound vehicles had reached their destination when the road caved in near Ramban, few hundred vehicles got stranded, the officials had said, adding most of them, including trucks carrying essential supplies to Kashmir, were stopped

at various places including Jammu and Udhampur districts.

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. (With PTI inputs)

THE 270-KILOMETRE JAMMU-SRINAGAR HIGHWAY WAS CLOSED FOR traffic after a portion of the road caved in near Ramban town on Sunday, hours after it was thrown open for traffic after remaining closed for seven days.

Escape Tunnel To Be Ready By March: Govt

The Jammu and Kashmir administration said on Tuesday that the escape tunnel of crucial Z- MORH, connecting Kashmir with Ladakh Union Territory is likely to be completed by March this year. The information regarding it was given to the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole during a meeting to review pace and progress made on Z- MORH and Zojila tunnels connecting Valley with the Ladakh region, an official spokesperson said. At the outset, he said, Executive

Night Temperature Falls Across Kashmir

The night temperatures decreased across Kashmir valley with Gulmarg recording the highest plunge to remain the coldest place in the Valley, the weather-man said on Tuesday. Srinagar city recorded a low of minus 0.9 degrees Celsius down from minus 0.2 degrees Celsius the previous night, said a MET official. The official said that the minimum temperature in Gulmarg tourist resort settled at minus 11.2 degrees Celsius down



SKIMS-Bemina Resumes OPD Services

SRINAGAR: After leading the COVID-19 patient care since March last year, SKIMS-Bemina has resumed the non-Covid facilities after the Government de-notified it from Covid designated hospital list.

Outpatient services, In Patient Services and elective surgeries were stopped in March last year after it was designated as specialized Covid facility centre.

However, with the daily tally of Covid cases falling in the past few months, non-COVID, the OP and IPD services were resumed today.

"This is the first day after the march we have resumed the OPD services and today we issued more than 200 OPD cards, since it

Bukhari Demands Statehood, Early Polls

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Apni Party (JKAP) president Syed Altaf Bukhari on Tuesday advocated the early restoration of statehood and holding of assembly elections in the Union Territory, asserting that the people desperately need a popular government as the present administration is paralysed.

Bukhari also pitched for the immediate restoration of the 4G internet mobile service, stipend for unemployed educated youth, release of arrested youth and rehabilitation policy for misguided youth who are returning to the mainstream after shunning the path of violence.

Making a fervent appeal to

'J&K With India Because OF Abdullah's, Mufti's'

Describing the Abdullah and Mufti families as the "torch bearers" of the national flag in Jammu and Kashmir, Apni

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the former minister said, We are waiting for the fulfillment of the promise made to us from the floor of Parliament that the statehood to J-K would be

Farmers Refuse To Join SC Panel

Will Hold Tractor Parade On Republic Day

New Delhi (PTI): Farmer leaders on Tuesday said they welcome the Supreme Court order staying the implementation of the three farm laws till further orders, but they will continue to protest till the contentious legislations are repealed and expressed doubts over the neutrality of the panel formed by the top court to end the impasse, a view shared by the Congress.

The agitating farmers also made it clear that they will not participate in the SC-ordered committee process. Reacting to the SC ruling,

1 Corona Death In 24 Hours

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus claimed the life of another elderly man in Kashmir Valley on Tuesday, even as the Union Territory reported 113 fresh cases of Covid-19, including a minor, a paramilitary personal besides three travellers during the last 24 hours.

A 67-year-old man from Omar Colony area of Lalbazar here became one more victim of Covid-19 in J&K, taking the fatality count to 1912, officials said.

Srinagar district with 452 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu

...RUBAIYA SAYEED ABDUCTION CASE

Court Charges Yasin Malik, 9 Others In 31-Year-Old Case



Press Trust Of India

JAMMU- A special TADA court has framed charges against Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chief Mohammad Yasin Malik and nine others in a 31-year-old kidnapping case involving Rubaiya Sayeed, the daughter of then union home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

Malik is presently lodged in Tihar jail, Delhi, after he was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in April 2019 in connection with an alleged militant funding case, a month after his group was banned by the central government.

In March last year, the special TADA court had framed charges against the JKLF chief and six others in another case related to the gunning down of four IAF personnel on the outskirts of Srinagar in January 1990.

Special TADA judge Sunit Gupta on Monday ordered framing of charges against Malik and nine others -- Ali Mohd Mir, Mohd Zaman Mir, Iqbal Ahmad Gandroo, Javed Ahmad Mir, Mohd Rafiq Pahlloo, Manzoor Ahmed Sofi, Wajahat Bashir, Mehraj-ud-Din Sheikh and Showkat Ahmad Bakshi.

The 10 are among two dozen accused named by the CBI in its charge-sheet filed before the TADA court. Among the others, Mohammad Rafiq Dar and Mushtaq Ahmad Lone -- both top commanders of JKLF-- are dead and 12 others are absconding.

The absconders include Halima, Javed Iqbal Mir, Mohammad Yaqub Pandit, Riyaz Ahmad Bhat, Khurshid Ahmad Dar, Basharat Rehman Noori, Tariq Ashraf, Shafat Ahmad Shangloo, Manzoor Ahmad, Gulam Mohammad Taploo, Abdul Majeed Bhat and Nissar Ahmad Bhat.

'Collusive Threat From China & Pakistan'

PLA Has Not Pulled Out Troops From Frontline: Army Chief

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Army chief Gen MM Naravane on Tuesday hoped for an amicable resolution of the military standoff with China in Ladakh through talks and based on "mutual and equal security" even as he said the collusive and potent threat from China and Pakistan to India cannot be "wished away".

Gen Naravane at the same time asserted that Indian troops are fully prepared to deal with any eventual-ity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and will hold their ground as long as it takes to achieve the "national goals and objectives."

The Chief of Army Staff was ad-



ressing a news conference here ahead of the Army Day on January 15.

On increasing security challenges at the LAC, he said a need was felt about "rebalancing" of troops along the northern borders and subsequently steps have been taken to put adequate focus on the borders with China.

BRO Launches Op 'Himank' For Troop Movement

The Border Roads Organisation has launched a special snow-clearing operation to keep strategic roads and passes open for troop movement amid the tension along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), officials said, as the force's personnel brave freezing temperatures

"I am sure that through dialogue and discussion, we will be able to reach an amicable solution

HC Rejects Cooperative Bank Employee's Plea

Says He's Public Servant Thus Liable Under Penal Code, PC Act

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir High Court has dismissed a plea of a Cooperative Bank's employee who had sought quashing of an FIR against him by CBI and subsequent framing of charges under penal code and Prevention of Corruption Act for not being a public servant.

A bench of Justice Rajnesh Oswal referred to the explanation appended to section 21 of

the penal code to reject the petition by the Bombay Mercantile Bank employee.

"In view of (the) explanation, it is evident that every officer or servant employed by a Cooperative Bank whether for the whole or part time is a public servant within a meaning of section 21 RPC and like-

wise section 2(2) of the J&K Prevention of Corruption of Act..." the court said and



INTERVIEW: 'Kashmir Has Far Better Eye Care Than Other States'

Hibah Bhat

Over the years as Kashmir witnessed an 'eye emergency' due to renewed rage and offensive, eye specialists found themselves grappling with the growing calamity inside the critical care units turned 'war-theatres'.

Eventually, as the strife-torn eye-load crowded the outside clinics to fix their enforced darkness, the questions were raised on the valley's ability to handle the eye-crisis, even as a certain Tamilian would lead the way by showing up as a 'eye-messiah' at the peak of the

searing summer of 2016.

Availing the expert services of the same south Indian surgeon, Kashmir's 50-year-old clinic is now trying to attune itself to play a larger role in mitigating the eye crisis of the valley.

Apart from spreading awareness through medical camps, Dr. Manzo- or Eye Care Centre is trying to end Kashmir's reliance on the outside clinics by making treatment convenient and affordable.

In a candid chat with Kashmir Observer, son of (late) Dr. Manzoor, Dr. Khurshid Ahmed—who previously worked as a chief eye surgeon in a government mobile health unit—talks about Kashmir's



eye crisis, his clinical interventions and why Kashmir doesn't need the outside eye-care anymore.

Where does Kashmir stand in

terms of eye care facilities?

Well, in terms of eye care, Kashmir is far better than most of the states. Equipped with latest tech-

nology, our two medical colleges and health centres are doing an excellent job in making this 'second-to-none' distinction.

But we can still improve eye care by holding more eye camps, especially in far-flung areas. As we live in the 'subspecialtiesera', we also need specialists to deal with a certain kind of diseases. In this regard, government intervention and support is must.

So, what're the most common eye diseases in Kashmir?

Cataract, which is a treatable blindness, is the most common eye disorder in Kashmir, followed by diabetic and hypertensive retinopathy. Besides, age-related eye

degeneration, glaucoma and mis-alignment of the eyes remain the common eye problems in Kashmir.

What approach is needed to prevent these eye diseases?

I would say social awareness is the key. In absence of it, many patients tend to overlook eye disorders or signs making them prone to eye diseases in future.

And since Kashmir houses size-able diabetic patients, they're prone to eye-impairment and blindness called diabetic retinopathy.

Similarly, any patient over the age of 40 can develop an eye disorder called glaucoma, which can cause blindness by damaging an optic nerve.



Children and people above the age of 45 are most vulnerable to eye problems.

The best way to prevent these eye diseases is to have regular eye-checkups, at least once in a year.

People from smaller states mostly prefer going to outside clinics or hospitals for treatment. Is that the case with Kashmiris too especially when it comes to eye care? »PAGE 06

‘Looked Like A Fool’ Australia Captain Tim Paine Apologises For Sledging Ashwin

Press Trust of India

SYDNEY: Australian captain Tim Paine on Tuesday apologised for his on-field behaviour during the drawn third Test against India here, saying that his leadership wasn't good enough and he ended up "looking like a fool" by sledging Ravichandran Ashwin.

Paine has come under fire for a verbal duel with Ashwin when the Indian held vigil with an injured Hanuma Vihari to eke out a draw for his team, which was chasing a mammoth 407 for a win. Paine said he was "distracted, agitated and a bit grumpy at times" during the game.

"I spoke to him (Ashwin) really quickly after the game yesterday, as I said to him, look I ended up looking a fool, didn't I? You open your mouth and then you drop a catch and had a bit of laugh about that," he said at a virtual press conference, which he wasn't even scheduled to attend.

He said he decided to speak

to the media to "address some things" after having defended his behaviour in the post-match presser on Monday.

"...I do want to apologise for the way I went about things yesterday on someone who prides himself on the way I lead this team and yesterday was a poor reflection of that," Paine said.

The 36-year-old wicket-keeper dropped three catches during the match, including of Vihari after the confrontation with Ashwin. Paine conceded that it was the pressure of the game that got to him and that affected his mood.

"My leadership wasn't good enough, I let the pressure of the game, I suppose get to me and it sort of affected my mood and then from there affected my performance," he elaborated.

"So, yesterday when I came off the ground, my reflection was purely on my wicket-keeping. I think I said to my players, I had a really poor game as a leader, not so much as a captain, but certainly as a leader.

"...yesterday I fell short



of my expectations and our team's standard," he added.

According to Paine, his behaviour on Monday wasn't a reflection of the way he wants to lead the Australian team.

"So, I want to apologise for the mistakes that I have made yesterday. Certainly, as I said, not a reflection of the way I want to lead this team.

"We have set really high standards over the last 18 months and

probably a little-bit off. The way I spoke to the umpires early on day 2 was also unacceptable.

"So like I said yesterday I want to take that on the chin, it is not the way I want to lead this Australian team, it is certainly not a reflection of how I want to do it going forward," he added.

Paine also admitted that on Monday he fell short of his own standards and expectations in terms of playing the game by certain ethics. "I always talk to our players about playing this game on skill and not on emotion and yesterday as I said I fell short of my own standards, and own expectations.

"...but at the same time, bit of self-reflection, being able to learn from it, being able to move on after the (Sydney) Test was important.

"I again apologise to our fans and people who heard some of the things I said yesterday, it wasn't good enough particularly from the leader of this team," said Paine, who used an abusive word to unsettle Ashwin during their chatter.

BCCI Forced To Intervene After Team India Denied Basic Facilities In Brisbane Hotel

Press Trust of India

BRISBANE: The Indian cricket team, which landed in Brisbane for the fourth and final Test against Australia, was in for a shock on Tuesday as it was lodged at a hotel which "lacked basic facilities", prompting an intervention from the BCCI top brass.

It is understood that BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, Secretary Jay Shah and CEO Hemang Amin have all got in touch with their Cricket Australia counterparts after complaints reached them and have been assured that the Indian contingent will be made to feel comfortable from here on. The series is tied 1-1 currently.

"There was no room service or house keeping facilities. The gym is very basic and not of international standards and the swimming pool can't be accessed. This wasn't what they were promised when they checked in," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

India will be playing the fourth Test in the Queensland capital from January 15 where the surge of COVID-19 cases and a border lockdown with New South Wales has led to a strict hotel quarantine for the Ajinkya Rahane-led team.

Asked if the players were being allowed to mingle, the Board source said: "Yes, they have been provided with a team room and are allowed to meet each other inside the hotel."

When asked whether the team had protested with the hotel authorities, the source said: "When the manager enquired about how these things are not being taken care of, all they said was, 'the rule applies to both Indian and Australian teams. There is no one team that has been subjected to hard quarantine rules.'"

However, the Indian contingent is confident that both Ganguly and Shah will be able to amicably resolve the matter as the injury-ravaged team prepares for the series-decider.

AUS Vs IND 4th Test Bumrah Ruled Out While Ashwin And Agarwal Join India’s Growing Injury List

Press Trust of India

SYDNEY: The injury-ravaged Indian team was dealt another telling blow on Tuesday as pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah was ruled out of the fourth Test against Australia due to an abdominal strain.

If that wasn't enough, Mayank Agarwal -- tipped to be Hanuma Vihari's replacement in the playing XI in Brisbane -- has sustained a knock on the hands and it could be a hair-line fracture.

To make matters worse, Ravichandran Ashwin's back spasms have aggravated after battling for three hours on the final day, leaving little options for India on the bench.

Bumrah, key to India's attack, sustained the strain during the drawn third Test in Sydney.

It has been learnt that Bumrah's scan reports showed a strain and the Indian team management does not want him to aggravate the injury, keeping in mind the upcoming four-Test series against England.

"Jasprit Bumrah suffered an abdominal strain while fielding in Sydney. He is going to sit out of the



Brisbane Test but is expected to be available against England," a BCCI source told PTI.

While the Indian team management is heaving a sigh of relief that Bumrah hasn't sustained a tear but wants to be on the side of caution as playing in Brisbane and breaking down in the middle of the Test match could have an even more adverse effect on the team.

"If we take the risk of him playing at 50 percent, what if the injury aggravates and he breaks down in the middle of the match and then ruled out for better part of England series?"

"England is the last series which will decide the qualification for World Test Championship final and we are in contention and would require a fit Bumrah," the senior BCCI

source added.

It is now expected that two-Test old Mohammed Siraj will be leading the Indian attack and will be joined by Navdeep Saini, Shardul Thakur and T Natarajan in the Brisbane Test, starting January 15.

Unless, Bumrah is fielded at 30 percent fitness, risking the entire England series, T Natarajan will make his debut.

The problem with the Indian team is after injured KL Rahul's departure and Hanuma Vihari's grade 2 tear, there are no back-up middle-order batsman left in the reserves.

The only two available batsmen are two out of form openers in Prithvi Shaw and Mayank Agarwal.

It remains to be seen if India, knowing their depleted strength and long tail, decide to take the conservative route of playing four bowlers and six batsmen with Rishabh Pant as the wicketkeeper.

If Agarwal's scans reveal that it's a bruise and not a fracture, then it could well be Prithvi Shaw batting at number three followed by Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, and Agarwal himself at number six.

SRINAGAR MUNICOIPAL CORPORATION

GIST TO NIT NO.52 OF 2020 -21
DATED: 05/01/2021

For and on behalf of Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation tenders are invited from Dealers of Automobile Spare Parts or Authorised Dealers for the following works.

S. No.	Name of the Work	Quantity	Total valve of the Work	Earnest Money	Period of competition of work
01	Providing and fitting of Hydraulic Jack Seal Kit both sides (L/R) (As per sample)	02 kit	Rs.83,700/-	2% of the total value of the contract	10 days
02	Providing and fitting of Hydraulic Distributor (Sr. No.951068 Code No. 44196). (As per Sample)	01 No.			
03	Providing and fitting of Hydraulic Pump (10027605/BOSS/6060APSTBN) . (As per sample)	01 No.			
04	Ana Bond Tube	01 No.			
05	Universal Cross PTO (As per sample)	02 No's			

The details, terms and conditions of which can be had from the office of the Executive Engineer Mechanical Division Srinagar Municipal Corporation, from 08/01/2021 to 25/01/2021.

DIPK-NB-5060/20
No. SMC/EEM/142-45
Dated:- 05/01/2021

Sd/-
Executive Engineer Mechanical
Srinagar Municipal Corporation

Government of Jammu and Kashmir

Office of the Executive Engineer Department of Floriculture Kashmir.

email: exnflori@rediffmail.com Contact No: 0194-2478128.

Sub: Corrigendum of e-NIT No. 84 of 2020-21 dated: 24/12/2020 for the work of “Up-gradation and Beautification of Tu-lip Garden Sgr.(SAKURA PROJECT) park B construction of open Air cafeteria , Kehwa/ coffee point. “

Please read sft. Instead of Sqmt mentioned at S.No. 36 of the BOQ of above quoted e-NIT.

DIPK-11550/20

No: EE/FDK/ 2875-76

Dated: 11/01/2021

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Floriculture Department,
Kashmir.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PHE DIVISION KUPWARA

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
E- Tendering NIT No: 30 /PHE/Kup/2020-21.

For & on behalf of Lt Governor J&K Union Territory E-Tenders (In Single Cover System) are invited on item rate basis from approved eligible contractors registered with J&K UT Govt PWD, Railways & other State/Central Govt. for following work indicated against it.

S.No	Name of works	Est Cost (Rs. In lacs)	Earnest Money (in	Cost of T/ Doc	Time of Completion in days	Class of Cont	Major Head	Position of funds	Tender Call
1.	Providing and Laying by-pass line for PIR Mohalla Lashtiyal WSS Kalaroose	1.29	2580/-	50/-	07 working days	DEE	BACK TO VILLAGE	Accorded / approved	Ist

Documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications can be had From the departmental website https://jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates below.

01.	Date of publishing/Uploading of Tender Notice	11-01-2021
02.	Start of downloading	11-01-2021
03.	Bid Submission start date.	11-01-2021
04.	Bid Submission end date.	18-01-2021(Upto 16:00Hours)
05.	Date & time of opening Bids (Online)	19 -01-2021 (10.00AM)

It is obligatory for the bidders to upload the additional performance security deposit along-with the tenders as admissible under rules & otherwise the tenders shall be cancelled.

Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of E-Challan cum Treasury Minor Head :0215- water supply & sanitation in favour of Executive Engineer PHE Division Kupwara (tender inviting authority) and Earnest money /Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR pledged to Executive Engineer PHE Division Kupwara (Tender receiving authority)

Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria specification. Drawings, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of rates given above. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of demand draft in favour of Executive Engineer PHE Division Kupwara and Earnest money /Bid security in shape from any nationalized Bank pledged to Executive Engineer PHE Division Kupwara (tender receiving authority)

The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site WWW.Jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their email address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same web site in the office of the Executive Engineer PHE Division Kupwara. (Tender receiving authority)

The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of bids. The earnest money shall be forfeited if:

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

Failure of successful bidder to furnish the required performances security within the specified time limit.

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

No:PHEDK/3322-32
Dt:09 /01/2021

DIPK-11609/20

SD/-
Executive Engineer
PHE Division
Kupwara

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
PWD(R&B) DIVISION KULGAM

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS
Fresh NIT No. 111/2020-21/RnB/Kul/e-tendering/7586-7606 dated 09-01-2021

For and on behalf of the Governor, J&K State, e-tenders (In Single cover system) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S.No	Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rs.)	Earnest Money (In Rs.)	Time of completion	Time & Date of Opening of Bid	Class of Contractor	Major Head of Account
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Balance work of double storied city retreat building at Kutbal	26.90	1100	54000	30 days	19-01-2021 at 11.00 A.M	Aay & Bee	Languishing

Position of AAA:- Accorded
Position of funds: Available

1. The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 10-01-2021 10.00 A.M 18-01-2021 4.00 P.M

2. The Bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 10-01-2021 (11.00 AM) 18-01-2021 upto 4.00PM.The bids uploaded on the Web Site upto due date and time will be opened on 19-01-2021 at 11.00 AM in the Office of Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Kulgam in

3. presence of the bidders who wish to attend. In case of holidays/Office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids, bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

4. The complete bidding process will be on line.

3.1 Critical DATES

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	09 -01-2021
2.	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 10-01-2021 10.00 A.M to 18-01-2021 4.00 P.M
3.	Bid submission Start Date	10-01-2021 from 11.00 A.M
4.	Bid Submission End Date	18-01-2021 up to 4.00 P.M
6.	Date & time of opening of Bids	19-01-2021 at 11.00 A.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Kulgam

Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

4.1 Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in to acquaint bid submission process.

4.2 To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved vendors.

4.3 The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No Financial bid will be accepted in physical form.

4.4 Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-2 & 3.1 .

4.6 Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents like CDR/PAN/TIN/ GST certificate Treasury Challan/ Receipt with the bid.

Note:- Scan all the documents on 100 dpi with black and white option.

5. The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission due to any reasons.

6. Scanned copy of cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan/ Receipt mention with Name of work/ref: to NIT duly credited to MH 0059-Rev:Misc: and Earnest money/Bid Security if applicable Pledged to the Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Kulgam payable at Kulgam must be uploaded with the bid..

7. Bidders are advised to use "My Documents" area in their user on R&B e-Tendering portal to store such documents as are required.

8. All other terms and conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double Agreement Form)

NO: 7607-09
Dtd: 09-01-2021

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
(R&B) Division Kulgam

DIPK-11554/20

New Chapter Of Tribal Community Dev Being Written : LG

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, on Tuesday observed that for the first time in history, the tribal com-



munity of J&K has been provided forest rights and a new chapter of their development is being written.

He was interacting with various delegations, who called on him at Raj Bhavan in Jammu today. The delegations hailed the Union Territory government for initiating the implementation of Forest Rights Act.

He assured the members of the delegations that all the genuine issues projected by them would be taken up on merit for their redressal and urged the former Ministers to continue working towards welfare of the people.

A public delegation from Rajouri was led by former Minister and senior leader of J&K Apni Party, Chowdhary

Zulfkar Ali. They said the Forest Rights Act is for the betterment of tribal communities.

He further apprised the Lt Governor about various developmental issues of Rajouri

area including augmentation of Banking facilities, upgradation of health facilities, besides other issues of public importance.

Similarly, former Minister, Abdul Ghani Kohli met the Lt Governor and submitted a memorandum of demands pertaining to the welfare issues of Gujjar-Bakerwal community including creation of Gujjar scout; setting up of model Eklavya institutions; transport facilities for nomadic people, among others.

He expressed his gratitude towards the Lt Governor led UT Government for taking several measures for the upliftment and holistic development of Gujjar-Bakerwal community of J&K



LAWDA Acts After 8 Years, Demolishes Illegal Structures From Nigeen West

Augib Javed

Srinagar: Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA) finally acted on the repeated complaints of residents and environmentalists and partially demolished a private hut in the tourism park on the West side of Nigeen Lake on Tuesday.

The demolition was however stopped after the owner of the hut, an influential businessman along with officials from the tourism department intervened and stopped LAWDA workers from razing it to ground, alleged head of an NGO which spearheaded the campaign for encroachment free Nigeen.

According to residents, the Tourism Department acquired 176 kanal and 18 marla of land on the Western shores of Nigeen Lake in early seventies for building a public park.

However it was only in 2008 the land was converted into Joggers Park and named Cherry Park. However the entire front end of the lake remains under oc-

cupation of houseboats marooned along its banks.

"We cannot even touch the water while inside the park. The entire stretch has been fenced by houseboat owners which is illegal, said Aftab Ahmad, a regular at the park.

"Some people have erected sign boards of 'Private Property' in the park and have raised illegal constructions. We have been asking authorities to take action for a long", said Nasr Ahmad Naikoo, local councillor. He has even shot a letter to Director Tourism seeking his intervention.

"Ironically some of the encroachers are running an NGO for the conservation of the Nigeen Lake. They are in cohorts with some officials of the Tourism Department and that is why tourism officials intervened today and stopped LAWDA workers from the demolition", alleged a resident who was present at the site when the demolition squad arrived sparking an angry reaction by the inmates.

Director Tourism when contacted told Kashmir Observer that his

team accompanied LAWDA for demolition of the structures today that were built 17 years back. "No one will be allowed to breach the law", Director Nisar Ahmad said. He parried a question when asked how was a private hut standing on tourism property for so many years?

He however said it is now upto LAWDA to check and demolish any illegal structure raised near the water bodies.

Residents said action was taken only after they approached Divisional Commissioner P K Pole who issued prompt orders for eviction of encroachers. However they appealed to him to monitor the entire process till all encroachments around the park are removed.

Divisional Commissioner Pole told Kashmir Observer that he had asked the tourism department to take action against the illegal structure, since the area pertains to the department. Pole further said he has asked for a time bond action taken report regarding the case from the department and is aware of the case.

FCIK Hails LG For Industrial Scheme for J&K

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Federation Chamber of Industries Kashmir (FCIK) has hailed Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha for obtaining the much needed Central industrial package-2021 for Jammu and Kashmir from the central government.

According to a statement, an executive Council meeting of FCIK was held and attended by presidents of the associations representing all the estates, districts and identified

segments of industry from across Kashmir division to discuss the expectations from the new package.

The members expressed their gratitude to the Lieutenant Governor for putting in his hectic efforts in convincing the central government that the industrial sector in J&K had been craving for real support from them and obtaining Centre's approval for a significant package of Rs 28,400 Crores for existing and prospective industrialisation.

The Jammu And Kashmir State Board Of School Education, BRANCH OFFICE SOPORE



The candidates whose photograph is published in this notice is claiming to have lost the original marks certificate of 10th under Below mentioned particulars Name Faizul Bashir Mehraj -ud-Din Dar Father's Name Mohammad Maqbool Dar Mother's Name Hamida Bano Roll No 679505 Session /Year Annual 2013

Now the candidate has applied for Duplicate Marks Card. Anybody (if) having any objection may file the same before undersigned with (07) Seven days from the date of publication of this notice. Besides, the original marks card is tested as cancelled.

Sd/ Assistant Secretary B/O Sopore
AMS



ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AWANTIPORA, KASHMIR.

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

NOTICE

On-line applications are invited from eligible candidates for admission to Ph.D. programme in the following subjects for the Academic Session 2020-21.

Management Studies	Chemistry
Economics	Food Technology
Journalism & Mass Communication	Computer Science
Islamic Studies	Electronics & Communication Engineering
Arabic Language & Literature	Mechanical Engineering
Mathematics	Civil Engineering
Statistics	Electrical Engineering
Physics	Computer Science & Engineering

The application forms are available on the University website www.islamicuniversity.edu.in and the last date for submission of online application forms shall be **28-01-2021**. Detailed admission notification reflecting eligibility criteria/other details is available on the University website www.islamicuniversity.edu.in.

For any further query/information, the candidates may contact the following:

EPABX: 01933-247252/247955 Ext., 1109 Email ID: admissions@islamicuniversity.edu.in

No: IU/ST/Adad/Admissions/21/06

Dated: 12-01-2021

Sd/- Deputy Registrar, Academics

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR

NOTICE

Whereas an application has been received from one. Shri: Mohammad Shafi Sheikh S/o: Ghulam Mohammad Sheikh R/o: Parmewa Jagir Budgam owner of vehicle bearing Registration No: JK04E-9743 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S J&K Bank Ltd B/U Parmewa.

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 publication of this notice in the daily newspaper.

Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.2167
Dated 12/01/2021



MCB

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR

NOTICE

Where a application for transfer of ownership has been received from one. Shri : Khursheed Ahmad Sofi S/o: Ghulam Hassan Sofi R/o: Bat Bagh Budgam as Transferor) and Shri Parvaiz Ahmad Bhat S/O Ghulam Ahmad Bhat R/O Budgam as transferee) for Transfer of Tipper Cargage route Petmit No 957/GC/Budgam Covering Vehicle No JK04A-9611 as well as HPA Cancellation with J&K Bank Ltd B/U Ompora

Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed transfer of ownership 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 publication of this notice in the daily newspaper Kashmir Observer. No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.2157
Dated 12/01/2021

Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir

MCB

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR

NOTICE

Whereas an application has been received from one. Shri : Ghulam Mohammad Bhat S/o: Abdul Gani Bhat R/o: Shanipora Khansahib Budgam owner of vehicle bearing Registration No: JK04F 1111 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S Mahindra & Mahindra Finance B/U Budgam.

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 publication of this notice in the daily newspaper.

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.2154
Dated 12/01/2021

Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir



MCB

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

28 Jumada al-Awwal

1442

PRAYERS

FAJR 6: 08

ZUHR 12: 39

ASR 4:04

Magrib 5:46

ISHA 7:11

This Day In History

- 1942 - World War II: First use of aircraft ejection seat by a German test pilot in a Heinkel He
- 280 jet fighter
- 1958 - 9,000 scientists of 43 nations petition UN for nuclear test ban
- 1964 - Hindu-Muslim rioting breaks out in the Indian city of Calcutta - now Kolkata - resulting in the deaths of more than 100 people.
- 1975 - Henry Kissinger hints at military action against oil countries in case of "actual strangulation of the industrialized world" in the wake of oil shock
- 1976 - Future undisputed world middleweight boxing champion Marvin Hagler suffers his first career loss in a controversial 10-round majority decision to Bobby Watts at the Philadelphia
- Spectrum
- 1978 - NASA select its first American women astronauts
- 1991 - UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar meets with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein
- 1992 - Japan apologizes for forcing Korean women into sexual slavery during World War II
- 1993 - STS-54 (Endeavour) launches into orbit
- 1993 - French, British, and US fighter jets launch bombing raids in southern Iraq
- 2000 - Microsoft chairman Bill Gates steps aside as chief executive and promotes company president Steve Ballmer to the position
- 2001 - Earthquake measuring magnitude 7.6 strikes El Salvador, killing more than 840 people

From KO Archives

Lone's shocked reaction to Z-security report

Jawed Naqvi

NEW DELHI- On Tuesday, Abdul Ghani Lone went to a favourite C-grade barber shop in Delhi to have his beard trimmed. He picked up a leading newspaper and saw a care-fully placed front-page story which said that the senior leader of Kashmir's All Parties [Hurriyat Conference (APHC)] was now covered by 'Z' category security by the government, a category Just below the prime minister's. "I died in my boots, Lone told this correspondent. "The lipoor barber was so rattled by my shocked reaction that he nearly nicked my throat with the razor. Of course that story is bilge," thundered the 68-year-old veteran of Kashmiri politics known for his angry outbursts.

On Saturday the editor of another major Indian daily was advising Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in a signed article on the urgent need to avoid saddling Lone with too many responsibilities in seeking a breakthrough over Kashmir. The article warned that Lone would run the risk of becoming Harchahd Singh Longowal, the moderate Sikh leader who was assassinated by hardline Sikh insurgents.

"Lone as Longowal is a scary thought," the article said: If that was not enough, two internet news agencies, usually fairly reliable, filed stories on Sunday from Srinagar on how Lone's house had been surrounded by elite commandos. "Rubbish!" said the be-spectacled leader. "I just spoke to my family in Srinagar. There's not a soul there. As for the second charge, I am not fighting for Kashmir's free-dom to please India. Do the media want me to get killed?"

For the record, Lone was emphatical that he would refuse any Indian security even if it was offered to him. "I have lived dangerously, but I am not a fool. I belong to the times of Sheikh Abdullah, when I used to take him on in the state assembly, calling him a traitor to Kashmir when others would have trembled in his presence."

Lone said he did not take lightly recent threats from hard-line Kashmir groups targeting him as a renegade. Lone's recent remarks addressed to Mujahideen groups may have contributed to his difficulties with Kashmir's armed organizations. Dawn (KASHMIR OBSERVER, 13 January, 2001)

Royal Springs Golf Course Cheshmashahi Srinagar

Fresh E-Tender Notice No. 66 Of 2020-21 Dated:- 11-01-2020

For and on behalf of Secretary Royal Springs Golf Course, Cheshmashahi, Srinagar e-tenders (two cover systems) invited on item rate basis from approved Suppliers /Dealers Regd. with J&K UTI Government, for each of the following item /work.

S. No	Name of work	Est. cost (Rs in lacs).	Earnest money/ Bid Security (In Rs)	Cost of tender document (in Rs)	Time of Completion	Class of contract	Major Head of Account
1.	Supply of Turf Seed for Kashmir Golf Club Srinagar	1.175	2350 /= in Shape of CDR Or FDR in favour of Turf Manager RSGC	100/= Non Refundable in shape of DD in favour Secretary RSGC or Bank Challan SB-12341 J&K Bank Brain Branch Nishat Srinagar	25 days	Eligible suppliers/ dealers /	5452-Toursim

Special conditions: -

- In case the offered bid is below 60% of the advertised cost or more, such bid / bids will be out rightly rejected.
- In case more than one bidder has quoted equal bid amounts or bids are found to a "Tie" list lowest will from draw of lots.

1. The bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawing, bill of quantities (B.O.Q) set of terms and conditions of contract and other details are appended and is also available from the departmental website www.jktender.gov.in as per the scheduled date given below.

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	11-01-2021 4:00 PM
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 11-01-2021 to 19-01-2021 (4.00PM)
3	Bid submission Start Date	11-01-2021 4:00 PM
4	Bid Submission End Date	19-01-2021 4:00 PM
5	Date & time of opening of Bids(Online)	21-01-2021 11:30 PM in the office of Turf Manager RSGC Srinagar

General Conditions:

- The successful bidder shall submit original Demand Drafts/CDR or FDR and copies of GST Registration Certificates and PAN in person within two days from the opening of the bids failing which proceeding as warranted under rules shall be initiated in the matter.
- The bidders will provide email ID and complete postal address including cell numbers.
- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online

Turf Manager
Royal Springs Golf Course
Srinagar.

DIPK-NB-5069/20

No:- RSGC/TM/2020-21/333-35
Dated: 11-01-2021.

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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K O V I E W

Return the bodies

Families of the three youth killed in an encounter on the outskirts of Srinagar on December 30 have been demanding their remains. They are also demanding probe into their killing in what they have alleged was a fake encounter. The demand of the families makes sense in the wake of the killing of three labourers from Rajouri in an encounter at a Shopian village in July last year that later turned out to be fake. This too happened after the labourers' families protested and forced the army to order a probe. And to Army's credit, it was quick to indict its own soldiers. This came as a pleasant surprise to people. Army chose to voluntarily dispense justice in a case where its personnel had in the words of Army itself "exceeded" the powers vested under the AFSPA. Later the police accused an army officer and two associates of planting weapons on the bodies of three slain labourers Captain Bhoopendra Singh who is now in military detention, has been charged with murder, conspiracy and other offences. Similarly the two civilian "sources", who were with him at the time, are in police custody.

At the recent Srinagar encounter too, the families are saying their wards had left for Srinagar on the day they were killed. One among the three youth Ather Mushtaq was just sixteen years old. Families are unwilling to believe the three were militants overground workers or had gone to join the ranks of militants. Significantly, police has said the three youth were not a part of its list of militants, even though Army has insisted that the three were not civilians. In a statement, the Army has said that the three had been given the opportunity to surrender but they refused.

That said, it is important that the Army follows the example of the Shopian encounter and holds a transparent probe. Both the families and the people have a right to know what happened on the day. Also, the government should sympathetically consider the demand of the families for the return of the bodies. It is heartbreaking to see the video of the father of Ather Mushtaq himself digging the grave for his slain son in his ancestral graveyard and asking for the body to be returned to him. The government's reason for not returning the bodies has been to prevent the massive funerals in view of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. And second, according to the Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, this is to stop the glamourization of the militancy. On closer examination, the two arguments hardly seem to hold water. With vaccines for Covid-19 having been approved, there's no reason that the bodies can't be handed over now. And as far the glamourization, a sincere and serious political outreach would be far more helpful to arrest the ongoing recruitment into militancy.

O T H E R O P I N O N

A big Test

India's vaccination drive against COVID-19, targeting 3 crore healthcare personnel and frontline workers, will commence from January 16. Coordination systems between 20 ministries are reportedly being put in place and the government has framed a set of guidelines for the rollout that deal with logistics, human resources and monitoring systems to report adverse events. Dry runs have been conducted in more than 700 districts to acquaint the administrative agencies and vaccinators with some of the challenges that lie ahead. These exercises have shone a light on the gaps that must be plugged before the first shots are administered.

Digital systems have a key role in the vaccination plan. Nearly 80 lakh beneficiaries in the first priority list have reportedly registered on the Centre's COVID Vaccine Intelligence Network (Co-WIN) system — "a digitalised platform to track the enlisted beneficiaries for vaccination on a real-time basis". The challenge now is to make the manual interventions to this platform foolproof and user-friendly for ASHA and other healthcare workers involved in the last-mile delivery of the vaccine. Care must also be taken to obviate server malfunctioning that has been a longstanding bane of IT-enabled services in the country. There have been reports of the Co-Win app not performing as per plans during the mock drills — officials in several parts of the country have complained that the platform did not show the names of all the targeted beneficiaries. Also, last week, this paper reported that codes of some villages in Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat and Assam were not mapped on the Co-Win platform. Experts have rightly warned that such snags could prevent intended beneficiaries from keeping their date with the vaccine, and even more worryingly, erode trust in the inoculation process. The Union Ministries of Health and Information Technology are reportedly collaborating on bolstering the IT infrastructure and have sought inputs from private players.

The government plans to administer the vaccine to 30 crore people in the first two phases of the inoculation drive. According to current plans, each person will be administered two doses of a vaccine. In other words, 60 crore shots will be administered in the next six to eight months. Nearly one lakh vaccinators will be involved in the process. The dry runs have bared the inadequacies, especially in reporting adverse events. Healthcare officials have also expressed apprehensions that such a large-scale project, involving conversion of PHCs into vaccination points, could result in the disruption of regular health services, including routine immunisation programmes and institutional deliveries — already there are concerns that the country's TB control programme has suffered a setback because of resources being diverted for COVID-19 control. The coming months could be exacting for the country's healthcare system. How it steps up to the demands of the moment will be watched.

The Indian Express

Send your write ups and feedback at
editpage.ko@gmail.com

Forest Department is a Respondent Party under FRA

Involve SDM's , DPOs, Tehsildars , BDO's and NGOs in awareness building

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

Recently, the Deputy Commissioner Anantnag with an aim of implementation of the Forest Rights Act in district issued a circular on 4.01.2021 asking forest officers to create awareness on the Forest Rights Act (FRA). Yet again, a mistake that was committed in other states in the past is being repeated in J&K. The Forest Department is a Respondent Agency when it comes to implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 commonly known as Forest Rights Act or FRA. How can an organization that is holding title of a land give away the same to the tribals and traditional forest dwellers living around forest areas?

With an aim to ensure justice delivery vis a vis Forest Rights Act (FRA), the Tribal Affairs Ministry was made the nodal agency for implementation of this pro-poor and pro tribal law at national level. In states and UTs, the respective Tribal Affairs Departments are the nodal departments to implement FRA. Rural Development and Revenue authorities also have a great role. But in the case of Jammu & Kashmir, the Govt seems to be ignoring them and involvement of forest officials is given more focus. If this is a deliberate attempt then that needs to be exposed but if it is done due to lack of awareness around this law, the same needs to be rectified.

It is not wise to call upon Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) through an official circular to carry out awareness and information education and communication (IEC) programmes among forest dwelling communities. Will DFOs, Range officers or Foresters or even Forest guards in Anantnag dare to tell forest dwellers or gujar population living around Kokernag, Pahalgam, Breng, Gadole or other forest areas that

"We will be surrendering our land that is under your possession very soon in your favour. You will be its owner and can carry out your agriculture and other activities on it". They can't tell them and this will kill the essence of this law.

The Deputy Commissioner could have instead directed the SDMs, District Panchayat Officers (DPOs), Tehsildars or Block Development Officers (BDO's) to do this work or involved some reputed NGOs as well. Even the Government at top level is giving the role and responsibility of FRA implementation to the Forest Department while the Tribal Affairs Department JK Government or even Panchayati Raj Department are completely sidelined. During the last two weeks, several workshops were held across J&K on FRA, and in most of these programmes, Forest Department officials were either giving powerpoint presentations (PPTs) or were involved in other activities related to FRA. I am not against what they are doing. Their intentions might be good but as per the law they have a limited role as FRA goes against their interests. As FRA is in its infancy and has been recently rolled out by the J&K Government recently, I am trying my best to make Govt officials aware about this historic legislation through my regular columns. I have already written a lot of 10 articles on FRA in other media outlets. Through this media platform I want to continue with my advocacy and activism on the Forest Rights Act. This piece explains the role of Govt departments and preamble of FRA.

Preamble of FRA

The preamble of Forest Rights Act calls for recognizing and vesting the Forest Rights to the tribals and traditional forest dwellers. The preamble reads as

"An Act to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation in forest land in forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose rights could not be recorded; to provide for a framework for recording the forest rights so vested and the nature of evidence required for such recognition and vesting in respect of forest land"

Explaining the background of this legislation plus aims and objectives to enact Forest Rights Act, the preamble further reads as:

"Whereas the forest rights on ancestral lands and their habitat were not adequately recognized in the consolidation of State forests during the colonial period as well as in independent India resulting in historical injustice to the forest dwell-



In states and UTs, the respective Tribal Affairs Departments are the nodal departments to implement FRA. Rural Development and Revenue authorities also have a great role. But in the case of Jammu & Kashmir, the Govt seems to be ignoring them and involvement of forest officials is given more focus.

ing Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who are integral to the very survival and sustainability of the forest ecosystem and whereas it has become necessary to address the long standing insecurity of tenurial and access rights of forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers including those who were forced to relocate their dwelling due to State development interventions "

Explanation

A large population living in and around forests especially the scheduled tribes (Gujjars, Bakerwals in case of J&K) and other traditional forest dwellers (Kashmiris, Pahadis or even Dogri speaking people of J&K) have lived in these areas for a long period in symbiotic relationship. This relationship has led to formalized or informal customary rules of use and extraction, often governed by ethical beliefs and practices that have ensured that forests are not too degraded.

During the British rule colonial the focus shifted from the forests being used as a resource base for sustenance of local communities to a State resource for commercial interests like setting up of dams, railways and mining and development of land for agriculture. Several Acts and policies such as the Indian Forest Acts of 1865, 1894 and 1927 of the Central Govt and some state forest Acts curtailed centuries old, customary use rights of local communities. This continued even after independence till much later until enactment of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. FRA was enacted in 2006 and rolled out in 2008 across India except J&K.

This law was not ratified by the JK legislature which it could have. Even the former Forest Minister Lal Singh claimed 370 was an impediment in extending FRA in J&K, but that should not have been the problem as Lal Singh was not in favour of giving rights to Gujjars and Bakerwals of J&K. There are several laws like GST which were ratified by J&K legislature in recent past and even central laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) or even NREGA were extended to J&K in spite of article 370 having been in force that time. The Govt of J&K could have even enacted a similar law of its own in the past but even the Forest Ministers from Kashmir like Mian Altaf Ahmed also failed to do that. I believe he was not well advised by the Forest Bureaucracy in the past. After abrogation of article 370 the FRA got automatically extended to J&K, but from Oct 31st 2019 till December 2020 Govt failed to roll out this law. After Govt issued eviction notices by invoking an obsolete Indian Forest Act 1927, it infuriated the tribals and we also tried our best to impress upon the Govt to implement FRA 2006. The Govt started rolling out the law after the Chief Secretary himself made announcement of this news. The way law is being rolled out violates the basic principles and preamble of Forest

Rights Act (FRA). This needs to be looked into. As I said in the past, authorities also need to learn from the mistakes that were committed in other states during FRA implementation.

What experts say ?

Veteran Forest Rights activist, researcher and columnist Y Giri Rao who heads Bhubaneswar based NGO Vasundhara while having an informal conversation with the author said that Forest Department is like an accused party under the Forest Rights Act, and it is not ethically right to involve them in awareness and implementation of the Act. "How can the petitioners get justice from respondents?" he questioned. Giri Rao says that mistakes being committed during the past across several Indian states should not be repeated in Jammu & Kashmir.

"If there are no officials of Tribal Affairs department available at Sub Division or Block level, let the Tehsildars and other officers be given a role like in case of Himachal Pradesh. For training Director Tribal Affairs J&K Govt and Director Panchayati Raj and District Panchayat Officers (DPOs) must play their role. In addition the elected panchayat representatives, village forest rights committee like BDC members, DDC members and even District Development Council Chairperson have a great role. They must understand their roles and responsibilities" said Giri Rao

Conclusion

The aim of this article is not to undermine the forest officers. The land title in forest areas where tribals and traditional forest dwellers claim the rights is registered in the name of the forest department. Will the forest department allow free use of their land by such people? No they won't as this is a natural phenomenon. Let the law be implemented without any interference of the Forest Department. Axing of 10,000 apple trees by forest officials on November 18th 2020 at Kanidajan Budgam is a clear example before us that the forest department won't allow tribals and forest dwellers to claim the rights over the land that is under their possession. I appeal to the Chief Secretary to involve the Tribal Affairs, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Departments in FRA implementation. SDM's, District Panchayat Officers (DPOs), Block Development Officers (BDOs) and Tehsildars who already have a role under FRA need to be involved more for creating mass awareness on this law. FRA is not a rocket science, even a simple graduate if trained properly can become a master trainer "

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat is Founder & Chairman of Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement. For Feedback bhatajramuzaffar@gmail.com

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



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PDD Employees on the Frontlines

With the onset of winters and heavy snowfall several essential services are interrupted annually here in Kashmir. During these harsh colder months we also observe a department facing enormous flak from the people for not being able to ensure their services to the subscribers, which to an extent is completely understandable and justified. Yes, I am talking about the Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Department, a department which always remains on the receiving end of the blows from the people for providing erratic power supplies to Jammu and Kashmir, when a major proportion of it is being produced here and more production avenues are being explored and worked on. Although this is an ac-

ceptable fact that the higher officials of this department face genuine criticism but, there is a section of employees who are paid meagre amount of wages after months while they leave no stone unturned to discharge their duties. Pictures of daily wage workers of the PDD department surface on the internet often, showing them on the top of electric iron poles in snow and rain trying to restore the power in areas affected by snow. Another side of these pictures is their financial sustenance, serious injuries and even deaths of such workers while fulfilling their duties due to electric shocks. Unpaid wages and the lack of regularisation of their jobs, and the Minimum Wage Act not being implemented, is hurting casual labourers in Jammu and Kashmir, especially those in the

PDD. They not only suffer due to the apathy they receive from the government alone, their families also have to go through an enormous amount of pain and trauma at a time when such a hard-working daily wage worker is rendered physically disabled for life or if such a worker dies on the field. A person employed as a casual labourer is entitled to receive a meagre amount of Rs 225 as their daily wage, many workers have a disdain towards the government claiming that their meagre wages are paid to them after months in installments. Meanwhile, the government's promise of implementing the Minimum Wage Act in the UT of J&K has not seen the light of day. PDD workers have been demanding the implementation of SRO 381 (part of Recruitment Rules) which

promises the regularisation of daily wagers who have completed seven years in the department.

Around one lakh casual labourers – Teshildars, need based workers and others – have been engaged in different departments including PDD

The Minimum Wage Act if implemented in Jammu and Kashmir will ensure an amount of Rs 520 on a daily basis to the workers. These unsung heroes deserve appreciation and acknowledgement of their efforts from us, while the government should also acknowledge their high risk job and implement The Minimum Wage Act which can raise their wages and ensure some sort of financial stability of their household.

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COVID Vaccine: Is it Halal or Not?

Even before the COVID vaccination process starts in India. The Indian Muslims have courted another controversy. The question is whether they'll be amenable to get vaccinated or not, as there are reports that the proposed vaccines may not be halal as per the Islamic dietary laws.

Muslims, Jews and even Hindus have questioned the composition of the proposed vaccines developed by Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. Even as India is scrambling to start the coronavirus vaccination drive, Muslims have raised concern over the use of pork products - forbidden in Islam and Judaism, while the Hindus have questioned the inclusion of cow's blood in the vaccine.

Halal or haram

The vaccine manufacturers - Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna - have rejected in vain the allegations of using pork gelatine. The manufacturers have clarified that pork products are not part of the vaccines, though pork-derived gelatine is known to be used as a stabiliser for safe storage and transportation of the vaccines.

The approved COVID-19 vaccines have been met with a mixed response from the Islamic theological community, halal associations and halal pharmaceutical experts as to whether the vaccine is halal, despite various governments' approval, including those of many Muslim-majority countries.

In the UK, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which is being given to the public, was approved by the British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) and other Islamic scholars, stating the vaccine was halal "based on the information available."

According to the British government, the vaccine does not contain any components of animal origin, which has been a concern for Muslims as porcine, which is haram (non-permissible), or non-halal slaughtered beef could have been used.

However, the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIC), a unit of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), has so far, not officially stated that the vaccine is halal or not halal. Ihsan Ovut, the Secretary General of SMIC, in an email to an Islamic website, said there is "no specific standard developed on the halal-ness of COVID-19 vaccines."

A halal pharmaceuticals expert says the vaccine cannot be claimed as halal if they are not halal-certified. But this No is on technical grounds. According to Dr. Mohammed Ali Al Sheikh, who works at SMIC, the halal certification has to be carried out by a competent third-party and can not be claimed by a manufacturer itself, which Pfizer did. It is an opinion seconded by the World Halal Authority (WHA).

Acceptance by Muslim countries

However, in spite of these flimsy or technical objections, Bahrain, Saudi



Arabia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, the UAE and Pakistan, countries which claim to be Islamic or are Muslim-majority countries, have approved the Sinopharm vaccine, while Singapore's government has authorised the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for use in the country. This step must have been taken after considering the religious sensibilities and analysis of the composition of these vaccines.

In Singapore, which has a sizeable Muslim population, the Office of the Mufti of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), stated on its website that the COVID-19 vaccine is "a basic necessity (daruriyyat)" as it is a life-saving inoculation. In Indonesia, the government has already said it will include the Muslim clerical body in the COVID-19 vaccine procurement and certification process.

Indian Ulema's view

In India, the controversy was stoked last week by Mumbai's Raza Academy, a Bareilvi outfit, seeking details about all the vaccines being developed and whether they contain pork extract, from the WHO.

The Indian Islamic scholars, as usual are divided on the issue with the majority of them citing verses from the Holy Quran (Surah Nisa and Surah Baqara) to advocate for the vaccine, but not giving a clear-cut guidance to the Muslim populace.

Leading Islamic scholar Akhtarul Wasey, former professor of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, trying to put at rest the whole issue, opines that for Muslims pork and alcohol are not permissible for eating and drinking purposes, but if a part of these is used for medicinal purpose then it is allowed in Islam, as that medicine will be taken for the express purpose of saving life, which

is allowed in Islam. Furthermore, he asserted that according to Islamic jurists a person suffering from hunger for more than three days and nearer to death is also allowed to eat the meat of a dead animal, in order to survive.

Prof. Wasey urged the Muslim Ulema to be more proactive in this regard and appreciated the stand taken by Deoband and Nadwa, the two leading Islamic seminaries in this regard. He also reiterated the fact that the Polio drive in India was completed successfully and the scourge of Polio in India was wiped out after the intervention of Indian Ulema. In fact, Jamaat-e Islami Hind (JIH) has become the first Muslim body in India to categorically state that Muslims are permitted to use the Coronavirus vaccines, even if they contain pork extracts, as it sought to dispel all rumours suggesting otherwise.

In an advisory, the Shariah Council of the JIH said, "Islam gives great importance to human life and also emphasises on its protection." It added: "If an impermissible object is transformed into another thing, totally different in properties and characters, it may be considered as clean and permissible. On this basis, the use of Gelatine derived from the body part of a haram animal has been considered to be permissible by Islamic jurists. Same is the opinion of some jurists about pork Gelatine."

It is not just Muslims in India, who were concerned about the composition of the vaccines. Swami Chakrapani, president of the Hindu Mahasabha, had written to President Ram Nath Kovind demanding that the government and pharmaceutical companies clarify whether Covid-19 vaccines contain cow's blood or not. But the Indian media coolly overlooked this letter.

There's a similar assessment by a broad consensus of religious leaders

in the Orthodox Jewish community as well. Rabbi David Stav, chairman of Tzohar, a rabbinical organisation in Israel, said, "According to the Jewish law, the prohibition on eating pork or using pork is only forbidden when it's a natural way of eating it. If "it's injected into the body, not (eaten) through the mouth," then there is "no prohibition and no problem, especially when we are concerned about sicknesses."

Nonetheless, the Indian Muslims concerns as to whether the vaccine is halal or not, might be a challenge to convince people to be inoculated in addition to the anti-vaccination phenomena proliferating in many countries.

Meanwhile, there are reports that a halal-certified vaccine may however be on the horizon. Malaysia's MYEG inked a deal with China's Anhui Zhifei Longcom Biopharmaceutical to conduct Phase-3 clinical trials in Malaysia and to obtain halal certification, based on Malaysia's DSM standards for a COVID vaccine. Indonesia's state-owned PT Bio Farma, which is working with China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd, has also confirmed that it is seeking halal certification for the COVID-19 vaccine.

In the given circumstances it would be pertinent for Indian Muslims to decide for or against the vaccine, as per the conditions. Even the Indian government has not made the vaccination mandatory, so far. So it seems it would be better to err in favour of caution and need.

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

Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi.

The approved COVID-19 vaccines have been met with a mixed response from the Islamic theological community, halal associations and halal pharmaceutical experts as to whether the vaccine is halal, despite various governments' approval, including those of many Muslim-majority countries.

ASAD MIRZA

Video games need holistic approach

For those who are worried about the ill effects of video games, a complete ban on them appears to be an easy solution.

For those who are worried about the ill effects of video games, a complete ban on them appears to be an easy solution. However, is it possible to achieve it? And is it possible to ignore the side effects of such a method?



HAMAD OBAID

Those who are wary of video games and fear their consequences on their children's brains have many legitimate reasons to feel so. However, truth has many faces. One of the facts is that the sector of video games has become a global economy worth hundreds of billions of dollars. And, in this economy, is a large international community comprising mostly children, who communicate with each other and spend their time in an exciting environment every day.

Sometimes, more than a million people are involved in one game, at the same time.

For those who are worried about the ill effects of video games, a complete ban on them appears to be an easy solution. However, is it possible to achieve it? And is it possible to ignore the side effects of such a method? In 2019, the Indian government tried to prohibit one of the most popular online games of that time. Consequently, people bypassed the ban and got their way. Officials soon discovered that only a small group of people adhered to the ban.

A series of violent incidents in the American states of Texas and Ohio, and the Canadian province of British Columbia triggered a widespread debate about the impact of video games in perpetuating a culture of violence and increasing the crime rate. However, those in favour of banning video games could not convince anyone that their solution was ultimate.

Games have become a part of our daily life. They accompany us on our travels. And for those who practise it daily, it is hard to imagine travelling to a country that bans games. So what does that mean?

Let's look at it from the perspective of tourism economy. Any country that seeks to attract large numbers of tourists must offer them something to stay for as long as possible. In the case of family tourism, the wishes of children must be taken into account. They are usually the most influential factor in deciding the family's travel destination.

The child might refuse to travel to a country where he cannot play his or her favorite game. Parents would refuse to travel to a country where their children do not enjoy their time. At the same time, it is difficult to let the children loose. Surely, there are formulas and solutions that can maximize the fun from playing games while minimizing the resulting risks. Parents have a vital role in this to closely monitor their children and communicate with them. They could even use parental control methods available in the games.

Reaching optimal solutions requires keeping the topic open to discussion, taking a holistic approach in addressing the issue and taking into account the multiple sides of reality.

Khaleej Times

From Front page...

Escape Tunnel To

Director, NHIDCL, gave a detailed PowerPoint Presentation (PPP) of Z-Morh tunnel, construction of approach roads, lanes, protective walls, drains besides the road and other projects. He said that the chair was informed that despite the snowfall the work process was going on smoothly on Zojila tunnel.

"At the outset, the Div Com said that the 65 per cent physical work has been completed on Z- MORH while its escape tunnel is likely to be completed by March- ending. He said that despite snowfall and harsh weather conditions, the work was going on smoothly almost on all road and tunnel projects," the official spokesperson said.

Stressing on the speedy work process, he said, the Div Com instructed concerned to ensure prompt response by all concerned departments to all bottlenecks causing inconveniences in the construction process.

"He emphasized on immediate lifting of scrap from the Z- MORH site and ensure adequate dumping site facility is provided to the concerned for dumping purpose," Pole, as per official spokesperson said.

"He further stressed on providing uninterrupted power supply and carrying out snow clearance work on all approach roads and sites," he added.

The Div Com, he said, directed concerned to ensure land acquisition process is completed with release of compensation to the land losers at the earliest.

"The Div Com also reviewed the status of various other projects including approach roads of Srinagar-Zojila and Kargil, Gulmarg- Baramulla Highway, Vailoo-Danipawa Ashajipora Alstop besides various other proposed road projects in Kashmir," he said, adding " Div Com directed concerned to put all men and machinery into service and expedite the work process."

As per the official spokesperson, the meeting was informed that the deadline for the tunnel is December -21, 2023 however, a bonus upto Rs 400 crores shall be provided to the concerned agency if the project is completed before it's set deadline.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Executive Director, NHIDCL, Anand Pahal, Commandant HAWVS, CE Beacon and other concerned.While DC Kargil and ADC Ganderbal other concerned also attended the meeting through videoconferencing.

Night Temperature

from minus 9.6 degrees Celsius the night earlier. Gulmarg was the coldest recorded place in the valley.

Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 5.3 degrees Celsius, down from minus 4.6 degrees Celsius a night earlier.

Qazigund recorded a minimum of minus 1.4 degrees Celsius, Kupwara, in the north, minus 1.8 degrees Celsius and Kokernag minus 3.9 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.

Farmers Refuse To

the government said the order to stay the implementation of three new farm laws is against its wish but the direction of the apex court is 'sarva-nya' (acceptable to all) and welcomed the composition of an "impartial" committee to resolve the deadlock.

In an interview to PTI, Minister of State for Agriculture Kailash Choudhary made these remarks and also said he is confident that whatever decision is taken by the court, that will be "taken to ensure that the laws are kept the way they are."

While opposition parties like NCP and DMK welcomed the SC order and hoped that it will help in resolving the deadlock, the Congress leaders expressed apprehensions over the members chosen for the committee, saying they are known for their support to the three Acts and the agitating farmers.

In a statement, All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSSC) said,"It is clear that the court is being misguided by various forces even in its constitution of a committee. These are people who are known for their support to the 3 Acts and have actively advocated for the same."

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also raised questions over the formation of the committee, asking can justice be expected from people who have given written support to the "anti-agriculture laws". "This struggle will continue till anti-farmer-worker laws are repealed, Jai Jawaan Jai Kisaan," he tweeted.

Addressing a press conference, Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the party welcomes the Supreme Court's concern over the farm laws, but the party has issues with the composition of the committee formed by it.

He said the members of the committee have already expressed their views in the past favouring the new laws "so the question arises in our minds that how justice will be done to farmers by their hands".

Asserting that any order of the Supreme Court has to be complied with by all the concerned parties, BJP spokesperson Nalin Kohli attacked the Congress for its criticism of the court-appointed committee.

The Congress' stand and conduct on the agricultural laws is a "classic testimony towards its duplicity and opportunistic politics practised since 2005".

The BJP has said the Congress-led UPA government had supported farm reforms but the opposition party has now taken a U-turn due to political reasons.

While staying the laws, the top court set up a four-member committee to resolve the impasse between the Central government and the farmers' unions protesting at Delhi's borders over the legislations.

The four members of the committee are Bhupinder Singh Mann, President of Bhartiya Kisan Union; Anil Ghanawat, President of Shetkeri Sangthana, Maharashtra; Pramod Kumar Joshi, director for South Asia, International Food Policy Research Institute, and agriculture economist Ashok Gulati.

Addressing a press conference at Singhu (Delhi-Haryana) border, farmer leaders claimed the members of the committee formed by the top court are "pro-government".

"The members of the SC-appointed committee are not dependable as they have been writing on how agri laws are pro-farmer. We will continue our agitation," farmer leader Balbeer Singh Rajewal told the press conference. "We are against the committee on principle. It is the government's way to distract attention from the protest," he said.

The farmer leaders also said the Supreme Court can repeal the farm laws suo motu.

"We welcome the court's order to stay the implementation of the farm laws, but we want a complete repeal of these laws, which is our main demand," said Abhimanyu Kohar, a senior leader of the Sankhyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella

body of around 40 protesting farmer unions.

Another farmer leader, Harinder Lokhwai, said the protest will continue until the contentious farm laws are repealed. Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said the concern expressed by the Supreme Court over the farmers' protests is "justified and welcome in the situation created by a stubborn government".

"The decision to form a Committee to help find a solution is well-intentioned. However, the composition of the four member committee is puzzling and sends contradictory signals," he said on Twitter.

Another Congress spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill tweeted, "After Supreme Court stay order, Agriculture Minister must resign as it is the total incompetence, irrational & irresponsible behaviour of the BJP Govt due to which Judiciary had to step in-Stay Order is a tight legal slap on BJP dictatorial law making and imposing mechanism."

Nationalist Congress Party Chief Sharad's Pawar also welcomed the apex court's decision to put on hold the implementation of three farm bills and set up the committee to resolve the issues.

"It is a big relief for farmers and I hope that a concrete dialogue between the Central government and farmers will be initiated now, keeping the farmers interests and wellbeing in mind," he said.

Echoing similar views, DMK chief M K Stalin also welcomed the decision of the Supreme Court, saying this is a victory for farmers protesting across India.

"I once again urge the Union government to commit to repealing the farm laws in the next Parliament Session," he said.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has asked the state Advocate General to examine in detail the Court order and called a meeting of his cabinet to discuss it, the CM's media advisor said.

The top court has sought the cooperation of the protesting farmers and made it clear that no power can prevent it from setting up a panel to resolve the impasse over the controversial farm laws.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Haryana and Punjab, have been protesting at several border points of Delhi since November 28 last year, demanding a repeal of the three laws and a legal guarantee to the minimum support price (MSP) system for their crops.

Enacted in September last year, the three laws have been projected by the Centre as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove middlemen and allow farmers to sell their produce anywhere in the country.

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

1 Corona Death In

(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 new cases of coronavirus, including three travellers, a paramilitary personal and a minor during the last 24 hours, officials said. While 65 new cases were reported from Jammu division, 48 others were confirmed by officials from Kashmir Valley. Giving district-wise details, officials said, Srinagar reported 24, Baramulla 5, Budgam 2, Pulwama 5, Kupwara 3, Anantnag 1, Bandipora 2, Ganderbal 2, Kulgam 2, Shopian 2, Jammu 48, Udhampur 5, Doda 2, Kathua 1, Samba 4, Poonch 1, Ramban 2 and Reasi 2 new cases of Covid-19.

Moreover, officials said, 198 more patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals—98 from Jammu Division and 100 from Kashmir valley. The number of active cases has reduced to 1682 in J-K. (With GNS inputs)

Court Charges Yasin

Rubaiya Sayeed was kidnapped by JKLF members on December 8, 1989, from Srinagar to ensure the release of their associates lodged in different jails.

From the confessional statements of the accused persons recorded, either under Section 164 CrPC or under Section 15 of TADA Act, supported with the statements of the abductee Rubaiya Sayeed and other prosecution witnesses, it has been prima facie proved that the accused persons have hatched a criminal conspiracy to kidnap the abductee with sole objective to get their persons released from the custody after having negotiation with the Government of J&K as well as Government of India and the accused persons had also succeeded in their nefarious designs and got their persons released from the custody.

I am of the considered view that sufficient grounds are existing for drawing prima facie presumption that the accused persons namely Malik, Ali Mohd Mir, Iqbal Ahmed Gandroo, Manzoor Ahmed Sofi, Mehraj-U-Din Sheikh and Rafiq Ahmed Pahlloo have committed offences under Sections 364/368 /120-B RPC, 3/4 TADA Act & 27 IA Act, whereas, the accused persons namely Mohd Zaman Mir, Javed Ahmed Mir, Wajahat Bashir and Showkat Ahmed Bakshi have committed offences under Sections 120-B read with Sections 368 RPC and Section 3/4 of TADA Act, the Special Judge said.

Hence, the court said, the charges are required to be framed against each of the accused persons, separately, for the delineated offences. During the investigation, accused Ali Mohammad Mir had voluntarily made the confessional statement under Section 164 CrPC before the Magistrate, whereby, he had admitted his role in the commission of offence as well as disclosed the role played by the other accused persons.

Another accused Mohammad Zaman Mir had in the same manner made a confessional statement under Section 164 CrPC before the concerned Magistrate and had disclosed his own role and the roles of other accused persons in the commission of the offence, the court said.

It said the accused, Iqbal Ahmed Gandroo, had also made a confessional statement admitting his guilt and role played by him in the whole occurrence. Besides, the accused persons namely Rafiq Pahlloo, Wajahat Bashir, Manzoor Ahmed Sofi and Showkat Ahmed Bakshi had made their confessional statements before Prakash Mishra SP CBI, which is found to be admissible in evidence under Section 15 of TADA Act, the court added.

Since the accused persons besides admitting of their own guilt have also narrated about the participation of other accused persons namely Yaseen Malik, Javed Ahmed Mir and Mehraj-U-Din Sheikh, which can also be used against them as one of the pieces of evidence, the court said. It said the investigating agency has also conducted Test Identification Parade of the accused persons, Ali Mohd Mir, Mohd Rafiq Dar and Mohd Iqbal Gandroo, as per the provision of Section 9 of the Evidence Act and during that proceedings the abductee had identified them and disclosed about the individual participations of each of the accused persons in the commission of offences.

PLA Has Not Pulled Out

based on the principle of mutual and equal security and in consonance with the talks...I am very hopeful for a positive situation. But as I said, we are ready to

meet any eventuality," he said.

"We are prepared to hold our ground as long as it takes to achieve our national goals and objectives. The Army chief said the Indian troops are maintaining a high level of alertness all along the LAC and not just in Ladakh.

"Our operational preparedness is of a very high order and the morale of the troops is high. Whatever has transpired in the last year has highlighted the need for us to restructure and for us to enhance our capability," he added.

Asked about the actual situation in eastern Ladakh, Gen Naravane said it remains the same that was prevailing last year, and there has been no change in status quo.

To another question on the same issue, he said the situation remains the same whatever existed earlier.

India and China are locked in a military standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5 last year.

Referring to the overall security challenges facing India, he said Pakistan and China together form a potent threat to national security.

"There is no doubt that Pakistan and China together form a very potent threat and there is an aspect of collusivity which cannot be wished away. That is also very much part of our strategic planning and calculus when we are formulating our plans," he said.

Gen Naravane said there has been an increasing co-operation between China and Pakistan in both military and non-military sectors and the possibility of a two-front threat is something India should be prepared for.

When queried on China's mobilisation of troops in May last year, the Army chief said it was not new as they came to the region for training and India was monitoring them. However, he added the Chinese Army had the "first mover advantage". "We had the first mover advantage in August as they did not know we will surprise them," he said, in an apparent reference to Indian Army capturing a number of strategic heights along the Pangong lake in August last year. Gen Naravane also said China has withdrawn some troops from depth areas on conclusion of training and noted there is no reduction in deployment of personnel at the frontline.

"Every year PLA (People's Liberation Army) troops come to traditional training areas for training. With the onset of winters and completion of the training period, the training areas have been vacated and since these training areas have been vacated, it is fair to assume that those troops who were in depth areas on the Tibetan Plateau have gone back to their garrison," he added.

"However there is no decrease in strength either on their side or on our side as far as friction points are concerned." On Pakistan, Gen Naravane said the country continues to use "terrorism" as an instrument of state policy and India will continue to confront the menace effectively.

"Pakistan continues to embrace terrorism as an instrument of state policy. However, we are very clear that we have zero-tolerance for terror and we reserve our right to respond at a time and place of our own choosing and with precision. This is a clear message that we have sent across," he added.

Gen Naravane said the Army is carrying out restructuring with an aim to transform it from manpower-driven force to technology-intensive force, adding it is looking at application of high-end technologies like big data, artificial intelligence and quantum computing. He also said the Army is fully committed to tri-services jointness and proposals on having integrated commands.

BRO Launches Op

and intimidating altitudes to keep communication lines opened. BRO officials said the organisation has launched project 'Himank' to undertake the arduous and daunting task of keeping the strategically important roads along the LAC open even though that meant maneuvering some of the highest mountain passes in the world and working in temperatures going down to minus 35 degrees Celsius.

"Winter snow clearance task this year has been particularly more challenging considering the altitude, extreme weather and the heavy deployment of the troops along the LAC," a senior BRO official said.

Officials said that BRO personnel deployed at altitudes ranging from 16,500-18,000 feet are relentlessly executing the winter snow-clearance.

They said the strategically important road axes and prominent mountain passes where the snow-clearance operations are carried out include Chang la, Warila, Marshimikila, Kajukondla, Kassangla, Umlingla, besides the Durbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beig Oldie Road.

During the winters, the only existing road axis connecting DBO in Sub Sector North, Hot Spring and Chushul in Eastern Ladakh, and gateway to Changthang Sector of Ladakh (via Changhila and Warila passes) gets blocked due to heavy accumulation of snow.

Officials said that to provide sustenance to troops deployed in these areas amid the tension with China, road construction companies are working tirelessly to keep the roads open and ensure connectivity all through the winter.

"To keep the roads open, meticulous planning and resources mobilisation were undertaken and adequate advance winter stocking including that of equipment spares and winter diesel was done," one of them said.

SKIMS-Bemina Resumes

is the first day the footfall was less but in coming days we are expecting the normal flow of patients which we ideally used to have before this pandemic," said Tariq Ahmad a senior employee at SKIMS-Bemina.

"I used to come to SKIMS-Bemina Hospital for check-up as I have problem in my eyes, but since Covid-19 pandemic, after this hospital was closed for routine check-ups and follow ups, I had to consult other doctors and sometimes went to private hospitals for check-up, today I am happy the OPD services are resumed in the hospital at least I can get consultation from my own doctor who had operated upon me," said a patient from north Kashmir. Pertinent to mention the SKIMS-Bemina hospital has been catering to the most of patients from North Kashmir, Srinagar, and Central Kashmir as well.

Principal SKIMS JVC Dr Reyaaz Ahmad Untoo said that after being designated as Covid 19 hospital by Government "our entire team at SKIMS worked tirelessly day in and out and results are in front of everyone.

"We at SKIMS-Bemina had recovery rate of 95%, now in the interest of the Patient care and students, Government has de-notified out hospital from Covid-19 list and has directed Hospital Authorities to resume the non-Covid services again," Untoo said, adding that "We have resumed the OPD services in all departments and in coming days we will be resuming the elective surgeries and IPD services as well, more of, the students of PG and UC who were demanding bed side teachings and clinical classes, with opening of OPD and IPD services their demands are also met now."

He, however, said that the hospital will undertake all safety measures which will be strictly followed, and also appealed the patients and attendants to follow the SoPs and guidelines while visiting the hospitals", he said. He also advised the people to use masks and maintaining of physical distancing while visiting the hospital—(KNO)

Bukhari Demands

restored. We want our identity back, Bukhari,

who was flanked by senior party leaders from both Kashmir and Jammu regions, told reporters here after felicitating party candidates and independents who successfully contested the recently held District Development Council (DDC) elections.

He said the prime minister made a promise about the restoration of the statehood to the JKAP delegation when they called on him after formation of the party last year.

Criticising the opponents, he said, Our detractors attacked us for our meeting with the prime minister and home minister. There were some who were thinking that statehood will be restored in due course of time but we know it is a hard battle and we have to work jointly to achieve this.

On August 5, 2019, the central government scrapped the special status of J-K under Article 370 and bifurcated it into union territories.

We take the credit for restoring politics in J-K. Politics was said goodbye on August 5, 2019 (when the majority of the leaders including three former chief ministers were detained). We came forward though the decision of August 5 was not in good taste for us as well. The people want restoration of statehood and safeguards for their land and jobs, he said.

Referring to the various PIL's pending in the Supreme Court challenging the Centre's move, Bukhari said they are expecting a decision from the Supreme Court which is in accordance with the heart-beat of the people of J-K.

Battling for early assembly elections after the successful conduct of the recently held DDC polls, the JKAP leader said the people want a popular government so that their problems get solved.

We want assembly elections to be held sooner even before the completion of the delimitation process. The delimitation process can complete its work of creating seven more seats. We used to nominate two seats, let it be seven this time around as you have already changed so much and this will make no difference, he said, adding at least people will get a popular government which is responsive, responsible and answerable to them. He claimed that the present administration is paralysed and both the regions are facing a lack of developmental work and administration inertia.

You (Prime Minister) are told that a lot had happened in J-K over the past two and a half years. For God's sake, send a team which does not restrict itself to computer presentations and can see practically whether anything had happened, he said.

Bukhari said, We do not see any development taking place in any of the two regions. Development has come to a grinding halt and the administration is paralysed and restricted to advertisements only. People are facing a lot of problems. He also demanded a probe into the frequent closure of the Jammu-Srinagar national highway and the ongoing four-laning project.

Jammu-Srinagar highway is the lifeline as far as national security is concerned. Why there should be no CBI probes against engineers and contractors who vandalised the hills overlooking the strategic highway. They should be booked under national security act, he said, adding there was no preparedness of the administration to tackle the situation in the aftermath of the snowfall which is a regular feature during winters.

Referring to the continued snapping of 4G mobile internet services in most of J-K post-August 5 development, he said there is a lot of improvement as far as security scenario is concerned as militancy-related incidents had come down and there was a peaceful DDC election as well so there is no justification in the ban.

Our children are suffering because they are unable to attend online classes. Prime Minister, you are very brave and have a lion's heart so please give them 4G as they are the future of this country, the JKAP leader said.

He also demanded the release of youth undergoing detention and said now is the time for normalcy and reconciliation . Those who have gone astray are coming back and need a rehabilitation package, he said and called for a stipend of Rs 10,000 for unemployed educated youth and said they cannot wait for three to four years for reaping the benefits of the recently announced industrial package. Bukhari also demanded covering of the old unit holders in the new industrial package.

‘J&K With India Because

Party president Altaf Bukhari on Tuesday said he would like to give them full credit for having this region with India. "I have a lot of respect for both the families (Abdullah and Mufti). They have a contribution not only for this region (J&K) but for the country as a whole," he told reporters here.

Responding to a question about these leaders' influence on people with their "emotive slogans", the former minister said, "I ask myself what was the contribution and the sacrifices of the two families for this country less.

"Is it not a fact that they were the torch bearers of the Indian flag in J&K. If we are with India, it is because of these families - at least one of the families openly and the other covertly. So I would like to give them credit for having this region with this country," he said.

However, he attacked the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an amalgam of seven mainstream parties including National Conference headed by Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti-led PDP, and claimed that the alliance had crumbled sooner than they expected.

"We never accepted this alliance as a people's alliance. It was an alliance of the parties for the parties. They had to face the public and thus created a smoke screen. Anything on the foundation of a lie will crumble and it has crumbled sooner than we expected," he said.

Bukhari thanked the people for voting Apni Party in the recently held District Development Council (DDC) elections and said an overall vote share of 5.5 per cent is encouraging for a party which is just nine months old.

"We came before the people with slogans of achievable issues and politics based on truth. We did not raise any emotional slogans as was the practice over the last 72 years," he said, adding "we could withstand the pressures of all that emotional politics which has been an important ingredient of politics in J&K for the last 72 years."

In response to another question about the growing rift between the two regions of Jammu and Kashmir over trivial issues, he said both the regions have proved that they are above this politics.

"Had there been a say of the politicians, you could have seen a war. People's will is running and they have lived for the last 72 years with love and brotherhood and will continue to live in harmony and peace with each other. The people know what some politicians do," he said.

Bukhari welcomed the tourist arrivals in J&K from different parts of the country but was critical of the government approach.

"No doubt COVID-19 is a challenge but we have to move ahead. The tourists from different parts of the country have started coming on their own. There is no government initiative which is evident from the fact that the air fare between Jammu and Srinagar is falling between Rs 12,000 and Rs 15,000 and outside locations to over Rs 25,000. The government is no-

where and we do not see it," the JKAP leader alleged.

He also criticised the government for its alleged failure to ensure better coordination among the members of the panchayati raj insitutions and government officials.

"We have a serious question whether the government officials are ready to work with the newly-elected DDCs. Have they worked with Block Development Council (BDC) members and panches and sarpanches?" he asked, adding the "answer is no as nobody is ready to listen".

Bukhari also urged the administration to gear up the official machinery and provide relief to the people affected by the recent incidents of fire and earthquake in the Chenab valley region.

Ex-Bank Manager Held

Soon, many other complaints were received by the police, the officials added. In-charge Bank manager, Subash Chander said that approximately Rs 3 crores have been misappropriated. SHO Mendhar Manzoor Kohli said that a case has been filed against the Karim, who retired from services on December 31, last year.

"We have arrested him and started further investigations. Many other employees of the bank including those who have retired or are in service are on the police radar," he said. (GNS)

HC Rejects Cooperative

rejected the employee's contention that he is not a public servant and could not have been prosecuted for the offences under the PC Act. "The second contention raised by the petitioner (employee) is that the allegations leveled against the petitioner do not make out any case for prosecuting him under the penal laws and liability if any, is civil in nature is also without any merit," the court said.

It said that there are serious allegations against the employee with regard to abuse his official position by opening fictitious accounts and causing huge loss to the extent of more than one crore rupees to the Bank. "The criminal proceedings can be quashed only when the matter that is essentially of civil in nature has been given a cloak of criminal offence," the court said, adding, "From the perusal of allegations it is not made out that civil dispute has been camouflaged as criminal dispute. So this contention also deserves to be rejected."

The challan reveals that the FIR was lodged on the basis of written complaint dated 13 January 2004 submitted to Superintendent of Police, CBI by Ashraf Ali Abbas, the then Branch Manager of the Bank.

"In the instant case, investigation stands concluded and the challan stands filed," the court said, adding, "The trial court has taken cognizance of the offences mentioned in the challan and has even framed the charges against the petitioner (employee) and the other accused. Now at this stage, the accused-petitioner (employee) cannot raise a plea that the CBI had investigated the matter without any authorisation and also there is no whisper that any miscarriage of justice has been occasioned to the (employee) due to such investigation by CBI." (GNS)

INTERVIEW: ‘Kashmir Has

Well, it isn't anymore. However, there was a time when the patients would go outside the valley for the eye-care treatment.

But now, times have changed. Apart from the government hospitals, our private eye care centers are today equipped with the latest technology to deal with all the eye problems.

So, I feel there's no need for any patient to go out of the valley for an eye care. And I tell you why.

Usually, a high eye care surgery, say a corneal transplant, in a private hospital outside Kashmir cost not less than one lakh rupees to a patient.

But in Kashmir, we're doing the same of surgery for just Rs 35,000. So, you can yourself imagine the treatment difference in terms of convenience and cost.

But do you think eye check-ups are as frequent as physical checkups in Kashmir?

No, only 15 to 20% Kashmiris are mindful of the need of regular eye-checkups to prevent ailments.

Are there any eye conditions which are stigmatized in our society?

Many, actually. And one of the most common stigmatized disorders is the refractive errors among girls.

If girls are wearing thick glasses, it becomes a problem at the time of their marriage. So in order to get rid of the glasses, we do offer them a number of treatments like Lasik laser or a refractive lens exchange. With advanced technology, we can get rid of eyeglasses, up to a power of minus 25.

Other than that, squint patients face a lot of challenges. For that as well, we've a full-fledged department. We counsel the patients and their parents to seek treatment.

With the unavoidable usage of smart gadgets and screens, our eyes have become more vulnerable to problems. What are the tips that you would like to give to people to take care of their eye health?

People using gadgets should take a break every 20 minutes for 20 seconds. We call it 20/20 rule. They should just look toward the far-off objects or keep their eyes closed.

Also, people using gadgets for a longer period of time should use blue-cut lenses with a special coating to restrict harmful blue light.

Plus, one should try to come out of the air-conditioned room for a short period of time to save their eyes from thermal strain.

But how has the process of eye surgeries changed with newer technologies?

Technology has made the process easier and faster. For example, a cataract surgery has now become a 10 minute procedure. Without any injection or stitch and post-operation patches, we introduce a new foldable artificial intraocular lens into the eye. And from the next day, patient is able to do his normal work.

We also do corneal transplant which is performed if the front portion of the eye becomes opaque. So by changing that portion of the eye, the patient's eyesight can be restored back.

Since Kashmir is a politically-uncertain zone, there are greater challenges on health institutions here. How do you deal with the cases of occasional assault that reach you in the form of pellet victims?

Well, over the years we've had the large number of pellet injuries who have come here to seek our help. We have been able to treat them in whatever possible way.

What we've observed with these pellet injuries is that most of the eyes are damaged beyond repair. The damage to the inside of the eyes is such that even if we operate, they still need multiple surgeries. But now, we've developed a good experience to deal with such injuries.

We are in touch with a very renowned ophthalmologist in India named Dr. S. Natarajan. In 2016, he came to SMHS hospital and operated the 100 patients free of cost.

Pak PM Khan Issues Special Permit For Dubai Royals To Hunt Internationally Protected Bird



ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government has issued at least seven special permits to Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, and six other members of the ruling family, to hunt the internationally protected bird houbara bustard during the 2020-21 hunting season, according to a media report on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Imran Khan, who has earlier opposed such permits for Arab royals, personally approved the special pass this time, reported the Dawn newspaper.

The Foreign Ministry's deputy chief of protocol issued the documents after approval by the Prime Minister, the daily reported quoting sources. The permits were delivered to the UAE Embassy in Islamabad.

Apart from Dubai Ruler Rashid Al-Maktoum, the oth-

ers given permits are the crown prince, deputy ruler and finance and industries minister, deputy police chief, an army official, two other members of the royal family and a businessman.

Khan, when in Opposition, had campaigned against such hunting excursions by the rich Arab families, who annually visit Pakistan to hunt the endangered bird.

A Saudi prince, Fahd bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, is said to have gunned down 1,977 birds on reserved and protected areas over 21 days in January 2014 while other members of his party killed another 123 birds, bringing the total to 2,100.

The killing resulted in a lot of criticism but the practice has been going on. The bird's meat is considered by the Arabs to be an aphrodisiac. PTI

Policeman Killed In Attack On Polio Vaccination Team In Pak



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Militants targeted a polio vaccination team in northwestern Pakistan on Tuesday, killing a policeman in the latest attack on workers engaged in the campaign against the crippling disease.

The unidentified gunmen opened fire on the team at Latambar area in Karak district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province.

The policemen were providing security cover to the vaccinators.

A policeman patrolling the area was killed in the firing.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan are the only two remaining countries in the world where polio is endemic.

Immunisation efforts in the past have been hampered by

militants. They have alleged the immunisation campaigns are a cover for Western spies.

Local officials said they had recruited Muslim clerics to promote the immunisations among children after past programmes were met with resistance and even violence by extremists.

Attacks on anti-polio campaigns increased in the years following revelations that a fake hepatitis vaccination campaign was used as a ruse by the CIA in the hunt for al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who was killed by US commandos in 2011 in Pakistan.

The latest attack comes on the second day of the anti-polio drive week.

A five-day national polio immunisation drive began from Monday to vaccinate over 40 million children.

LOCAL OFFICIALS SAID THEY HAD recruited Muslim clerics to promote the immunisations among children after past programmes were met with resistance and even violence by extremists.



SUPPORTERS OF US PRESIDENT Donald Trump gather in front of the US Capitol Building in Washington, US, January 6, 2021 Reuters

Trump Shores Up Pence Ties As Democrats Move To Impeach

Agencies

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence met on Monday for the first time since rioters stormed the US Capitol last week, signalling a united front as Democratic efforts to impeach Trump gain momentum.

The meeting in the Oval Office -- described as "a good conversation" by a senior official -- came ahead of a critical 48-hour period when Pence will come under pressure to break from the president and initiate his removal.

Just eight days before his term ends, and nearly a week after a failed insurrection scarred the seat of America's democracy, Trump heads to Texas on Tuesday in one of his final trips as president, desperate to reach friendlier territory so he can tout his administration's successes.

In Washington, though, he is the target of efforts to remove him from power, including a historic second impeachment, this time for "incitement of insurrection" over his supporters' deadly breach of the Capitol building.

First, the House of Representatives will vote Tuesday on a longshot bid to get Pence and the cabinet to invoke the US Constitution's 25th Amendment, which would declare Trump unfit to perform his duties and in-

stall Pence as acting president.

Pence's meeting with Trump appeared to quash any prospects of that outcome.

The two men "reiterated that those who broke the law and stormed the Capitol last week do not represent the America First movement backed by 75 million Americans, and pledged to continue the work on behalf of the country for the remainder of their term," the official said.

Democrats will then follow up with impeachment proceedings, including a House vote expected Wednesday.

The move -- which threatens to torpedo any hopes of a political future for Trump -- could make for a tense culmination of four years of controversy ahead of Joe Biden's January 20 inauguration.

Inauguration threats

While Biden's transition team expressed confidence in the ability to hold a safe inauguration, the FBI warned in an internal memo that armed pro-Trump protesters could seek to disrupt the inauguration.

The bureau, according to ABC News, also received information on a group seeking to "storm" government offices in all 50 states on Inauguration Day.

Authorities are seeking to arrest more people who raided the Capitol after a rally by the president when he repeated false claims that Democrats stole the election through fraud. The

siege left five people dead.

Military personnel have flooded into Washington, where as many as 15,000 National Guard troops could be deployed.

In the US Capitol on Monday, where security has tightened substantially including a metal fence around the building, Republicans blocked immediate passage of the 25th Amendment resolution, forcing a debate and House vote.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi hit out at Republicans, accusing them of enabling Trump's "unhinged, unstable and deranged acts of sedition to continue."

Trump has been largely silent in recent days, making few statements and holding no news conferences. He has been banned from Twitter, his favoured public platform, for language that could incite violence.

Support appeared to be crumbling within his inner circle. Chad Wolf, acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security which safeguards the inauguration, resigned on Monday, the third cabinet member to quit since the riot.

In the Republican-controlled Senate, which is on recess until January 19, top Democrat Chuck Schumer is said to be considering a rarely used maneuver to force the chamber back into session under emergency circumstances to more quickly open an impeachment trial.

FBI Warns Of Armed Protests In US Ahead Of Joe Biden's Inauguration: Report

Agencies

The FBI has warned of possible armed protests being planned for Washington, DC, and at all 50 US state capitals in the run-up to President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration on January 20, a federal law enforcement source said on Monday.

Faced with threats of more violence from outgoing President Donald Trump's supporters, the National Guard was authorized to send up to 15,000 troops to Washington, and tourists were barred from visiting the Washington Monument until January 24.

Biden's inaugural committee said on Monday the theme of the January 20 ceremony will be "America United," even as the country grapples with the fallout of last Wednesday's storming of the Capitol by Trump loyalists.

The law enforcement source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the FBI warnings were from January 16 and at least through January 20 for state capitals and for the three



days leading up to Inauguration Day in Washington DC.

The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Daniel Hokanson, told reporters he expected about 10,000 troops to be in Washington by Saturday and they would focus on supporting security, logistics, and communications. He said the number could rise to 15,000 if requested by local authorities.

At least one lawmaker asked the Pentagon to do more.

Senator Chris Murphy, who said he was sending a letter to the acting secretary of defense on Monday, said it was unclear

if the National Guard would be sufficient to protect the nation's capital and active duty troops may be needed also.

"I'm not afraid of taking the oath outside," Biden told reporters in Newark, Delaware, referring to the traditional setting for the swearing-in ceremony on the Capitol building grounds.

But he said it was critically important that people "who engaged in sedition and threatened people's lives, defaced public property, caused great damage" be held accountable.

washington monument closed to tours

The Park Service said it would suspend tours of the Washington Monument, an obelisk honoring the country's first president, due to safety concerns from threats to disrupt the inauguration.

In a letter to Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf made public on Sunday, Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser called for a fresh approach to security after what she called last week's "unprecedented terrorist attack."

'This Is Apartheid': Rights Group Slams Israeli Rule



Agencies

A leading Israeli human rights group has begun describing Israel and its control of the Palestinian territories as a single "apartheid" government, using an explosive term that the country's leaders and their supporters vehemently reject.

In a report released on Tuesday, B'Tselem said Israel has created a system in which Jewish citizens enjoy full rights, but Palestinians living in Israel's four areas of control have different levels of rights -- depending on where they live -- are always below the Jewish people.

"One of the key points in our analysis is that this is a single geopolitical area ruled by one government," said B'Tselem director Hagai El-Ad. "This is not democracy plus occupation. This is apartheid between the river and the sea."

The report said Israel seeks to advance and cement Jewish supremacy throughout the entire area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

"To that end, it has divided the area into several units, each with a different set of rights for Palestinians -- always inferior to the rights of Jews," the report said.

As part of this policy, Palestinians are denied many rights, including the right to self-determination, the report added.

The four areas of Israeli control are the occupied West Bank where Palestinians live in dozens of disconnected enclaves under rigid military rule; occupied East Jerusalem where Palestinians are permanent residents but not citizens; the blockaded Gaza Strip which Israel continues to control externally; and Israel itself.

Israel has long presented it-

self as a thriving democracy and purported that its Palestinian citizens, who make up about 20 percent of its population of 9.2 million, have equal rights.

However, these Palestinians suffer from being treated as second- or third-class citizens at the institutional level, with some 60 laws that actively discriminate against them in sectors such as housing, education and healthcare.

The report went on to describe four methods used by Israel to advance Jewish supremacy: freedom of movement, political participation, exclusive immigration, and expropriating land for its Jewish citizens while crowding Palestinians in enclaves.

Israel's harshest critics have used the term "apartheid" for decades, evoking the system of white rule and racial segregation in South Africa that was brought to an end in 1994. The International Criminal Court defines apartheid as an "institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group".

"There is no country in the world that is clearer in its apartheid policies than Israel," said Nabil Shaath, a senior adviser to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. "It is a state based on racist decisions aimed at confiscating land, expelling indigenous people, demolishing homes and establishing settlements."

Itay Milner, a spokesman for Israel's consulate general in New York, dismissed the B'Tselem report as "another tool for them to promote their political agenda," which he said was based on a "distorted ideological view". He pointed out that Arab citizens of Israel are represented across the government, including the diplomatic corps.

Gold Mine Explosion In China Traps 22 Workers Underground



Agencies

Chinese authorities have sent rescue workers to a gold mine in the country's northeast after 22 workers were trapped underground following an explosion, the Xinhua news agency reported on Tuesday.

The accident happened on Sunday in Xicheng Township, located in eastern Shandong province.

In a social media post, the state-run Global Times newspaper cited Shandong authorities as saying that rescue workers had so far been unable to contact the trapped miners.

According to Xinhua, the blast damaged the communication signal system underground, preventing communication.

Xinhua says the mine is owned by Shandong Wukailong Investment, which is named by Zhaojin Mining, China's fourth-biggest gold miner, as a related party or "subsidiary of an associate" in its 2019 annual report. China's mines are among the world's deadliest.

In December, at least 18 people also died after being trapped in a mine in China's southwestern city of Chongqing, the region's second such accident in just over two months.

The dead were among 24 people trapped underground by excessive levels of carbon monoxide gas at the Diaoshuidong coal mine.

In September, at least 16 were killed after high levels of carbon monoxide trapped miners at the Songzao coal mine in Chongqing.

NEWS MAKERS

Turkish TV Preacher Jailed For 1,000 Years Over Sex Crimes

ISTANBUL: A Turkish court on Monday sentenced a Muslim televangelist who surrounded himself with scantily clad women he called "kittens" to more than 1,000 years in jail for sex crimes.

Adnan Oktar preached creationism and conservative values while women in revealing outfits -- many of whom appeared to have had plastic surgery -- danced around him to upbeat music in the TV studio.

The bearded 64-year-old was detained in 2018 along with more than 200 other suspects as part of a crackdown on his group by the financial crimes unit of the Istanbul police.

He was sentenced to 1,075 years for crimes including sexual assault, sexual abuse of minors, fraud and attempted political and military espionage, the private NTV broadcaster reported.



The court also sentenced two executives in Oktar's organisation, Tarkan Yavas and Oktar Babuna, to 211 and 186 years, respectively.

The official Anadolu news agency reported that Oktar was additionally found guilty of aiding a group led by US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen that Turkey blames for staging a failed coup attempt in 2016.

"Welcome To Brexit": Dutch Officials Seize Sandwiches From UK Passengers

The Hague: Dutch customs officials have been filmed confiscating sandwiches and other food from passengers on a ferry from Britain, blaming new post-Brexit trade rules.

Officers in high-visibility jackets and face masks are seen stopping car and lorry drivers at the Hook of Holland port, in the footage filmed last week by the Avrotros public broadcaster.

"Welcome to the Brexit, sir. I'm sorry," says one official as he seizes the foil-wrapped sandwiches of one stunned driver, who is said by the broadcaster to be Polish.

The driver plaintively asks



the Dutch customs officer if he can "take off the meat and you leave me the bread?"

But the Dutch official replies: "No, everything will be confiscated."

Another driver is seen having fish products seized.

Drivers cannot say they were not warned: the British government in December gave the

example of ham and cheese sandwiches of a food that could not cross to the continent after Britain formally abandoned EU trade rules on January 1.

The new post-Brexit rules say that bringing foods that contain meat or dairy into the EU, even for personal use, is forbidden.

The rule is intended to prevent the entry of foods that could spread diseases.

The new Brexit rules have also hit grocery retailer Marks and Spencer, which wasn't able to stock its popular sandwiches and meals in France after Britain's official exit from the EU on January 1.

Only 1 Supporter Showed Up At Pro-Trump Rally At Twitter HQ

SAN FRANCISCO: Only one person turned up during a pro-Trump rally at Twitter headquarters, protesting against its decision to permanently ban US President Donald Trump.

While there was a single pro-Trump protester in evidence, two counter-protesters appeared to applaud Twitter's decision to deplatform the outgoing president, reports The Verge.

Twitter's San Francisco headquarters was empty, with employees working from home during the ongoing pandemic.

There was still a heavy police presence and at last 30 police officers were present at the site to protect against mob violence.

Angry at Twitter which permanently removed Trump from its platform following the Capitol chaos last week, his supporters planned a rally at the company's headquarters on Monday.

The posts on a popular internet forum for Trump supporters called for the President's adherents to protest his Twitter ban outside of the company's headquarters.

Posts on TheDonald.win, an independent far-right internet forum, called for supporters to gather outside of Twitter's headquarters in San Francisco to protest the ban.

A Twitter spokesperson had said that the company's highest priority was workers' safety.

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