



**P3 CITY**

### MOHAMMAD AIJAZ ASSUMES CHARGE AS DC SRINAGAR

Mohammad Aijaz Asad Thursday assumed charge as Deputy Commissioner Srinagar taking over from Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary who was accorded warm farewell in a function...

**P5 ISRA WAL MI'RAJ**

The event of al-Isra wal Mi'raj was one of the miracles of the noble Messenger (pbuh) that occurred in the twelfth year of his prophetic mission in Makkah. Before we discuss the circumstances in which it occurred, let us recall what the noble Qur'an says....



**P7 STATE**

### WEST PAKISTAN REFUGEE ARRESTED FOR HATCHING CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY

The Crime Branch Jammu on Thursday said that it arrested a West Pakistan Refugee hailing from Chak Santhal of Sialkote district of Pakistan for his...



**Widom Quote!**  
Wisdom is the daughter of experience  
—Leonardo da Vinci

## Pak Army Chief Bats For Peace With India

Time For India, Pak To Bury The Past And Move Forward: Gen Bajwa

Press Trust Of India

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's powerful Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa said on Thursday that it was time for India and Pakistan to "bury the past and move forward", a day after Prime Minister Imran Khan made similar overtures towards New Delhi following an unexpected ceasefire announcement by the militaries of the two countries last month.

Addressing a session of the first-ever Islamabad Security Dialogue here, Gen Bajwa also said that the potential for regional peace and development always remained hostage to the disputes and issues between Pakistan and India - the two "nuclear-armed neighbours".

"We feel it is time to bury the past and move forward," he said, adding that the responsibility for a meaningful dialogue rested with India.



India last month said that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan in an environment free of "terror, hostility and violence". India has said the onus is on Pakistan to create such an environment.

Gen Bajwa's remarks came a day after Prime Minister Khan

made a similar statement at the same venue. Khan said on Wednesday that India will be benefitted economically by having peace with Pakistan as it will enable New Delhi to directly access the resource-rich Central Asia region through Pakistani territory.

"India will have" More On P6

### Austin Urged To Raise Human Rights Concerns With India

Press Trust Of India

WASHINGTON: A top American Senator has urged US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin to take up with the Indian leaders the issue of human rights and farmers protests besides India's plan to purchase Russian S-400 missile defence system during his visit to New Delhi this week.

Austin, the first-ever US defence secretary to include India on his maiden foreign trip, is scheduled to meet his counterpart Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit K Doval, during his New Delhi visit from March 19 to 21.

Getting the US-India partnership right is critical to addressing 21st-century challenges, and that includes urging the Indian government to uphold democratic values and human rights, Senator Robert Menendez, Chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote in a letter to Austin. More On P6

## No Outsider Purchased Land In Kashmir: Govt Tells MPs Panel



Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Over a year after Modi government revoked semi autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir, no non-local has purchased land in the newly carved Union Territory despite the introduction of new laws that enable them to buy land, the Hindu reported Thursday.

The report based on the information provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to a parliamentary panel said that the J&K government had received memoranda of understanding (MoUs) for 18 private hospitals with investment of 3,200 crore and 33 proposals with an investment of 2,100 crore in the education sector. In October last More On P6

### NEWS DIGEST

#### Truck Crushes Traffic Cop To Death

SRINAGAR: Police on Thursday claimed to have arrested a truck driver, hours after he knocked to death an assistant sub inspector (ASI) of traffic police at Bonigam crossing in Qazigund area of South Kashmir's Anantnag district. According to a police spokesperson, ASI Mohammad Shafi Bhat of Shangus, Anantnag was killed on the spot after an More On P6

#### 3 Held For Running Fake Job Racket

SRINAGAR: Police on Thursday claimed to have busted a fake job racket by arresting three people from north Kashmir's Bandipora district. Irfan Ahmad Wani, Manzoor Ahmad Pandit, both residents of Saderkoot Bala and Bilal Ahmad Dar of Asham were arrested by police on the basis of specific information that they were misguiding youths and duping them on the pretext of providing More On P6

#### Missing Elderly Man Found Dead

SRINAGAR: An elderly man was found dead in a forest area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district on Thursday, over a month after he went missing. The body of Mohammad Ismail Sayal of Chowgam area of Qazigund was found in a forest area in Verinag on Thursday afternoon, reports said. Sayal had gone missing on February 16 after which his family had lodged a missing report with the police. Meanwhile, a police officer said More On P6

#### ACB Raids PCB Office In Srinagar

SRINAGAR: Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday carried out a raid in Sheikh-ul-Alam Complex in Rajbagh area of Srinagar. A local news agency Kashmir News Observer (KNO) quoting unnamed officials reported that the ACB conducted raid in Jammu and Kashmir Pollution Control Board office located at Sheikh-ul-Alam Complex in Rajbagh. Raids were going on when this report was being filed—(KNO)

#### 3 Gamblers Held In Sumbal: Police

SRINAGAR: Three alleged gamblers were arrested in an input driven raid in Shilwat area of north Kashmir's Bandipora district, police said Thursday. Ghulam Rasool Guru, Hial Ahmad Dar and Adil Ahmad Sofi were arrested at Shilwat Bund by the cops of police station Sumbal after receiving an input about gambling activities, a police spokesperson said Thursday. He said playing cards an amount of Rs 15020 was also More On P6

### India Puts Onus On Pakistan

Press Trust Of India

### 226 Militants Killed In J&K Since 2020: CRPF

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on Thursday said 226 militants were killed during operations in Jammu and Kashmir since 2020, while 296 were apprehended. CRPF Director General (DG) Kuldip Singh said stone-pelting incidents in the Kashmir Valley have "reduced drastically", although they have not stopped completely. More On P6

### BJP, Opposition Spar In LS Over J&K Situation

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Lok Sabha Thursday witnessed an intense debate during a discussion on supplementary demands for grants for Jammu and Kashmir with Opposition alleging the situation has worsened there after it was made a union territory, while the ruling BJP asserted the move empowered grassroots democracy and ushered in development.

BJP's Jamyang Tsering Namgyal hailed Prime



Minister Narendra Modi as a "yug purush" for realising the dream of BJP ideologue Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who had opposed special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Initiating the discussion, Congress More On P6

### Law And Order Situation Has Improved: Nirmala

Press Trust Of India

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said law and order situation has improved in Jammu and Kashmir and assembly elections can be held only after completion of the delimitation process. She said abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian More On P6

## Omar Skeptical About Assembly Polls In 2021 Says Party, Not Elections His Priority

Agencies

SRINAGAR: National Conference vice-president and the former chief minister of erstwhile state of J&K Omar Abdullah Thursday said that he doesn't see Assembly elections taking place in 2021.

He, however, said that his priority was not elections but



to strengthen the party at the grassroots level. More On P6

### 'New Delhi Used DDC Polls As Diplomatic Tool'

Agencies

SRINAGAR: National Conference Vice President and former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday accused New Delhi of using DDC elections as "diplomatic tool" More On P6

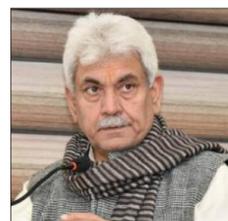
## LG Welcomes Historic Budget For J&K

Says Rs 108621 Crore Budget Surpasses All Previous Allocations

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Thursday expressed gratitude to the Centre for passing yet another historic budget of Rs 1,08,621 crore for the growth and development of the Union Territory.

"I would like to thank the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, Home Minister, Amit Shah, and Finance Minister,



Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman for yet another historic budget with emphasis on the growth and development of Jammu & Kashmir. The Government is committed to invest more money in new More On P6

## SC Lists Plea On Rohingya Refugees Release On March 25

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday said it would hear on March 25 a fresh plea seeking immediate release of detained Rohingya refugees in Jammu and restrain the Centre from implementing any order deporting them to Myanmar. A bench headed by Chief

Justice S A Bobde, which initially observed that there was no urgency, took note of the submissions of lawyer Prashant Bhushan that the detained Rohingyas may be deported to Myanmar where the Army has taken over and violence is taking place. "Ok, then we will hear the Rohingya matter on Thursday," said the bench More On P6

## Govt Calls For Quick Vaccination As Cases Spike

Observer News Service

JAMMU: As coronavirus cases continue to show an upward trend in Jammu and Kashmir, the Union Territory administration on Thursday said that it was ramping up capacity to

administer 3 lakh vaccine doses per day and urged people to get vaccinated quickly. Chairing the third meeting of UT Steering Committee here to review the progress of vaccination drives that were rolled out in More On P6

### 140 New Cases In J&K, 1 Death

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir recorded 140 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, taking the tally to 1,28,097, while one more person succumbed to the pathogen, officials said. Out of the fresh cases, More On P6

## HC Refers Farooq's Plea Against ED Action To Its Division Bench

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Thursday referred to its division bench a petition filed by National Conference President Farooq Abdullah against an order by Enforcement Directorate,

attaching his properties in a case of alleged money laundering. "Having gone through the writ petition as also the judgment of the Coordinate Bench in Ahsan Mirza's case, it can be seen that some of the issues raised by the petitioner (Farooq Abdullah) in More On P6

# Brother's Accidental Death Makes Kashmiri Boy Hit The Roads

Mir Yasir Mukhtar

In 2017, Azaan Bhat was a 19-year-old teenage boy dealing with his share of challenges like others in his age group - mostly wondering about his academic future and the life ahead. But a phone call from his mother in the summer of that year, set the young boy in the drivers' lane where he continues to be slow but sure.

"When I received the call, my mother's exact words were: Oh son! Where are you? Come home quick. Your brother is no more." Azaan, a resident of Harwan in Srinagar, recalls. His cousin, Adnan Bhat, on



July 18 of that year, was riding pillion on a motorbike when the driver while negotiating a blind

curve skidded off the road. The duo on motorbike were grievously injured in the road mishap

and while the driver recuperated at a hospital, Adnan lost his battle with life.

Since 2004, 46 per cent of people, including minors, involved in road mishaps have lost

their lives in Kashmir, according to a survey by the local police.

Kashmir has topped the list of "high accidental death-prone cases" from last decade.

The year 2020, alone had 6120 accidents which caused 8655 injuries and 1073 fatalities due to road accidents.

Azaan says the words of his mother brought his world upside down. "It was of beyond my imagination that the person, I had dinner with a day ago is no more," he recounts the shocking moment of his life with a sad face. "Adnan never used to over speed, and always wore helmet before riding bike," the boy continues with a sigh. "I lost a friend

in my brother and his death has left a deep scar on my heart."

Time healed his scars, but Azaan drew the pivotal lesson from Adnan's death: Life was too valuable to lose to speed.

"I don't want any other family to suffer the same dreadful pain, my family has been through," he says. "I can't see another Adnan because his absence still haunts me."

After passing through the painful time, the 23-year-old along with some like-minded friends finally decided to float a group, with the motto to inform people about the vehicular conduct on roads.

To begin with, it didn't prove a pushover. The More On P6



# Experts, Academics Stress On Social Security, Dignified Care Of Elderly

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Academics and legal experts on Thursday called upon society to ensure social security and dignified care of elderly people.

They were speaking at a day-long online sensitisation-cum-awareness programme titled "Important policies and programmes regarding geriatric care in India", organised jointly by the varsity's Department of Sociology, National Institute of Social Defense of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and 'Anugraha', a noted national-level Non-Governmental Organisation.

Dean of Research at KU Prof Shakil

A Romshoo, who was the chief guest on the occasion, in a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), underscored the importance of organising such collaborative programmes to address issues and concerns related to the elderly people.

He urged academics and young scholars to conduct research on various dimensions associated with care of elderly people and come up with some concrete suggestions for their welfare and betterment.

In her welcome address, Dr Aabha Chaudhary, Chairperson 'Anugraha' welcomed the resource persons and highlighted the importance of such sensitisation programmes. She also high-

lighted the work being undertaken by her NGO for the elderly people.

Prof Aneesa Shafi, Head, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir and Prof Sheikh Showkat Hussain, former Dean and Head, Department of Law, Central University of Kashmir were the chief resource persons for the sensitisation programme.

Prof Shafi gave a sociological perspective of the elderly population and ageing while bringing forth the marginalization and estrangement problems they face within the families and in the society at large. She also stressed on developing an alternative mechanism to ensure the social security of the elderly

owing to their increasing population and changing social settings.

Prof Hussain highlighted physical, psychological and emotional problems of the elderly population as a result of institutional stratification, nuclear families and technological advancements.

"There is an adequate legal framework for taking care of such problems but law has a limited role. The main onus of tackling this problem lies on society as a whole," he said.

The day-long programme was attended by officers from the central government, J&K UT, lawyers, doctors and students from the university and various colleges.

## Mohammad Aijaz Assumes Charge As DC Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Mohammad Aijaz Asad Thursday assumed charge as Deputy Commissioner Srinagar taking over from Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary who was accorded warm farewell in a function at DC Office here.

Handing over the charge to him, Dr Shahid said Mohammad Aijaz Asad is one of the most professional and committed officers and that he was very happy to hand over this very important charge to him.

He also expressed his gratitude to the gathering of officers and officials and thanked them for their love and respect he was accorded on the occasion.

Mohammad Aijaz Asad while speaking on the occasion said he was honoured to take over as the DC of the historic and capital district of Srinagar. He praised the outgoing DC for the high standard of administration he has left in his wake



and also thanked him for his words of praise.

While addressing the district administration staff present on the occasion he said he expects complete dedication to professionalism and commitment to work from all officers and officials and assured them of his complete support to honest work endeavours aimed at prompt work disposal and development of the district.

ADCs Mohammad Haneef Balkhi, Khurshid Ahmad Shah, SDMs East and West Owais Mushtaq and Akshay Labroo, ACR Rouf Rehman, Chief Planning Officer Srinagar Mohammad Yaseen Lone and other officers and officials of the district administration were present on the occasion.

## PIB Srinagar Conducts IMPCC Meeting

Observer News Service

Srinagar- Inter Media Publicity Coordination Committee (IMPCC) meeting of the various units of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) and other Central Government organisations was organised by Press Information Bureau (PIB) Srinagar today via online mode.

The meeting was chaired by Additional Director General (Region) PIB Northern Region Devpreet Singh.

Singh said that different media units under MIB have been regularly disseminating information about the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination drive and various aspects of COVID-19 appropriate behaviour. She referred to the recent resurgence of COVID as a matter of grave concern and said that awareness among masses needs to be disseminated at grass-root level. She also highlighted the activities of various MIB units regarding special programmes of the Government of India.

Programme Head, All India Radio

(AIR) Srinagar, Rabia Rasool spoke about multitude of programmes related to Covid vaccination and precautions. She further added that the department has been active in holding interviews with health experts on regular basis to clear any misconceptions regarding the vaccination drive. She said that such programs are being aired in all the local dialects to maximise the reach.

Presenting an overview of the activities of Regional Outreach Bureau (ROB) J&K and PIB Jammu, Neha Jalali, Deputy Director, highlighted the various initiatives taken by the two departments throughout Jammu and Kashmir. She said ROB has been regularly conducting events like webinars and exhibitions besides using presence on social media to propagate messages on various themes related to COVID and other programmes like Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.

Ramesh Raina, Deputy Director News, Regional News Unit AIR

and DD Jammu, said that AIR aired programmes related to Covid appropriate awareness among people and also focussed on vaccination drive, taking interviews of eminent doctors and citizens who got vaccinated. In addition to this programs related to Poshan Pakhwada are covered in co-ordination with PIB and DIPR.

Program Head, All India Radio Jammu, Renu Raina said that special programs on Republic day and PM Sehat initiative were given due coverage. Frequent jingles in different dialects for Covid SOP, traffic awareness and other programs of current importance were broadcast regularly.

Sunil Koul, Assistant Director, Regional Unit Srinagar said that interviews of health officials to clear doubts about Covid vaccination were aired in different regional dialects. He also said that the station broadcasts a grievance redressal program 'shahar shahar manzar' in order to cater to the problems faced by the people living in different areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

Jammu & Kashmir

## Road Transport Corporation, Srinagar

Reference: Date Extension ENIT No: - 28 of 2021-22 Dated:24-02-2021

CORRIGENDUM E- NIT No: - 28 of 2021-22 Dated:24-02-2021  
FOR SUPPLY OF SPARES THROUGH DPC II.

Due to poor response for the above ENIT as advertised in the aforementioned E-NIT the last date of uploading the bid has been extended upto 06-04-2021 @ 2.00 P.M

Rest of terms and conditions shall remain same as already uploaded in the website. www.jkntenders.gov.in.

DIPK-NB-6501/20

Sd/-  
Manager (P&S)  
JKRTC, Srinagar.

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

## OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION GANDEBAL

SHORT TERM NIT NO. 211/2020-21

DATED:15.03.2021

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, sealed tenders affixed with Rs.5/- Revenue stamps are invited from the approved/ registered PWD Contractors/SHG's for the works as indicated below which should reach the office of the "Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Gandebal" on before 22.03.2021 Upto 2:00 P.M.

The tenders/ bids will be opened on the same day or any other day convenient in presence of the contractors who may like to be present.

S.No	Name of the work	Estt. Cost (Rs in lacs)	Cost of Tender document	Time of completion	Class of contractor	Major Head of Account
1	Necessary Repairs of washroom at Zonal Agricultural Office Kullan.	Rs. 0.99 Lacs	200/=	04 days	DEE	

### Terms & Conditions:-

- The bidders shall be at liberty to send their bids either in person or through registered post but shall super scribe the following in front of the envelopes. i) Name of work ii) Cost of work iii) Full name of Contractor iv) Ref. to CDR No. & Date v) Date of receipt of tenders vi) Ref. to NIT No.
- The bidders should address their tenders to "Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Gandebal".
- Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Gandebal (tender inviting authority) (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date) pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Gandebal (tender receiving authority).
- All Bidders has to submit Bid Security Declaration Form instead of Earnest money as per the circular of Finance Department (Bid Security Declaration Form is as per Annexure "A" below)
- The 1<sup>st</sup> lowest Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 3% of contract as performance security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG within 02 Days before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of work.
- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jkntenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Gandebal (tender receiving authority).
- The bids for the work/works in the form of "TENDER BOOK LET FORM/TENDER DOCUMENTS" shall be issued by this office 19.03.2021 to 20-03-2021 till 14:00 hours against cash payment (Non-refundable)/Treasury Challan pledged to Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Gandebal duly filed and completed in all respects by attaching Valid Registration Card with Renewal, PAN Card/ TIN Number along with latest Sales Tax clearance certificate/ acknowledgement receipt of Sales Tax return file.
- The Bidder should upload and also furnish in hard copy "The Latest Self Attested Certificate by the bidders to the effect that he has no Sales Tax Liability/arrears." should be attached with tender on or before the receiving date i.e. 22/03/2021 upto 2:00 PM. Any bid received after the deadline date and time shall be returned unopened to the bidder.
- The bidder is required to deposit the Earnest Money in the shape of Call Deposit Receipt of a scheduled Bank pledged to Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Gandebal and Postal Order equal to Tender Document cost shall be attached with the tender, without which the tender shall not be considered at all. Bids accompanied with cash/ cheques will not be entertained in any case.
- The released CDRs attached with tenders cannot be entertained. The tenders having attached released CDRs shall be totally rejected.
- The tenderer may in his own interest inspect the site and its surroundings as also means or access to site and satisfy himself before tendering as to the nature of grounds eremitic condition the form and nature of site.
- Each page of tender documents should be signed by the tenderer or his authorized representative(s) otherwise tenders shall be rejected.
- The rates quoted by the tenderer with two inks shall not be entertained and be rejected.
- All other terms, conditions are as per PWD Form-25 (Double agreement Form).
- All the conditions and rules laid down by the Government regarding registration and classifications of contractor will be binding upon the intending tenderer.

No:17927-36  
Dt:15.03.2021

DIPK-15304/20

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE LT.GOVERNOR  
Union Territory of JAMMU AND KASHMIR,  
Executive Engineer,  
(R&B) Division Gandebal

### DIAL-EMMA



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

### AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

### RAILWAYS

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

### HIGHWAY STATUS

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



HIJRI  
CALENDAR  
04 SHABAN  
1442

### PRAYERS

FAJR	5:15
ZUHR	12:40
ASR	4:59
Magrib	6:45
ISHA	8:05

## This Day In History

- 1984 - STS 41-C vehicle moves to launch pad
- 1991 - Gorbachev says the Soviet Union will cut its oil exports by nearly half
- 2002 - U.S. invasion of Afghanistan: Operation Anaconda ends (started on March 2) after killing 500 Taliban and al Qaeda fighters with 11 allied troop fatalities
- Invasion of Iraq
- 2003 - Airstrikes by an American and British-led coalition signal the beginning of the invasion of Iraq, without United Nations support and in defiance of world opinion
- 2012 Wendy's overtakes Burger King to become the second best-selling hamburger chain
- 2013 - 27 people are killed and 14 are injured in a bus crash in Maharashtra, India
- 2013 - 16 people are killed by mudslides in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 2013 - NASA's Mars rover Curiosity discovers further evidence of water-bearing minerals
- 2014 - Russia captures the Ukrainian naval base in Sevastopol
- 2014 - Israel sends airforce against Syrian military units involved in an attack yesterday on an Israeli patrol in the Golan Heights

From KO Archives

## Peace road carries hopes of millions

Sheikh Mushtaq

KAMANPOST - The automatic rifles have given way to spades and shovels, heavy artillery to earth movers and soldiers to construction workers. Troops in divided Kashmir are working frantically to convert what was a mine-infested dirt track on one of the world's most heavily militarized frontiers into a peace road connecting the Indian and Pakistani sectors by bus.

The hopes of millions of Kashmiris are riding on the success of the project, one of the most tangible signs of a fledgling peace after decades of enmity.

Agreement to launch the bus service has stoked huge anticipation on both sides, with people separated from their families for decades lining up in their hundreds for travel permits to make 105-mile journey.

"I am really very excited," said Ghulam Mohammad Lolabi, 83, flashing a victory sign in Muzaffarabad, capital of Pakistani Kashmir, after grabbing an application form for the permit.

"Many of my relatives' living there (in Indian Kashmir) have died," he said. "But I hope I can see those who are alive."

Construction of the road began after nuclear-armed India and Pakistan agreed in February to launch an historic bus service between the two Kashmiris, divided by a half-century-old military cease-fire line. The service 'it is hoped, will bolster the peace process between the South Asian rivals, whose competing claims over Kashmir have led to two of their three wars since independence in 1947. They went to the brink of another war in 2002.

The 15-year insurgency in which tens of thousands of people have died in Kashmir has also held back peace efforts. India accuses Pakistan of aiding the Guerrillas but Islamabad says the insurgency is an indigenous movement

### RECONNECTING THE PAST

This month, Indian and Pakistani soldiers removed all land mines on the track, which was last used by a bus in 1948, ahead of the launch of the bus service on April 7. "The entire road has been demined. It is now safe for journey," Lieutenant-General Hari Prasad, who heads the Indian army's northern command, said at Kaman Post, the last border post on the Indian side.

"We look at it as a very good step toward normalization of relations between India and Pakistan," he said. "This is going to be the biggest confidence-building measure so far. Buses will man between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar restoring a service cut after the first war over Kashmir in 1947-48. A heavily mined 460-mile cease-fire line has divided the scenic region ever since.

The bus service is the latest in a series of gestures between the neighbors to build trust since they embarked on a fresh peace drive in 2003. A cease-fire has largely held since that year.

This week, visiting journalists saw hundreds of Indian m Pakistani workers laying stones and rebuilding the last stretches of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road.

The cease-fire line at Kaman Post is marked by a small stream surrounded by towering mountains. A wooden bridge over the stream was blown up during the 1947-48 war and the remaining four piers are a symbol of the regions lustal of division - two piers belong to India and two to Pakistan

Laborers of the two countries were strengthening the lira pillar on their respective sides ahead of building a new bridge. As workers raced to finish the job, Indian and Pakistani soldiers stood relaxed around the area, a far cry from the daily artillery and gunfire exchanges prior to the cease-fire.

"Everything will be ready before March 31, even before that," Sardar Mohammad Rahim, a senior government official in Muzaffarabad told Reuters.

(Kashmir Observer, 19 March, 2005)

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

The candidates whose photograph is published in this notice is claiming to have lost the original marks certificate of 12th under Below mentioned particulars Name Tariq Ahmad Sheikh

Fathers Name Gh Mohi-ud-Din Sheikh  
Mothers Name Pinjoora (KAWARHAMA Tangmarg B1a  
Details of Marks Certificate Lost



Secondary School Examination (Class 10th)  
Roll No 373229 Session /Year 2002  
DOB 04-02-1985

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

Sd/ Assistant Secretary  
Sub Office Baramulla

bmg

از نیابت درگولہ با اجلاس ایگزیکٹو مجسٹریٹ دیوبند اول  
عنوان: مضمون درخواست ممتازہ بانو و سفینہ بانو و یاسمینہ بانو و ساقبہ بشیر اولادان بشیر احمد گوجر ساکنہ کیرگام برادر عطا علی ST  
اشتہار برادر آگاہی ہر خاص و عام  
معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں سائل نے ایک درخواست برادر ST پیش کی ہے۔ جو کہ فتر ہذا میں زیر کاروائی ہے اس ضمن میں پٹواری حلقہ سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی ہے جس سے عیاں ہے کہ سائل واقعی گوجر ذات سے تعلق رکھتا ہے اور کبھی بھی ترک سکونت نہیں کی ہے۔ سرٹیفکیٹ زیر بحث ادا کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ ایم کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہو گا۔

سائل  
نائب تحصیلدار درگولہ

از نیابت درگولہ با اجلاس ایگزیکٹو مجسٹریٹ دیوبند اول  
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KO VIEW

## Signs of thaw

In fresh overture to India to resume dialogue on Kashmir, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said India will be benefitted economically by having peace with his country as it will be able to directly access Central Asia through it. Delivering the inaugural address at the launch of the two-day Islamabad Security Dialogue, Khan, however, said that "India will have to take the first step" for the dialogue with Pakistan. "Unless they do so, we cannot do much," he said.

Earlier last month, India had said that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence. But India also put the onus on Pakistan to create a conducive atmosphere for the engagement.

The signs of thaw between the neighbours began emerging in January when Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa had called for resolving the Kashmir issue in a "dignified and peaceful manner" between India and Pakistan, saying it was "time to extend a hand of peace in all directions". Ever since the two countries have reaffirmed their 2003 ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control and signalled building on it to discuss the other issues dividing them.

It remains to be seen what shape the engagement between the neighbours takes in near future. Or whether they are able engage at all. Khan has not let it be known what kind of concession he wants from India before the talks start. Pakistan has earlier been insisting that India first restore the Article 370 for the talks to start, which seems improbable. Some media reports in India have also been suggesting that Islamabad wants restoration of the J&K statehood for the engagement to resume. But there has been no such indication from New Delhi. It seems unlikely that India would give statehood back to J&K until delimitation commission completes its exercise of creating more Assembly constituencies for Jammu.

At the same time, the shifting geo-politics of the region makes it urgent for India and Pakistan to sort out their relationship. China's incursions in Ladakh have made the communist power as yet another party to the issue. And the alleged China-Pakistan collusion in the region has erected what some observers in Kashmir think 'a great wall of China' around India on its northern and western side. Also the cooperation among China, Pakistan, Iran, Russia is giving all indications of emergence of a geopolitical block. And if all goes well Afghanistan under Taliban could also be part of this block.

These shifting alignments are putting in place a new geopolitical order. This order, however, in no way will help resolve the issues of the subcontinent particularly those between India and Pakistan. That is, if the two countries themselves don't show a willingness to address these. And this needs to be done before the two countries get sucked into the emerging new cold war.

OTHER OPINION

## In J&K, the unfinished democratic agenda

Over 20 foreign diplomats are in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), meeting political and civil society stakeholders and assessing the ground situation in the Union Territory (UT). The Centre has organised the visit — this is the third such batch of diplomats — to showcase its claims of normalcy and progress in J&K, 18 months after the decision to effectively abrogate Article 370, bifurcate the erstwhile state, and turn it into a UT. In the aftermath of the August 2019 move, there was widespread international concern over the detention of leaders, a crackdown on connectivity and rights, and the implications for regional geopolitics and security. The government has, since then, substantially restored connectivity, released key regional leaders, including former chief ministers, and held local body elections, which saw the participation of mainstream Kashmiri forces. With this, the government believes that its move to overhaul the constitutional status of J&K is slowly paying dividends.

The Centre's willingness to both open up democratic space in J&K and engage with foreign interlocutors on the issue is positive — though it would have been more credible if the diplomats were allowed to meet diverse stakeholders, including those who operate within the Indian Constitution, but are sharply critical of the Centre's policies. More importantly, the task of restoring democracy in J&K remains unfinished.

First, the government must prioritise the protection of civil liberties — do remember that juxtaposing liberty against security only breeds alienation, and while there must be no let-up in countering terrorism, ensuring citizens in J&K enjoy the same rights as citizens elsewhere in India, at all times, is important. Second, it must recognise that the situation remains politically fragile. The mood in the Valley, as reflected in the local elections and the support garnered by the Gupkar alliance, remains one of distrust of the Centre and its moves. One way to address this is by beginning the process of restoring statehood — home minister Amit Shah said this would be done at an "appropriate time"; that time should come sooner rather than later. This then will enable the third step — free and fair elections to the assembly elections, with widespread participation and legitimacy. For the sake of Indian democracy, pluralism, and its own image globally, the Centre must focus on the twin tasks of both managing peace and cementing democracy.

Hindustan Times



# India and the Great Game

The country's uniqueness lies in democracy; a multicultural, multireligious secularism; and in its mixed-market economy

N.V. SUBRAMANIAN

**“The world has three more-or-less equal powers and one of them straddles India's northeastern borders. India's security hitherto lay in being a status-quo power. Changing the status quo has driven the country into a cul-de-sac**

The secretive India-Pakistan negotiations for the border ceasefire raise perplexing questions. Scoring in propaganda, the Pakistan army publicized the ceasefire before India could state soberly that it was a joint decision. Veterans of the government linked the ceasefire to the Joe Biden administration's desire to draw India and Pakistan together as it takes on its rivals, China and Russia, but the reaction of the United States of America came later than usual.

The question is this. Would rededication to the ceasefire owed to the statesmanship of the former prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, be a self-contained exercise or catalyse negotiations on Kashmir and other issues? In February, the Pakistan army chief spoke of resolving Kashmir "in a dignified and peaceful manner". Viewing the ceasefire as an Indian concession, Pakistan would now expect movement on Kashmir. Before this, India refused any common ground till Pakistan's "cross-border terrorism" in Jammu and Kashmir ceased. Since the 2016 Indian counterstrike on Pakistan's border posts and the Balakot air attack in 2019, New Delhi has continuously weighed military options to neutralise Pakistan's 'State policy' of terrorism. In a noteworthy change, the second anniversary of the Balakot strike on February 26 passed uncelebrated; this is unusual for an overtly nationalistic regime.

While the Biden administration may indeed have wrought India's change of heart, the ground has also shifted unfavourably for New Delhi. Since last summer's border clashes between Indian and Chinese soldiers, China has successfully merged expansion with negotiations. The anti-China Quad with the US, Japan and Australia is a non-starter. 'Trusted friend' Russia decries Quad and puts China ahead of India to counter US and Western antagonism towards Vladimir Putin's hard rule. Russia has its own problems with India's proximity to the US post the Cold War and since the 1991 market reforms. With the reforms enriching India, Russia is transactional, no longer memorable as the Cold War ally of Bangladesh's creation and

extorts in defence deals. Since Pakistan abuts oil-and-gas-rich Middle East and is pivotal to Afghanistan's geopolitics, Russia accommodates Islamabad and pays lip-service to India's concerns. Although India is part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Russia, China and Pakistan form their own club in it.

In the best of times, India has had to balance relations with all. Jawaharlal Nehru understood the nature of the Indian State and gave it Non-Alignment. Its geography denies alliances. It is not in the Asia-Pacific to where growth has shifted from the West since

steadily with reforms. India was almost able to escape its geographical confines. No longer.

The world is not where it was six years ago when India could profitably engage with it. Donald Trump's narrow nationalism and white supremacist presidency have eroded US preponderance versus authoritarian powers like China and Russia. Chinese programmes like 'Made in China 2025' and the 'Belt and Road Initiative' prepare it to lead the world in technology, innovation and infrastructure-building. Russia has joined its Great Power advantages with

**“In the best of times, India has had to balance relations with all. Jawaharlal Nehru understood the nature of the Indian State and gave it Non-Alignment**

the 1980s. It is not linked by land or religion to the Middle East, which, with North Africa and Turkey, has weighed on Europe's strategic consciousness.

India's uniqueness lies in democracy; a multicultural, multireligious secularism; and in its mixed-market economy. These assets transcend its geopolitical disadvantages. This was the settled position till six years ago when the political, social, economic and strategic coordinates of the country were changed to fit a narrow nationalistic ideology and base.

Although the changes were internal and unstoppable, it manifested in the internal-external realm before long. On August 5, 2019, Article 370 and aligned laws for Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomy were scrapped. The next day, China was tacitly warned from the Lok Sabha to vacate Indian territories. The rest, as they say, is history.

The present government certainly inherited the China, Pakistan and Kashmir problems. But it also made them worse with ultra-nationalism. Sooner or later, internal turmoil reflects internationally. Pre-2014 India posed no threat to peace in the neighbourhood and beyond. The world was happy for democratic, secular India growing

China in a new Cold War against the West. Brexit UK is floundering while continental Europe has tied its future with China and — covertly — with Russia.

It is not apparent whether India has understood the profound changes in world politics stuck in failed and self-defeating mantras like autarky and nationalism and encouraging religious divisions in citizens and minority persecution. The world has three more-or-less equal powers and one of them straddles India's northeastern borders. India's security hitherto lay in being a status-quo power. Changing the status quo has driven the country into a cul-de-sac.

All three Great Powers want India-Pakistan peace, with the US resolve being the weightiest. Even without that, the border ceasefire is overdue. There's no miracle cure for the self-inflicted wounds of Kashmir or the gratuitously destroyed ties with China and it hasn't helped to reduce the country to an India-Pakistan binary. The ceasefire is expected to follow a natural course and if it returns India to pre-2014 peace and stability, no one should cavil.

Telegraph India



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## Capacity Building and Training for Women's Safety

The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and should not be viewed in isolation as a women's issue for social justice. They are the only way to create a sustainable, just, and developed society. However, persistent patriarchal mentality and prejudice against gender equality will lead to poor recognition of women's rights; as it has been behind.

Regarding the deep-seated bias and poor recognition of women's rights in India, the Economic Survey 2018 noted that the desire for a male child has given birth to 21 million "unwanted" girls between 0 and 25 years old in India. According to the latest health index released by the

NITI Aayog, India's sex ratio at birth has declined in 17 of the 21 large states. This indicates a failure in the country's ability to curb female selective abortions after illegal sex disclosure.

As recently as March 2020, there were cases of infanticide in Usilampati, Tamil Nadu. The deeply ingrained bias ironically suggests that it exists against genuine equality between both men and women. According to PISA test data, the notion that "boys are better at math" is unfounded. Yet this belief still exists. Crimes against women increased from 3,793 per million in 2016 to 3,886 per million in 2017, according to the NCRB report. Uttar Pradesh topped the list with 56,011 cases followed by Maharashtra.

In the corporate world, women still earn an average of 79 percent of men, who hold only 5 percent of the Fortune 500 CEO positions and represent an average of 17 percent of global board positions. Women lack access to informal networks that provide opportunities to work in high-profile projects, including attending conferences abroad or job opportunities. Early marriage, with or without the consent of the girl, is a form of violence, as it impairs the health and autonomy of millions of girls.

It is important to develop and implement policies that promote gender equality by creating and enforcing laws to protect women, as well as marriage, divorce and custody laws, inheritance laws, and the elimination of

discrimination against women in property ownership. For financial freedom, improving access to paid employment to women and ensuring equal pay for equal work is extremely important.

However, women-centric development plans have been made due to gender-based budgets. The plan for safe cities to improve crime monitoring data collection system on violence against women and use of Nirbhaya Fund for better protection of women. Capacity building and training of service providers and law enforcement officers to handle cases of violence against women is of utmost importance at the nationwide level for women's safety.

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## Mindful Fridays

## Onset of Mental Health Crisis: Changing the Conversation in Pandemic times

JITAMANYU SAHOO &  
SYED MUJTABA HUSSAIN

**Mental health problems, depression, anxiety and so on are conversations which the society till now is not willing to engage with and take note of. The individuals going through the traumatic experience are categorized as weak, attention seeking and they need to toughen up. This belief which lingers on in a community is one of the central reasons why stigma is attached to mental health education**

The current pandemic situation across the globe has accentuated the pre-existing trend of mental health issues to the global forefront. What is more alarming is most of the world is under complete or partial lockdown and people living or developing mental health issues are unable to access the basic treatment. The emergence of mental health issues which is visible now in the low and middle income countries and its address has been thwarted by the pandemic on the run.

The COVID-19 as it unfolds is going to have lasting and profound effects on mental health. Under the sub-text of 'Changing the Conversation' we would be writing a series of articles on how to put forward a public health response on mental health challenges from different vantage points. The deniability of mental health treatments to individuals and vulnerable groups is due to lack of awareness and stigma attached to it. This stigma multiplies over a period of time having an enduring effect on mental health. Moreover, absence of coherent data, form, extent, duration and distribution has led to difficulties in mitigating the mental health issues now. Here, we look at the onset of mental health problems which are looming before us and how we must start a conversation.

**Distress, Disorders and Disabilities**

There is no health without mental health. A healthy person should have a healthy mind. A healthy person should be able to think clearly. A healthy person should be able to find solutions to her problem. A healthy person should be able to have good relations and be satisfied. It is in these essential aspects of our health which is known as mental health. Prof. Vikram Patel (one of the leading psychiatrist of the world) says mental health problem is 'a problem experienced by a person which affects their emotions, thoughts or behaviour, which is out of keeping with their cultural beliefs and personality, and which is producing a negative effect on their lives or the lives of their families.' The way a physical body can be ill, the mind too can be ill.

However, it is important to understand there is severity in which mental health problems can be categorized as it affects the impact of the individual.

- Distress is the most common type of mental health problem. Distress is characterised by a mixture of different complaints (such as feeling sad, worried, tense or angry), often of short duration, and in response to difficulties in one's life (such as the loss of a loved one).

- Disorder is a more severe, but less common, type of mental health problem. Disorders are characterised by more clearly defined groups of complaints which can be classified using a medical diagnosis, typically of a longer duration than distress, and not necessarily associated with, or explained by, difficulties in one's life.

- Disability is the most severe, and least common, type of mental health problem. Disabilities are characterised by enduring impairments in a person's daily functioning (e.g. the ability to communicate with others) and may be present from birth or very early childhood, or appear later in life as a consequence of a mental disorder.



The categories lay emphasis as Prof. Patel highlights on mental health problems which can be suspected and thrive on an individual even in the absence of physical disease.

**Identification and Assessment of mental health problems**

According to the survey conducted by The Indian Psychiatry Society after 21 days of the lockdown in India revealed a 20 percent rise in mental health cases. This survey has raised pertinent questions on the need for early recognition of mental health issues during a health crisis and the consequences for the person affected by it. Can we say that the rapid propagation of online surveys which claim some representation and media attention captured atleast the broader mental health problem during the pandemic? How can the value of the data collected through the samples be measured against the use of the data? Does larger sample sizes in identifying the mental health issues solve the biases attached?

There is inter-dependency on how we identify the mental health problems and which lead to timely assessment and treatment. The causes of identification problems include lack of knowledge of health and social care staff, about the symptoms (be it emotional, cognitive, behavioral or perceptual), not addressing the learning and physical disabilities, lack of information being shared among peers and difficulties for an individual to communicate her distress. Since the identification of the mental health problems is impaired; assessment and resource allocation becomes ineffective. We need now comprehensive evidence through surveys with detailed sample strategy which is currently unavailable to mitigate the mental health challenges before us today.

**Starting the Conversation**

Mental health problems, depression, anxiety

and so on are conversations which the society till now is not willing to engage with and take note of. The individuals going through the traumatic experience are categorized as weak, attention seeking and they need to toughen up. This belief which lingers on in a community is one of the central reasons why stigma is attached to mental health education.

In this health crisis another crisis of mental health has emerged. How do you start a conversation in this pervasive atmosphere? The community needs to be receptive and take the initiative. If someone you know, or even don't know needs assistance and to have a conversation ask them "Are you OK?", "I've got time to talk" "So tell me about..?" "Lots of people go through this sort of thing. Getting help will make it easier" "There are people that can help. Have you thought of visiting your doctor?"

Moreover, the role of family members and caregivers becomes paramount to identify for instance the behavior, signs of distress, loss of skills or onset of cognitive systems. Since family is the first point of contact to an individual, when families raise concern the treatment by paid career or psychologist could be carried out. The lockdown due to pandemic have forced the persistence of mental health problems and denied access to diagnostic interventions. But community and family can be integrated to promote mental health at all levels of care.

We can and must do better.

*Views expressed in the article are the author's own responsibility and are strictly for educational purposes only. These are not a substitute for medical advice*

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The event of al-Isra wal Mi'raj was one of the miracles of the noble Messenger (pbuh) that occurred in the twelfth year of his prophetic mission in Makkah. Before we discuss the circumstances in which it occurred, let us recall what the noble Qur'an says about this great event in Prophetic history. There are two aspects intimately linked with each other. The Prophet's Isra (nightly journey) from Masjid al Haram in Makkah to Masjid al Aqsa in Jerusalem (Al-Quds) is narrated in the first ayah of Surah al-Isra (aka Surah Bani Isra'il).

The ayah says: "Limitless in His glory is He [Allah] Who transported His servant by night from the Inviolable House of Worship [at Makkah] to the Remote House of Worship [at Jerusalem]—the environs of which We had blessed—so that We might show him some of Our symbols; for, verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-seeing" (17:01).

According to Prophetic narration, he (pbuh) led all the earlier prophets in prayer at the location where the Masjid al Aqsa stands today in Jerusalem (Al-Quds). The Dome of the Rock, a more imposing structure that is usually confused with Masjid al Aqsa, identifies the spot where the heavenly steed, Buraq, was tethered. From Al-Quds, the noble Messenger ascended to Heaven. This is referred to as al-Mi'raj. Its details are narrated in Surah An-Najm.

Muslims took possession of Jerusalem in 638 CE from the Christian Pontiff Sophronius. Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) was the Khalifah of the Muslims. He personally went to Jerusalem to take possession of the keys to the city. With Muslim rule, Jerusalem and the whole of Palestine (the holy land) witnessed the flowering of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Unfortunately, Jerusalem was lost to the Crusaders in the year 1099CE because of Muslim infighting in and around Palestine, much like today. However, under the command of Salahuddin Ayyubi, Muslim fighters reclaimed Jerusalem in 1187CE. It was the 27th night in the month of Rajab. This is the night in which the Prophet's (pbuh) Isra wal Mi'raj had occurred. We are in the month of Rajab, one of the sacred months in Islam, and 27th of Rajab will fall on March 10-11, 2021. In an interesting episode, Salahuddin's army was camped on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It was the night of 27th Rajab. He instructed his commander to visit the tents of all the soldiers. Those involved in worship during the night would participate in the operation to liberate Jerusalem the next day. The sleeping soldiers were to be excluded from battle. Allah granted the Muslim army victory because they were truly committed to His cause.

## Isra wal Mi'raj

ZAFAR BANGASH



**Life for the Palestinians is extremely harsh. They are boxed in from all sides. On the occasion of the celebration of Isra wal Mi'raj, Muslims would do well to remember the suffering of the Palestinian people, the illegal occupation of Masjid al Aqsa as well as of Palestine and think of ways to liberate them**

Let us briefly recall the circumstances in Makkah that preceded the great event of al-Isra wal Mi'raj. For 12 years, the noble Messenger (pbuh) had delivered the message of Islam to the people of Makkah but only a handful from among the 5,000 or so inhabitants accepted Islam. Most of them were downtrodden people: slaves, the poor and weak and women. The Makkkan elite subjected Muslims to intense persecution. About 100 men and women were forced to seek refuge with the Christian ruler in Abyssinia across the Red Sea.

The three years from the seventh to the 10th of

his mission in Makkah were extremely difficult. Muslims were isolated in Sh'ab Abi Talib, a ravine outside Makkah where they were completely besieged. In the 10th year when the siege ended, the Prophet (pbuh) lost two of his closest supporters: his beloved wife Khadijah (ra) who had comforted and supported him throughout their married life, and his uncle Abu Talib who had protected him from the wrath of the Makkkan mushriks.

Abu Lahab, another uncle of the Prophet, succeeded Abu Talib as chief of the Banu Hashim clan to which the Prophet belonged. Abu Lahab was a

cruel man and a staunch enemy of the Prophet. Far from protecting his nephew, he joined the Makkkan mushriks in tormenting him. It was in these circumstances that the Prophet (pbuh) decided to go to Taif, located some 40 kms from Makkah in the hope that the Hawazin and Banu Thaqif tribes might accept the message of Islam.

Unfortunately, the Taif chiefs proved even more hostile. Not only did they reject the message of Islam, they also set the hooligans of the town upon the Prophet who pelted him with stones causing massive injuries and profuse bleeding. These were the most difficult and trying times for the noble Messenger (pbuh). He felt most vulnerable with few supporters around him.

It was in these trying circumstances that Allah honoured him with Isra and Mi'raj. Through Isra (nightly journey from Masjid al Haram to Masjid al Aqsa), Allah granted him the leadership of all the Prophets. In Mi'raj, Allah honoured him by revealing the mysteries of Heaven and took him to Sidratul Muntaha (highest point in the cosmos). He returned with the five daily Salat as a gift of Mi'raj.

Every year, Muslims celebrate the event of Isra wal Mi'raj. Often, this great event is marked by describing the miraculous nature of the nightly journey. While important, the more relevant message of this great event would be to recount the circumstances in which it occurred. Today, Muslims are facing very similar challenges. Masjid al Aqsa as well as the whole of Palestine are under Zionist occupation. Palestinians—Muslims and Christians—are greatly tormented. Thousands of Palestinians have been killed and are being killed on a daily basis. They are evicted from their homes at gunpoint. Night raids on their homes are routine. Some 4,200 Palestinians, including women and children, languish in Israeli prisons. They face physical as well as sexual abuse. The Israeli court system is totally rigged to support the occupier's policies.

Life for the Palestinians is extremely harsh. They are boxed in from all sides. On the occasion of the celebration of Isra wal Mi'raj, Muslims would do well to remember the suffering of the Palestinian people, the illegal occupation of Masjid al Aqsa as well as of Palestine and think of ways to liberate them.

That would be a far more productive way to celebrate this great event in Prophetic history.

*Zafar Bangash is Director of the Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought*

*Crescent International*

## Pak Army Chief

to take the first step. Unless they do so, we cannot do much," Khan said while delivering the inaugural address at the launch of the two-day Dialogue.

Khan said that having a direct route to the Central Asia region will economically benefit India. Central Asia is rich in oil and gas.

Central Asia, in the modern context, generally includes five resource-rich countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

In his address, Gen Bajwa also said that peace between Pakistan and India would help to "unlock the potential of South and Central Asia" by ensuring connectivity between East and West Asia.

The powerful army, which has ruled Pakistan for more than half of its 73 years of existence, has hitherto wielded considerable power in the matters of security and foreign policy.

Their remarks came weeks after the militaries of India and Pakistan announced on February 25 that they have agreed to strictly observe all agreements on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir and other sectors.

India and Pakistan signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003, but it had hardly been followed in letter and spirit over the past several years with more violations than observance of the pact.

"Our neighbour will have to create a conducive environment, particularly in Kashmir, Gen Bajwa said in his address, adding that any effort to improve ties without addressing the core issue would be vulnerable to external political factors.

"The Kashmir issue is at the heart of this. It is important to understand that without the resolution of the Kashmir dispute through peaceful means, the process will always remain susceptible to derailment to politically motivated bellicosity, he said.

Though, both Prime Minister Khan and Gen Bajwa didn't specify the minimum steps that India should take but many experts in Pakistan believe that some positive measures in Kashmir could ease pressure on the Pakistan government before entering into talks or restoring the normal diplomatic ties.

Gen Bajwa also talked about poverty which he said was linked with the regional tension that had hindered the regional connectivity and integration.

"Despite being impoverished, we end up spending a lot of our money on defence, which naturally comes at the expense of human development," he said.

However, he added that Pakistan was resisting the temptation to become part of the arms race or increase defence budget despite rising security challenges.

"This has not been easy, especially when you live in a hostile and unstable neighbourhood. But having said that, let me say that we are ready to improve our environment by resolving all our outstanding issues with our neighbours through dialogue in a dignified and peaceful manner," he said.

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

The relations further deteriorated after India announced withdrawing special powers of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcation of the state into two union territories in August, 2019.

Talking about the concept of national security, Gen Bajwa said that it was not just about protecting countries from an external and internal threat.

"Today, the leading drivers of change in the world are demography, economy and technology. However, one issue that remains central to this concept is economic security and cooperation, he said.

He said that since national security involved ensuring human security, national progress and development, it was not solely the function of the armed forces and required a national effort to safeguard a nation.

## India Puts

dialogue and the recent ceasefire agreement between two sides besides the dialogue in the past six years.

Muraleedharan in a written reply said that both India and Pakistan have agreed to the strict observance of all agreements of cease firing with effect from the midnight of 25 February.

Muraleedharan said that during the visit of the External Affairs Minister to Pakistan in December 2015, it was decided to have a meeting at the level of the foreign secretaries to work out the modalities of the comprehensive bilateral dialogue.

"However, the meeting of the Foreign Secretaries could not take place due to the terrorist attack on the Pathankot Air Base in January 2016 and the continued support to cross border terrorism and ceasefire violations by Pakistan," Muraleedharan said.

Muraleedharan said that the government's consistent position has been that India desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan and is committed to addressing issues, if any, bilaterally and peacefully in an atmosphere free of militancy, hostility, and violence.

"The onus is on Pakistan to create such a conducive atmosphere including by taking credible, verifiable, and irreversible action to not allow any territory under its control to be used for cross border militancy against India in any manner," he said.

Muraleedharan said that India and Pakistan maintain regular channels of communication through the respective High Commissions and other established mechanisms such as hotlines, flag meetings, scheduled talks between the Directorate Generals of Military Operations (DGMO).

"Through these well-established mechanisms, the government regularly takes up all cases of unprovoked ceasefire violations and support for cross-border militancy infiltration by Pakistan forces," he said.

The Minister said that Pakistan has been consistently called upon to abide by its 2003 ceasefire commitment for maintaining peace and tranquillity along the International Boundary and the Line of Control following the scheduled talk between the Directors General of Military Operations over hotline.

"A joint statement was issued on 25th February 2021, in which both sides agreed to the strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firing along the line of control and all other sectors with effect from the midnight of 24/25 February 2021," he added.

## Austin Urged

Menendez urged Austin to raise concerns over democracy and human rights issues with Indian leaders.

The Indian government's ongoing crackdown on farmers peacefully protesting new farming laws and corresponding intimidation of journalists and government critics only underscores the deteriorating situation of democracy in India, he wrote in the letter a copy of which was released to the press on Wednesday.

In his capacity as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Menendez plays a key role in influencing the country's foreign policy and national security.

Moreover, in recent years, rising anti-Muslim sentiment and related government actions like the Citizenship Amendment Act, the suppression of political dialogue and arrest of political opponents following the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir, and the use of sedition laws to persecute political opponents have resulted in the US human rights group Freedom House stripping India of its 'Free' status in its yearly global survey, he said.

According to the CAA, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 following religious persecution there will get Indian citizenship.

The Indian government maintains that the CAA, which was passed by Parliament, is an internal matter of the country and stressed that the goal is to protect the oppressed minorities of neighbouring countries.

India abrogated the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution on August 5, 2019 and bifurcated it into two Union territories – Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir.

India has defended its move, saying the special status provisions only gave rise to terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. It has asserted that the abrogation of Article 370 is its "internal matter".

As the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance states, democracy is essential to meeting the challenges of our

time", Menendez said in his letter.

"We should seek to partner with India to address challenges from China to climate change, but in doing so we cannot let our democratic values fall away," he said.

"I urge you to raise the importance of democracy and human rights in your meetings with Indian officials to make clear that respect for democratic values is necessary for strong, sustainable US-India relations," Menendez said.

In meetings with Indian counterparts during your upcoming visit, I strongly encourage you to make clear that in all areas, including security cooperation, the US-India partnership must rest on adherence to democratic values, Menendez said in his letter.

Among his predecessors include President Joe Biden, who occupied this position during former president George Bush's administration and former secretary of state John Kerry.

On India's reported plan to purchase the Russian S-400 missile defence system, Menendez, a Democrat, said that if India chooses to go forward with its purchase, that act will clearly constitute a sanctionable transaction with the Russian defence sector under provisions of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act or CAATSA.

In October 2018, India had signed a USD 5 billion deal with Russia to buy five units of the S-400 air defence missile systems, despite a warning from the then Trump administration that going ahead with the contract may invite US sanctions.

In 2019, India made the first tranche of payment of around USD 800 million to Russia for the missile systems.

The S-400 is known as Russia's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile defence system.

The US had imposed sanctions on Russia under the stringent CAATSA. The law also provides for punitive action against countries purchasing defence hardware from Russia.

I recognise that India is not a US treaty ally and has historical ties with the Soviet and Russian militaries. However, if India chooses to go forward with its purchase of the S-400, that act will clearly constitute a significant and therefore sanctionable, transaction with the Russian defence sector under Section 231 of CAATSA, Menendez wrote.

It will also limit India's ability to work with the US on the development and procurement of sensitive military technology. I expect you to make all of these challenges clear in conversations with your Indian counterparts, he said.

The US law known as CAATSA is aimed at pushing back on Russian influence. It mainly deals with sanctions on Russian interests such as its oil and gas industry, defence and financial institutions, following Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine in 2014 and its alleged meddling in the 2016 US presidential election.

## No Outsider Purchased

year, the Centre paved the way for people from across India to buy land in Jammu and Kashmir by amending several laws, more than a year after the nullification of Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution.

In a gazette notification in Hindi and English, the Ministry of Home Affairs made several changes to the land laws, including allowing use of agricultural land for setting up facilities of public purpose.

According to the Hindu, the MPs panel was informed that agricultural land was being protected in J&K on similar lines as that of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. "However, the land has been opened up for industries [in the latter States]." "This has been one of the reasons why J&K, unlike Himachal and Uttarakhand, has not benefited from any industrial package in the past because till one has title to a land, industry cannot be set up," the report said.

It said that a land bank of 6,000 acres is "contemplated to be developed" for industries, of which "3,000 acres of land have already been identified."

When asked about the proposals of investment received in the newly carved UT, and purchase of land by people from outside the State, the panel, according to the report was informed that "456 MoUs have been signed amounting to 23,152.17 crore".

"Further, no person from outside has purchased land in J&K, since the industrial land allotment policy is in formulation and land allotment has not commenced," the report said.

Pertinently, J&K has been under direct rule of New Delhi since 2018 after the BJP government withdrew support from Mehbooba Mufti led coalition government.

## SC Lists Plea

which also comprised justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian.

On March 11, an interim plea was filed in a pending PIL seeking immediate release of detained Rohingya refugees in Jammu and restrain the Centre from deporting them.

The plea also sought direction to Ministry of Home Affairs to expeditiously grant refugee identification cards through the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) for Rohingyas in informal camps.

The application filed by Mohammad Salimullah, a Rohingya refugee through advocate Bhushan, said that it is filed in public interest in order to secure and protect the right against deportation of refugees in India.

The plea said that it is filed to protect rights guaranteed under Article 14 and Article 21, read with Article 51(c) of the Constitution, against the deportation of Rohingya refugees who have taken refuge in India after escaping widespread violence and discrimination against their community in Myanmar.

"Release the detained Rohingya refugees immediately and direct the Union Territory government and the Ministry of Home Affairs to expeditiously grant Refugee identification cards through the FRRO for Rohingyas in informal camps," it said.

It sought direction to the Union Government to refrain from implementing any orders on deporting Rohingya refugees, who have been detained in the sub jail in Jammu.

Violent attacks allegedly by Myanmar army men have led to an exodus of Rohingya tribals from the western Rakhine state in that country to India and Bangladesh.

Many of them, who had fled to India after the earlier spate of violence, have settled in Jammu, Hyderabad, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR and Rajasthan.

## Govt Calls

January 2021, the Chief Secretary, B V R Subrahmanyam urged people to participate in the vaccination drives and get vaccinated on priority to keep themselves and their families safe from the infection, an official spokesperson said.

Administrative Secretaries of the departments of Health & Medical Education, Home, Housing & Urban Development, Information, Youth Services & Sports, School Education, Tribal Affairs, besides Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Mission Director, National Health Mission (NHM), Director, SKIMS, and Principal GMC Jammu participated in the meeting.

In the meeting, the official spokesperson said it was informed that Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs) in Jammu and Kashmir were being gradually enhanced to 3034 including 34 private centres.

"All the CVCs will be connected through 873 cold chain points with a total vaccine storage capacity of more than 50 lakh doses and vaccination capacity of 3 lakh doses per day. The vaccines are being administered free of cost at all government CVCs and at private centres against the payment of Rs. 250 per dose," he said.

At the centres, he said, vaccination slots are being proportioned to accommodate reserved appointments of COVID registered beneficiaries; 2nd dose beneficiaries and open/walk-in beneficiaries on a day-to-day basis.

The official spokesperson further said that the meeting was informed that so far 77% of healthcare workers, 78% of front line workers, and 12.28% of elderly and co-morbid patients, totalling 4,39,910 people have been vaccinated in J&K with no reported case of extreme adversity.

"And arrangements have also been put in place for on-spot registration and administration of vaccination to the remaining health care workers and frontline workers, yet to be vaccinated," he said.

To effectively deliver the vaccines at the grass-root level, the official spokesperson said that the Chief Secretary impressed upon greater coordination between the frontline workers of various departments including health, social welfare, school education, rural development, and housing and urban development.

"The Chief Secretary also emphasized the need of evolving a multi-sectoral response to the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine by involving NGOs, NCC, and other volunteers, besides maintaining open and transparent communication

through a proactive IEC strategy to curb misinformation and rumors," he added.

## 140 New Cases

25 were from the Jammu division and 115 from the Kashmir division, officials said.

Srinagar district recorded the highest 75 cases, followed by 20 in Jammu district.

Seven districts did not report any fresh cases, 10 other districts had cases in single digits.

The number of active cases was 1,073 in the union territory, while 1, 25,046 patients have recovered so far, the officials said.

The death toll is 1,978 as one fresh death was reported from Kashmir Valley, they added. (PTI)

## HC Refers Farooq's

the present petition were also issues, which were raised and decided by the Coordinate Bench, which now, form the subject matter of consideration by the Division Bench of this Court," a bench of Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur said.

"Considering the fact that the genesis of the proceedings both against the petitioner, Dr. Farooq Abdullah as also the appellant, Ahsan Ahmad Mirza (former treasurer of JKCA), lies in the case which is pending trial before the Designated Court and the issues being common, in my opinion, therefore, are required to be considered together," he said.

In these circumstances, Justice Thakur, having expressed opinion that the matter be considered by a Division Bench, both the senior Counsel—Sidharth Luthra, as also Tushar Mehta, Solicitor General of India expressed no objection.

"Be that as it may, Registrar Judicial of this Court is directed to list this matter before the appropriate Bench after seeking due permission from the Chief Justice," the court added.

The court said that it can be seen that an FIR bearing No. 27/2012 dated 10th March, 2012 came to be registered under Section 409,406, and 120-B RPC in Police Station, Ram Mushi Bagh, in connection with "misappropriation" of funds of the JKCA.

The investigation of the case was subsequently transferred to the CBI in September 2015 by virtue of an order passed in a PIL—Majid Yakub D and Another vs. State of JK and Ors.

"After investigation, the CBI filed its final report and the matter is pending trial before the Designated Court. Amongst others, the petitioner, Dr. Farooq Abdullah as also Ahsan Ahmad Mirza have been reflected as accused in the case. Consequent upon the filing of the challan before the appropriate court, proceedings have been initiated by the Authorities under the PML Act against the petitioner as also against Ahsan Ahmad Mirza."

Ahsan Ahmad Mirza had challenged proceedings before the court in 2019 and his petition was later dismissed on 15 October that year. Mirza's appeal is pending before a Division Bench.

Farooq, the former three-time Chief Minister of J&K, has challenged the action of the Authorities under the PML Act, among others on the issue of jurisdiction, the applicability of PML Act to the erstwhile State as also on grounds of illegality and procedural irregularities.

The 83-year-old parliamentarian has said his ancestral and family properties in J&K have been illegally attached by ED despite the fact that it had "no jurisdiction to do the same."

"The illegal, excessive and arbitrary attachment of properties has resulted in grave injustice to the Petitioner (Farooq), and is a continuing violation of his fundamental rights under Article 14 and Article 21 of the Constitution."

In 2012, he submitted in the plea that certain allegations regarding the siphoning off of JKCA funds emerged.

"As per the Final Report, these discrepancies were noticed by the then Treasurer, Manzoor Ahmed Wazir who brought it to the notice of the President (Farooq) who convened an immediate meeting of the Office Bearers of JKCA and subsequently an FIR No. 27/2012 dated 10.03.2012 under Sections 409, 406, 120B RPC was registered in PS Ram Mushi Bagh naming the erstwhile General Secretary and Treasurer namely Saleem Khan and Ahsan Ahmad Mirza as accused persons."

"A bare perusal makes it amply clear that the ED has simply adopted the case of the CBI and the resulting Final Report filed against the Petitioner (Farooq)," he submitted. (GNS)

## BJP, Opposition

Anumula Revanth Reddy said the incidents of "crossfire" have risen to their highest numbers in the last 16 years in the union territory and accused the government of slapping criminal cases on local journalists for writing critical pieces.

The 2019 decision to scrap Jammu and Kashmir's statehood has proved to be wrong, he said, and also took a dig at the BJP for its bid to associate itself with Sardar Patel while criticising Jawaharlal Nehru, saying India's first home minister was part of the "Congress parivar".

Patel, as member of the Nehru cabinet, had banned the RSS, Reddy said, adding that BJP ideologue Mookerjee was a member of the same Cabinet which had enacted Article 370 to give Jammu and Kashmir special status.

The Modi government had nullified the operative provisions of the Article in August 2019.

Reddy's assertion drew a sharp retort from Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal who said B R Ambedkar, besides Mookerjee, were opposed to Article 370. And it was only a temporary provision, he added.

Union minister Anurag Thakur said the Congress had "forgotten" Patel and even "opposed" the Modi government's decision to build the world's largest statue in his honour.

"It is us", he said, who reminded the country of Patel's contributions, forcing the Congress to remember him.

Namyang praised the budget for Jammu and Kashmir, saying it will lead to its all-round development.

He took a swipe at the Congress for criticising the Modi government for detaining Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti just before scrapping the Jammu and Kashmir's special status, saying a Congress government at the Centre had put Sheikh Abdullah behind bars for over a decade.

Since Article 370 was annulled, development has reached grassroots with the election of 4,103 sarpanches, 28,942 panches and the constitution of block and district development bodies.

"Such an empowerment of grassroots democracy never happened earlier," he said.

He, however, asked the Centre to speed up the process of filling up vacancies in Ladakh and also sought creation of more districts in the vast but thinly-populated region.

TMC's Sougata Ray said Jammu and Kashmir's statehood should be restored and alleged that peace has not been brought to the Valley as was promised by the government.

Neither have Kashmiri Pandits been rehabilitated in Kashmir nor has tourism been restored, he added.

He also criticised the role of former Puducherry lieutenant governor Kiran Bedi, saying she often fought the elected government there.

The budget for Puducherry was also part of the debate. Bhartruhari Mahtab of the BJD said he looked forward to the union territory and Kashmir, and Ladakh are accorded statehood and also supported the government's measures to bring normalcy there.

Noting that two Lok Sabha seats are reserved for the area under Pakistan's control, he said the issue remains an unfinished agenda.

Hasnain Masoodi of the National Conference accused the government of pushing Jammu and Kashmir into bureaucracy by democracy and said ruefully that the budget should have been discussed in its assembly.

The steps taken by the Centre have turned out to be a "misadventure" that has achieved nothing, and only future will tell what all this "fire" will consume, he said.

Youth from the region has been lodged in jails outside and disagreement is being muzzled, he alleged.

## Law And Order

Constitution has been welcomed by the people, who came out in large numbers to participate in the local body elections

The minister was replying to a discussion on Budgets for Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Puducherry in the Lok Sabha.

The Budgets for 2021-22 were later approved by the lower house.

"Law and order is coming back to absolute normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir," she said adding the development works are taking place in the union territory at a faster pace.

Citing figures, the minister said rail, road, and housing projects are making progress.

With regard to assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, she said it can be held only after completion of the delimitation process and the decision to hold elections lies with the Election Commission.

Regarding Puducherry, she said the vote on account is being approved to allow the UT government meet its expenses for the period April 1 to August 31, 2021.

The Lok Sabha also approved the supplementary demand for grants for Puducherry for 2020-21.

## 226 Militants

The stone-pelting incidents have now been reduced to 10 per cent of what it used to be earlier, he said while addressing a press conference on the eve of the forces' 82nd anniversary.

"In Jammu and Kashmir, where the force works in close coordination with the state police and the Indian Army, 215 militants were neutralised in 2020 and 11 militants were killed this year," Singh said.

"Only a few days back, we neutralised four militants in two different operations. This included top Jaish commander Sajjad Afghani who was neutralised in Shopian in a joint operation," the DG said.

During the same period, 296 militants were apprehended by the security forces while eight surrendered.

Singh said the CRPF recovered 378 arms and 41 improvised explosive devices (IEDs), while 275 encounters/attacks took place during the same time period.

Asked about the threat posed by "sticky bombs" in Jammu and Kashmir, he said, "While frisking a vehicle, we keep in mind the threat of sticky bombs. Although, we have not seen any such incident where we found sticky bombs attached to a vehicle. But yes, it is a challenge, we know it, they (militants) might try to use it and we have briefed our forces about it."

He said at the instance of an accused, a few sticky bombs were recovered from some areas.

The DG said normalcy has been restored to a large extent in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Earlier, there were restrictions on internet usage but now they have been lifted," Singh said.

The 1986-batch West Bengal cadre IPS officer said extra forces that were sent to the Union Territory for the DDC elections have now returned and the normal deployment of the force remains as it is.

About 265 companies of all the CAPFs or paramilitary forces have returned from Jammu and Kashmir, he said.

Asked about some houses getting destroyed in Kashmir during encounters with militants and if there is any policy to avoid damage to civilian houses, he said, "This is not an issue of policy. Our experience is if the militant is from the same village where the engagement is taking place, a very large number of people gather, stone-pelting is done, arson takes place to deter the forces from the engagement which is taking place and as there is lot of arson, there are chances that there is some bit of incident of fire which will take place."

"So in this case, they themselves put fire so that they get a chance to escape from the cordon laid by the security forces and the CRPF has a unique capability to fight on both the fronts, facing forward with lethal weapons and towards the rear or on the side of the crowd with non-lethal weapons," the newly-appointed DG said.

On arrangements being made for the forthcoming Amarnath Yatra, Singh said last year, the yatra did not happen and since this year it is taking place, arrangements would be made for peaceful and smooth conduct of the yatra.

Replying to a question of income-tax being levied on the ration money allotted to personnel, Singh said there is "no decision" from the higher authorities so far.

The DG said 80 CRPF personnel have succumbed to COVID-19 till now.

Talking about the Left Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected states, he said there has been a significant reduction in the cases of Maoist violence.

"With our persistent operations and capacity building, we have pushed the Maoists into corners and restricted their activity," Singh said.

"We make short-term, medium-term and long-term plans to contain Naxalism and assess the situation accordingly and introduce mid-course corrections as well, he said.

The CRPF DG said 32 Maoists were neutralised in 2020 and five were killed in 2021.

## Omar Skeptical

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a party function organised to pay tributes to senior NC leader Wali Muhammad Yattoo at Dambhal Hanjpora in South Kashmir's Kulgam district today, Omar said that he doesn't see Assembly elections taking place in 2021.

"The Delimitation Commission has been given one year's extension and who knows it may be given more extension."

Let me clarify that my priority is not elections; it may be for the others. My top priority is to strengthen NC at grass-roots level, which I am doing," he said. Omar while replying to a query said that whether he is happy with the decentralization of District Development Councils (DDCs), he said as of now he doesn't see any development taking place. "There was 90 per cent voting during NC's tenure when Panchayat polls were held.

DDC members shouldn't be used as photo-opportunity and as a diplomatic tool. These elections were held to strengthen the grassroots level. Government must distribute powers and responsibilities to DDC members so that democracy flourishes," the NC vice-president said.

On how sees the recent commitment of Indo-Pak DGDMOs towards following the ceasefire pact of 2003, Omar said that he and his party has always welcomed such steps. "We hope this step will bring the two countries closer so that they talk freely in a peaceful atmosphere," he said.

About recent remarks of Wasim Rizvi about the holy Quran, Omar said that Indian constitution doesn't allow any assault on any religion.

"Wasim Rizvi is not a foreigner but one amongst us. People indulging in hurting the religious sentiments of people of any faith, should be brought to book as per the law of the land," Omar said.

## New Delhi Used

## Two Persons Sent To Judicial Custody For Embezzlement

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The anti-corruption bureau Thursday produced chargesheet against Bashir Ahmad Wani, son of Ghulam Mohammad Wani, a resident of Kalashpora Baddem Srinagar then posted as MPW (Halqa Konibal Pampore) Rural Development Department Block Pampore (now retired) and Abdul Rashid Dar, son of Ghulam Mohammad Dar, a resident of Lalpora Chatlam Pampore (Civilian Job Card Holder) u/s 173 Cr. PC for the commission of offences u/s 5 (1) (d), 5(1) c r/w 5 (2), J&K PC Act. Svt, 2006, and section 120-B, 420, 468, 471, RPC in case FIR NO. 45/2015 of PS ACB Srinagar in Anti Corruption Court Pulwama.

A statement issued by the ACB said that the case pertains to department of RDD, which, for upliftment of Rural Areas under MGN-REGA, was constructing/executing different developmental works. During the investigation it surfaced that an amount of Rs. 8,39,027 has been fraudulently drawn from official account of Panchayat Secretary bearing account number 18177 of J&K Bank Pampore on forged labour advices and same was credited

into the bank accounts of non-genuine Job Card Holders who are either relatives or neighbours of accused facilitator namely Abdul Rashid Dar. The amount was later withdrawn by the accused Abdul Rashid Dar from the accounts of these job card holders.

The statement said the accused person Bashir Ahmad Wani, son of Ghulam Mohammad Wani, a resident of Kalashpora Baddem Srinagar under a well knit conspiracy hatched with Abdul Rashid Dar, a resident of Lalpora Chatlam Pampore (Civilian Job Card Holder), prepared forged labour advice amounting to Rs. 30,000/- dated 24.04.2013, Rs. 5,45,000/- dated 12.05.2013, Rs. 1,57,000/- dated 09.04.2013, Rs. 29,737/- dated 02.01.2013 and Rs. 77,290/- dated 02.01.2013. On the basis of these labour advices, he managed to draw an amount of Rs. 8,39,027/- from bank accounts of job card holders who are either relatives or neighbours of accused facilitator namely Abdul Rashid Dar.

The statement said both the accused were lodged in sub jail Pulwama for judicial custody till next date of hearing that has been scheduled to April 1.

## J&K Witnessing A Wave Of Positive Change Since 'Abrogation Of Special Status': LG



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha Thursday observed that J&K is witnessing a wave of positive change in the last 18 months and a determined push is being given to socio-economic development, besides empowering the common people.

"Hundreds of laws and policies hampering the development of the region have been done away with, or modified."

The Lt Governor was addressing a webinar of Vivekananda International Foundation.

He said for the last seven decades, J&K has been kept away from prosperity and development despite being getting more per capita budget than other states. Since, 5th August 2019, with the efforts and resolve of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, J&K has been fully integrated into the mainstream

of the nation, the Lt Governor maintained.

"Now, the development process in J&K has been accelerated. Soon, the population living in 973 villages will be connected with paved roads for the first time after independence, and remote villages would see 20-22 hours of electricity in the next three-four years, said the Lt Governor."

While speaking on the importance of empowered grass-root democratic setup, the Lt Governor said that the three-tier Panchayati Raj System was established and peaceful, violence-free and fair elections were held for the District Development Councils for the first time in J&K.

The Lt Governor observed that the UT Government is nurturing transparency and accountability at all levels of the Administration. Issues and developmental aspirations

of the people living in rural areas are one of the focus areas of the government, he added.

Reforms have been made in making public grievance redressal mechanisms more robust and responsive. LG's Mulaqaat- Live Public Grievance Hearing is being held every month where I interact with the people and take first hand appraisal of their grievances, said the Lt Governor.

The LG also released a book titled "Forgotten Kashmir: The Other Side of the Line of Control" authored by Dinkar P. Srivastava.

Speaking on the occasion, the Lt Governor appreciated the author for "unmasking Pakistan's conspiracy and atrocities" on the people of Pakistan-Controlled Jammu & Kashmir (PcJK) over the past seven decades through his book, and creating a better understanding of Pakistan's motivations for its policies in the region.

## Notorious Drug Peddler Arrested In Budgam

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Police in Central Kashmir's Budgam on Thursday claimed to have arrested a notorious drug peddler involved in illicit trade of drugs and recovered a banned drugs from his possession.

A senior police official said that on receipt of a credible information that a person identified as Mehraj U Din Shah son of late Gh Hassan Shah, a resident of Nowhar Char-i-sharif area of the district has been indulging in illicit trade of drugs and has dumped a huge quantity of narcotic and psychotropic substance in his residential house.

He said, a case under FIR No.8/2021 U/S 8/20 NDPS Act was registered in police station Charari Sharief and accordingly a raid was conducted by police at the house of the accused in presence of Executive Magistrate 1st Class Chararisharief.

"During raid 900 grams of Charas-like substance was recovered from his possession. On further enquiry it was found that the accused is a notorious drug peddler and has been smuggling drugs and distributing it among gullible masses in return of hefty profit. The accused person has been arrested and investigation of the case is going on," he said.

The official further said that crackdown on drug peddlers will continue in the district, adding that whosoever found involved in the mischievous act will be brought to book.

## Budgam Kiln Owners 'Trash' DM's Order, Sell Bricks at Exorbitant Prices

Observer News Service

Budgam: Even though the District Magistrate of Central Kashmir's Budgam district, last year issued orders, after a consultation with the Brick Kiln Owners Association in the Valley and fixed Rs 21000 per 3000 bricks, that is one truck load, the Kiln owners has reduced the order to dust.

As against the fixed price of Rs 21,000, the Kiln owners are selling one truck load of bricks from anywhere between Rs 30,000 to Rs 33,000. Locals said that the brick kiln owners have been selling bricks at exorbitant rates and they are selling

"B Grade" bricks as "A Grade" at a price of around Rs 30,000 per 3000 bricks.

In the midst of this, the silence of the government officials and the concerned department seems to be a nexus between the law implementing agencies and brick owners as the brick owners are selling bricks at their choicest prices.

In areas like Barrow and Chadoora, most of the brick kilns are deliberately locked, especially under the pretext of the Airport Authority's objection, so that with the increase in demand, the owner can increase the prices on their own will, the locals claimed. (CNS)

## LG For Expeditious Completion Of Durga Bhawan

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha who is also the Chairman of the Shrine Board, Thursday reviewed the Master Plan of Bhawan & Extended Shrine Area and modalities finalised for the construction of 5-storey Durga Bhawan at Bhawan area in a meeting held here at the Raj Bhawan.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the CEO of the Shrine Board to ensure expeditious and timely completion of Durga Bhawan so that the pilgrims could take benefit of this facility at the earliest. He further directed that a PERT chart be formulated and strictly followed for time bound construction of this high

quality pilgrim-centric facility.

He also gave instructions for ensuring timely implementation of various components of the Master Plan for establishing infrastructural facilities for the visiting pilgrims in a planned manner.

The buildings should have adequate provision for harnessing clean energy, recycling of waste water, setting up of STPs, with provision of the best possible facilities for the pilgrims, added the Lt Governor. The Central Public Works Department is the construction agency for the Durga Bhawan. In this context, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by the CEO SMVDSB, Ramesh Kumar and Special Director General CPWD, Sh. Anant Kumar, in presence of the Lt Governor on the occasion.

## Primary Students Protests In Dooru Against Shifting Of School

Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: Students of a Government Primary School along with their parents Thursday protested in Dooru Shahabad area of South Kashmir's Anantnag district in front of SDM's office Dooru against the

relocating of their school to another village due to non-availability of school building.

The protesting parents said the education department has shifted the school in their village to another village about 1 km away, due to which their children are now compelled to take a dangerous route while going

to school as wild animals are often roaming in that area.

The children and parents demanded that the school should be set up in their village.

Zonal Education Officer (ZEO) Qazigund said, "The school had to be shifted due to non-availability of building."

Government of Jammu and Kashmir

## Office Of The Executive Officer Municipal Council Kupwara

Sub:-Auction For collection of "parking fee (contract) at Municipal parking place near Dc office complex Kupwara,

AUCTION NOTICE

Sealed Bids/offers affixed with six rupees revenue stamps are invited from the interested persons/parties for collection of parking fee /tax contract at Municipal parking place near Dc office complex Kupwara for the year 2021-2022 w. e.f, 01.04.2021 to 31.03.2022 )

12 months as per the following Terms & conditions :-  
01-Date of issuance of Bid forms upto 22/03/2021 upto 2:00pm (office of the Executive officer Municipal Council Kupwara Town hall against the non-refundable amount of Rs.1000/-each)  
02-Date of Auction /opening of bids: 24/03/2021 upto 2:0 (in case of unavoidable circumstances the date of receipt of Bids /offers will be reckoned on next working days

parking place near Dc office complex Kupwara	Minimum Bid Amount 1.10Lacs (Rupees one Lacsten thousand only )	CDR/FDR:Rs.2200/-Rupees two thousandtwo hundredonly (From any Nationalized Bank pledged to Executive officer Municipal Council Kupwara)
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Terms and Conditions:-

- The interested bidders/offers should be a domicile of J& k union territory
- The persons/parties against whom any outstanding amount exists on the records of department or the persons convicted in any offence under law by any court shall not be eligible to participate in the bid and no documents will be issued in his favour.
- The persons /parties have to produce PAN Card at the time of obtaining of bid form /documents ,no document will be issued in absence of PAN card.
- The contract of collection of parking fee/ Tax shall be for the year 2021-2022 W.e.f 01-04- 2021 to 31-03-2022and no claim for any kind of extension /relief what so ever shall be obtained by the department at any stage.
- The intending bidders/offers shall have to deposit CDR/FDR once he will obtain bid form /Documents from this institution.
- The bids offered by the bidder /offers shall be inclusive of all applicable taxes, which is required to be deposited by the contractor / allottee well in time.
- The bid form will be issued from the office of undersigned upto 22 .03.2021 upto 2.00pm against the non-refundable amount of Rs .1000/-only
- The intending bidder/offer shall be bound to accompany CDR/FDR from any nationalized Bank pledged to Executive Officer Municipal committee Kupwara ,without which no bid /offer will be accepted.
- The emerged highest bidder /offerer shall have to pay /deposit 5% token money of the total bid amount at the time of acceptance of bid /offer, and 45% forty five percent at the time of allotment and 25% in the month of September 2021 and remaining 25% in the month of December 2021
- The successful bidder shall be bound to execute an agreement with this institution duly registered in the competent court of law after receipt of allotment and before taking over the possession of the parking place.
- The successful bidder /allottee shall be bound to effect recovery of parking fee /tax strictly as per the approved rates /schedule Viz@ Rs 10/-per vehicle Rupees ten only for (08) eight hours and after eight hours Rs 20/per vehicle besidesRs200/ Rupees two hundred only per tipper / truck as terminal tax at regiporaAddaln case of any violation /report ,the contract shall be cancelled at the risk ,responsibility & cost of the contractor
- The contractor/allottee shall have to arrange main power ,furniture, stationery ,maintenance, etc of parking place at his own .without claiming any compensation from the institution /department.
- The bids offered by the bidder /offerer shall be exclusive of all applicable taxes/ GST,which is required to be deposited by the contractor /allottee well in time.
- The bidder/offerer while offering the bid shall be responsible to visualize all conditions /circumstance like hartals ,strikes unfavourable circumstances /conditions .unrest etc well in advance .Later on no claim for relaxation /relief in the ceiling of contract or extension of the contract period on this context shall be entertained .
- After expiry of the contract period (i.e 31.03.2022 at 4:00 pm) the contractor/allottee shall handover the possession of parking place to this institution in its original position without any damage .
- The contractor/allottee is bound to engage well versed persons who are not involved in any kind of criminal activities for collection with proper uniform /caps during collection of parking fee /tax at the parking place and the realization of fee /tax shall be collected in public friendly manner without causing any in convenience to the commuters /visitors/public.
- The contractor /allottee shall be responsible to maintain parking place with special care to sanitation /hygiene of the environment and surroundings.
- The undersigned reserve the right to accept or reject any or all offers /bids without assigning any reason what so ever.
- In case of any dispute arising between the parties with respect to any of the conditions as laid down herein above or any ambiguity will be referred to the president Municipal Council Kupwara and his decision shall be final and binding upon both parties.
- Further details can be heard from the office of the undersigned on any working day during office hours

No. MC/Kup/2971-75

Dated:15/03/2021

DIPK-NB-6480/20

sd  
Executive Officer,  
Municipal council Kupwara

### GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER IRRIGATION DIVISION OMPORA BUDGAM. e-NIT NO. 52 OF 03/2021

For and on behalf of the LT. Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir e-tenders on item rate basis are invited from approved and eligible contractors Registered with Union Territory of J&K Govt.

S. No	Name of work	Estt. Cost of work amount in lacs	Time of completion	Class of contract	Cost of tender document	Head of account
1	Restoration of irrigation supplies on Bacher Khul and Naroo Khul by way of construction of crated head works on Harvel Khul at village Ichgam. Amount of Rs. 1.14 Lacs including departmental supply	1.14	10 Days	DEE	200/-	M&R
2	Temporary restoration of Nairi Khul branch of Main Khanchi canal near RD 2300 ft. Amount of Rs. 1.44 Lacs including departmental supply	1.44	10 Days	DEE	200/-	M&R

No of works Advertised:- 02 (Two)

Position of Funds (Budgetary Provision)

Position of Administrative Approval to be got accorded)

1. The NIT consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria specifications, Bill of quantities, set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen /downloaded from departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in

	Publishing date	17-03-2021 (9 AM)
1	Download date start	17-03-2021 (9 AM)
2	Bid submission date starts	17-03-2021 (9 AM)
3	Bid submission date ends	23-03-2021 upto (4 PM)
4	Bid Opening date	24-03-2021 at (11AM)

The bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in.

General terms and conditions:-

- The Bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the website jktenders.gov.in from:- 17/03/2021 to 23/03/2021 up to 1600 hrs. The Bids will be opened on 24/03/2021 at 11: 00 AM. Online documents can be seen and downloaded from the website.
- The complete bidding process will be online.
- Technical bids of bidder shall be opened online in the office of the Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division Ompora Budgam.
- Bid document contains qualifying criteria for bidder, specification, conditions and other details.
- Any item /items not included in the rate list but found necessary during the execution of work shall be paid as per the rates of J&K SSR 2020.
- Any omission /Typographic error shall be read as per the J&K SSR 2020, and as per the corrigendum / errata issued to J&K SSR 2020 in vogue.
- The rates should be strictly quoted as per the unit advertised in the rate list.
- The contractors shall inspect & examine the site, and shall satisfy himself about the location of the site, its approaches and nature of the ground and sub soil before uploading the bids/submission of tender.
- If the contractor fails to complete the work within the stipulated time period, the penalty of RS.0.01% of the allotted cost of work shall be imposed upon the Contractor recurring on daily basis. In addition to penalty prescribed in agreement form 25/26 double.
- During the execution of work, department reserves the right to vary the quantity provided in the contract.
- Tender drawings furnished with the tender document shall not be deemed as working drawings. These may vary from the actual working drawing.

Executive Engineer  
Irrigation Division  
Ompora Budgam

DIPK-15189/20

No:- Date:- /03/2021

## Shahid Afridi Blames PCB For PSL 6's Postponement



Press Trust of India

**KARACHI:** Former skipper Shahid Afridi has criticised the Pakistan Cricket Board for postponing PSL 6 due to COVID-19 scare among the franchises, saying the deferment proved that PCB didn't have a plan B to fall back upon.

Speaking at a function in Lahore on Wednesday, Afridi said that the Pakistan Super League should not have been postponed.

"The PSL is a very big brand of Pakistan and Pakistan cricket and it is unfortunate that the PCB didn't appear to have a plan B for this important event," he said.

"But it appears they didn't have a plan B when the COVID-19 cases

were detected among some players and officials and this is surprising to me. The postponement didn't send out a good message," he said.

Nadeem Omar, owner of Quetta Gladiators franchise, also held the PCB responsible for failing to maintain the bio-bubble created for the event in Karachi.

"I think the PCB is 90 per cent responsible for the faults in the bio-secure bubble created for the tournament which eventually led to the postponement of the PSL," he said.

Omar also noted that PCB chairman Ehsan Mani had admitted that there was a communication gap between the board and the six PSL franchises, one of the reasons for bio-bubble's failure.

## Wrestler Ritika Phogat 'Commits Suicide' After Losing Final



Press Trust of India

**CHANDIGARH:** Wrestler Ritika Phogat (17), a cousin of the Phogat sisters, allegedly committed suicide in Haryana's Charkhi Dadri district after she lost the final bout of a tournament, police said on Thursday.

Ritika took the extreme step on the night of March 15, they said.

A native of Rajasthan's Jaipur village, Ritika was staying with her uncle and Dronacharya awardee Mahavir Singh Phogat in Charkhi Dadri's Balali village under Jhohju Kalan police station for the past four years, said Station House Officer (SHO) Dilbagh Singh.

She hanged herself from a ceiling fan at her uncle's house on the night of March 15 as she was upset over losing to her rival by one point in the final bout of a championship, he said.

The championship was held in Rajasthan's Bharatpur from March

12 to 14. Ritika was learning and practising wrestling at the Mahavir Phogat Sports Academy in Charkhi Dadri.

Wrestling star Geeta Phogat described Ritika, her maternal sister, as a "talented wrestler".

"It's a very sad moment for my family. Ritika was a talented wrestler and I don't know why she took such a step. Victory and defeat are a part of an athlete's life. We should never take such a step," she said in a tweet in Hindi.

Former Union minister Vijay Kumar Singh also took to Twitter to condole Ritika's death.

"Terrible news that we lost #RitikaPhogat who had a brilliant career ahead. The world has changed from where it was some decades ago. Athletes are facing pressures which were not there earlier. An essential part of their training should be to deal with these pressures," he said.

## 'Pakistan Optimistic About Hosting India In 2023 Asia Cup,' Says PCB Chairman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**KARACHI:** Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ehsan Mani is optimistic about hosting India in the Asia Cup in 2023 and hopes the political relations between the two neighbouring countries would improve by then.

Mani informed that Sri Lanka will host the Asia Cup in 2022, ruling out any chances of the continental event being staged this year in June.

"In 2022 Sri Lanka will have it (Asia Cup) and in 2023 Pakistan will be hosting the regional event. I am optimistic that by time the political relations between the two countries would have improved and this would pave the way for the Indian team to come to Pakistan," Mani said.

"In recent days there has been some positive signs through backdoor channels and hopefully the ice will melt in the relations," he told the 'Jang' newspaper in an interview on Wednesday.

Mani said if the Indian team visits its neighbours, it will be a "big breakthrough" for Pakistan cricket.

Mani further said that the Asia Cup 2021 is unlikely to be held as Pakistan doesn't have the time for it due to PSL 6 matches and India will also be busy with the ICC World Test Championship final



against New Zealand.

"Their is no question of the Asia Cup being held this year as we are very busy and don't have time to spare this year."

"There was a small window in June in which we are going to play the rest of the Pakistan Super League matches," Mani said.

"The Indian team will play the final of the Test Championship against New Zealand. They have to go to England two weeks ago and stay in quarantine so the Indian team is also busy," he added.

Mani said he hasn't officially received any information on the reports of India sending its 'B'

team for the Asia Cup.

"We have also heard about the Indian board wanting to send a B team to Asia Cup but no one has spoken about it to us."

Mani said the revenue earned from the Asia Cup will be spent on promoting cricket in associate countries.

He said the Asian Cricket Council is guaranteed a proper income from the tournament only if all the teams take part in the regional competition.

Mani also disclosed that the ICC had assured the PCB about Pakistan's participation in the World T20 this year in India.

## ICC Postpones 3 Qualifiers For Men's 2022 T20 World Cup Due To COVID-19

Press Trust of India

**DUBAI:** Three men's T20 World Cup Qualifiers in Africa and Asia — pathway tournaments to the 2022 show-piece event in Australia — have been postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic, the game's governing body ICC said on Thursday.

The Asia A Qualifier, which was due to be hosted between April 3 and 9, involving Bahrain, Kuwait, Maldives, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, will now be played in Kuwait between October 23 to 29.

The decisions were taken due to new restrictions being put in place by several participating countries to suspend sporting activities to limit the spread of the new COVID-19 variants, therefore giving no opportunity for teams to sufficiently train.

The other contributing factor was the extensive quarantine requirements for the visiting teams on their return to their respective countries.

The men's T20 World Cup Sub Regional Africa A and B Qualifiers were due to take place in South Africa in April this year and have been rescheduled to October 25-31.

Qualifier A involves Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland and Uganda, while Qualifier B includes Botswana, Cameroon, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, St Helena and Tanzania.



ra Leone, St Helena and Tanzania.

"The postponements were confirmed as a result of the process undertaken for the ICC's comprehensive contingency planning of COVID-19 after consultation with members and with the relevant government and public health authorities," the world body said in a statement.

"The ICC men's T20 World Cup Africa Qualifier is now confirmed to take place between Nigeria 24 and 27 November in Nigeria involving Kenya, Nigeria, and the top teams from the Sub Regional Africa A and B Qualifiers respectively to allow sufficient time for the sub-regional qualifiers to be completed."

In addition, the ICC U19 men's World Cup Asia Division 2 has also been cancelled as Thailand are unable to host due to COVID-19 restrictions and there is no other suitable hosting option. Bhutan, Hong Kong, Oman,

Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Thailand were confirmed to participate in the Division 2 event.

Oman and Singapore have now been promoted to the U19 Men's CWC Asia Qualifier scheduled in September in the United Arab Emirates, as a result of both teams having the best records in the previous five editions of the U19 men's CWC qualifiers. The ICC U19 men's World Cup Africa Division 2 Qualifier has been postponed to August 7-13 from June 2021 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions where hosts Tanzania, Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda and Sierra Leone will compete for two U19 men's Cricket World Cup Africa Qualifier spots.

"The dates for the U19 Men's CWC Africa Qualifier have been confirmed as 25 September to 1 October and will be hosted by Nigeria with Namibia, Nigeria, Uganda also competing for one spot in the West Indies in early 2022," the governing body said.

The ICC women's T20 World Cup Africa Qualifier which is a qualifying tournament to the show-piece event in 2023 has been rescheduled to October 3-11 from September to ease regional calendar congestion involving hosts Botswana, Cameroon, Namibia, Nigeria, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

## India Legends Defeat WI Legends By 13 Runs, Enter Road Safety World Series T20 Final

Press Trust of India

**RAIPUR:** Sachin Tendulkar-led India Legends defeated West Indies Legends by 13 runs to storm into the summit clash of the Road Safety World Series T20 here.

Tendulkar (65) led the way with a half-century after Virender Sehwag's entertaining cameo and Yuvraj Singh's six-hitting spree to post 218 for three in last night's semi-final clash.

Chasing 219, West Indies were restricted to 206 for six.

Pacer R Vinay Kumar took two West Indian wickets—captain Brian Lara (46) and Tino Best—at a crucial juncture in the 18th over that brought India back into the game.

Dwayne Smith's 63 (36b, 9x4s, 2x6s) and Narsingh Deonarine's 59 (44b, 5x4s, 2x6s) went in vain as West Indies could not repeat their performance against the England Legends and bowed out.

Earlier put into bat, Indian Legends posted 200 plus target in their second successive game.

Besides Tendulkar, Yuvraj played an unbeaten 20-ball 49 whirlwind knock, laced with six sixes and a four, to take India Legends past 200.

Sehwag (35, 17b, 5x4s, 1x6), Yusuf Pathan (37) and Moham-



med Kaif (27) too contributed with the bat for the hosts.

Yuvraj slammed six sixes in the last two overs. The 19th over saw Yuvraj hit leggie Mahendra Nagamootoo for four hits over the rope while the next two came in the last over of Suleiman Benn.

Brief scores: India Legends 218 for 3 (Sachin Tendulkar 65, Yuvraj Singh 49; Tino Best 2/25) beat West Indies Legends 206/6 (Dwayne Smith 63, Narsingh Donarine 59; R Vinay Kumar 2/26) by 12 runs.

## Boxer Vijender Singh Aims To Extend Unbeaten Run, Gears Up For 'Battle On Ship'



Press Trust of India

**PANAJI:** Unconquered thus far, star Indian boxer Vijender Singh would look to extend his unblemished record when he spars with tall Russian opponent Artshy Lopsan in the 'Battle on Ship', here on Friday.

The 2008 Beijing Olympic bronze medalist has not lost a bout after turning professional, boasting of a 12-0 record, which includes eight knock-outs.

Come Friday at the 'Majestic Pride Casino Ship', the 35-year-old would enter the ring after a considerable while.

His last bout was against Ghana's former Commonwealth champion Charles Adamu in Dubai in November 2019.

Vijender is expected to face a stiff challenge from the 26-year-old Russian, who also has a decent record as a professional boxer.

Lopsan, who is 6ft 4-inches tall,

in his six bouts as a professional boxer, has won four, including two knock-outs and has registered one defeat and one draw.

Both the boxers have been training in the coastal state ahead of the marquee event. Vijender had a sparring session with friend-cum-coach Jai Bhagwan at the Salvador-do-Mundo boxing hall on Wednesday.

Vijender is unfazed that he is up against a very tall rival.

"He is tall and I will take it slow at the start but I'm confident of beating him nonetheless. Height is not everything and in boxing, you need strength and strategy. I have experience under my belt and Lopsan is still a kid. My unbeaten streak will continue after March 19. The tougher the opponent, the more fun to beat him," Vijender had recently said.

The contest will be streamed live on 'Book My Show' and Fancode.

## Coach Stimac Wants Young Indian Side To Play Fearless Football Against Oman And UAE

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** His squad packed with youngsters, India head coach Igor Stimac wants his players to play fearless football when the team faces more fancied Oman and the United Arab Emirates in the international friendlies next week.

India play Oman and UAE in Dubai on March 25 and 29 respectively -- their first matches after more than a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic -- as part of preparations for the joint qualifying round matches for 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup.

"We need to come to the pitch without any fear, we need to try to make our transitions properly, and we need to try and enjoy the possession that we have. That's what I want to ask of my players," Stimac told AIFF TV.

"As part of our footballing philosophy, we do not look for easy opponents. We can improve only by playing against better sides. Immediately after we found out (that the World Cup Qualifiers were postponed to June), we were able to confirm two friendlies against Oman and UAE."

Though India are already out of reckoning for a 2022 World Cup berth, they are still left with three matches -- against Qatar (at home) and Afghanistan (at home) and



Bangladesh (away). All the three matches will be played in June.

Stimac said the selection of the 27-man squad was based on a number of criteria, including the Indian Super League form, past performances for the national team and overall experience.

"A conglomeration of different factors (went into deciding the squad). Most of the players made it to the squad on merit. But there are a few who have also proved themselves on the international stage. A few poor performances should not erase them from the squad," said Croatian.

He painted a bright future for Indian football.

"It's a long process, and we are preparing to play and win against the best," he said.

"We are trying to build on the U-17s and develop their knowledge. Football promotion has

grown leaps and bounds in India. Soon, football will take over as the number one sport here."

While the Blue Tigers are set for their return to international football after the pandemic, they will be without their captain and talismanic striker Sunil Chhetri, who has himself tested positive for COVID-19.

Stimac heaped praises on Chhetri, stating that his presence motivates youngsters because not many players of his age can continue performing at such a high level.

"When you watch Sunil this season, you can see that he has improved, even though Bengaluru FC did not play as well. His individual numbers show that," said Stimac.

"It is important for youngsters to develop that knowledge when they are with him. I hope he stays motivated, because there's still space left to improve, and there's a lot left in him."

## Badminton Powerhouse Indonesia Pull Out Of All England After COVID Case On Flight

Press Trust of India

**BIRMINGHAM:** The Indonesian badminton team has withdrawn from the ongoing All England Championships after all players and officials were forced to isolate themselves for 10 days following a COVID-19 positive case of an unnamed passenger in their flight to London, the world governing body (BWF) said on Thursday.

"... a number of players and team members from the Indonesian team have been contacted by the UK Government's National Health Service (NHS) Test and Trace service and are required to self-isolate with immediate effect," the BWF said in a statement.

"In accordance with UK Government requirements, the entire team will self-isolate for 10 days from the date of their inbound flight after a person travelling onboard tested positive for COVID-19."

The world body said results of the matches that has already taken place will stand and "the draw will remain unchanged."

"All scheduled opponents in the next round will be given a walk-over," BWF said.

The withdrawal of the Indonesian players will deplete the field, which has already been affected



after Chinese, Koreans and Chinese Taipei shuttlers decided not to compete in the Super 1000 event.

Indonesian shuttlers Anthony Sinisuka Ginting and Jonatan Christie were fourth and fifth seeds respectively in the men's singles.

In men's doubles, world no 1 Marcus Fernaldi Gideon and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo and world no 2 Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan were the top and second seeds respectively, while world no 7 Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto were seeded fifth.

In mixed doubles, Praveen Jordan and Melati Daeva Oktavianti were the top seeds, while Greysia Polii and Apriyani Rahayu were the third seeds in women's doubles.

"Tonight we're in shock to hear

the news that we (Indonesian players and officials) have to withdraw from All England due to an anonymous passenger tested + for covid that boarded the same flight as we did," Gideon wrote on Instagram.

Gideon slammed BWF for the mismanagement.

"It have to be taken to notice that BWF has failed to organise this matter. Before the flight, all of the Indonesia team have been tested negative & we were also been re-tested by the time we reached the hotel," he said.

"Some of you may notice that the game today was delayed prior to 7 positive cases they found in other team members (other country). After they have been retested, the result were ALL TURNED NEGA-

TIVE. So why don't we also have the same justice here?" he questioned.

The All England Championship was thrown into chaos after few players, including from India, tested positive for COVID-19 and some results came inconclusive.

BWF soon delayed the start of the opening day's play and re-tested all positive and inconclusive results after "sufficient doubt was raised over the accuracy of the original batches of tests submitted by Badminton England."

With all positive and inconclusive results coming negative for COVID-19, the world body decided to include all the players to the draw.

Gideon, who along with Sukamuljo, had reached three finals in the last four years here, said BWF should have a bio-bubble to ensure safety of the players.

"And if there are strict rules for entering the British area due to covid, BWF should have enrolled a bubble system that guarantee our safety. Players should have undergone a quarantine before the event," he wrote.

"To be fair, the person who has been tested + should have undergone another test because truly we have no faith anymore in the covid's test they ran because as you all can see all the 7 positive cases can turned into 7 negative cases in just 1 day."