



P3 CITY

TRADERS MEET COMM SMC, DEMAND PARKING FACILITIES, REDRESSAL TO WATER LOGGING ISSUES

Advocating for drainage, parking of vehicles and installation of street lights in the markets, Kashmir Trade Alliance...

P7 THINK

THE JAM AT SUEZ CANAL

In the early hours of March 23, the container ship Ever Given was blown off course by high winds on its way through the Suez Canal. At 400 metres long, the Ever Given is longer than the canal is wide, and the ship became wedged firmly in both banks,



P5 STATE

'LEAK IN KISHANGANGA DAM': 30 FAMILIES EVACUATED AS LANDSLIDES HIT BANDIPORA

Authorities in north Kashmir's Bandipora district Friday evacuated 30 families to safer places after the fresh landslides occurred at Chak-Mantrigram area of...



Widom Quote!
The best way to see Faith is to shut the eye of Reason.
—Benjamin Franklin

NEWS DIGEST

Rockslides Block Banihal Highway

SRINAGAR: While the Srinagar Jammu highway remained closed on Friday for maintenance, the rockslide at Sarmoli has blocked the road temporarily. An official said that while the restoration process to clear the debris have started, the decision on allowing the traffic movement on the highway will be taken on Saturday morning. **More On P10**

2 Non-Locals Held Over Abduction

SRINAGAR: Two non-locals on Friday were arrested by police for allegedly trying to abduct a girl from Uri town of Baramulla district. Hardev Singh and Gujrant Singh, both residents of Gurdaspur, Punjab were arrested by a police team when they tried to abduct a girl after luring her with a job offer through social media, news agency GNS reported Friday. "After meeting **More On P10**

Shooting Stone Kills Truck Cleaner

SRINAGAR: A truck cleaner on Friday was killed after being hit by shooting stones in Ramban district along the Srinagar-Jammu highway. The cleaner identified as Junaid Ahmad Bhat was killed after his truck stranded on the highway near Digidol area of Ramban came under shooting stones on Friday morning, reports said. Meanwhile, a traffic official said that people are **More On P10**

Ex NHAI Officer Booked In Tender Case

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday said that a case has been registered against the then Regional Officer, national highway authority of India (NHA) and others for allegedly awarding a work contract to an ineligible company. The case was filed against Hem Raj, Regional Officer, NHAI, Jammu and Rakesh Kumar Chaudhary, proprietor of the private company **More On P10**

Missing Driver's Body Found In Chenab

SRINAGAR: Police on Friday recovered the body of a driver, who went missing after an accident in Doda district of Jammu division early this month. Body of 32-year-old Vikram Singh of Sunder Nagar Thakri Kistwar was recovered on Friday afternoon in Chenab river in Doda, twenty days after he went missing after his vehicle rolled into the river on March 6, officials said. Meanwhile, SHO concerned Abid Bukhari said that the **More On P10**

Ghost Of 2016 Unrest Returns To Haunt PDP

NIA Claims Parra Paid Rs 5 Cr To Geelani's Son-In-Law To Keep Kashmir In Turmoil

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The NIA has alleged that PDP youth leader Waheed-ur-Rahman Parra paid Rs 5 crore to the son-in-law of hard-line Hurriyat Conference leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani for keeping Kashmir in turmoil after the death of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani in 2016.

In an exhaustive charge sheet recently filed in a special court in Jammu, the National Investigation Agency accused Parra, who was arrested last November, of being involved with banned militant groups like Hizbul Mujahideen and Lashker-e-Taiba.



The NIA alleged that after the death of Wani, who was killed in an encounter with the Army in July 2016, Parra got in touch with Altaf Ahmad Shah, alias Altaf Fantoosh, and asked him to ensure that the Valley was kept on the boil with widespread unrest and stone pelting. Parra, through his lawyer, has been denying these charges and claimed he was arrested for political reasons. He was granted bail by the NIA court, which said there was no reference to him in the original, as well as the supplementary charge sheets presented in July and October last year respectively. **More On P10**



Govt Trying To Dismantle PDP: Mehbooba

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Friday accused the Centre of trying to dismantle her party by luring and threatening its members. Her remarks come a day after she was grilled for five hours by the Enforcement Directorate at its Srinagar office in connection with a money laundering case. In a tweet, the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister charged, " **More On P10**

ROHINGYAS DETENTION

Country Can't Be Capital For Illegal Immigrants, GoI Tells SC

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The country cannot be the capital for illegal immigrants, the Centre told the Supreme Court which on Friday reserved order on a fresh plea seeking directions for immediate release of detained Rohingya refugees in Jammu and restrain the government from implementing any order deporting them to Myanmar. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde refused to



hear at this stage the intervention application filed by United Nations special rapporteur in the matter. We will not hear you today. There is serious objection to it, the bench told the counsel appearing for the UN special rapporteur. We are closing it for order, said the bench, which also comprised Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, after hearing submissions on the fresh plea. During the arguments, advocate Prashant Bhushan, **More On P10**

Modi Honours Mujibur Rahman With Gandhi Prize

Press Trust Of India

DHAKA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday handed over the Gandhi Peace Prize 2020, being conferred by India upon Bangladesh's 'Father of the Nation' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to his daughter Sheikh Rehana and the younger sister of premier Sheikh Hasina. Modi arrived in Bangladesh on a two-day visit to attend the celebrations of the golden jubilee of the country's independence, the birth centenary of **More On P10**

Teen Brother Of Slain Militants Goes Missing

Agencies

SRINAGAR: A teenager has gone missing from his home in south Kashmir's Tral town for nearly a week triggering speculation of him having joined a militant outfit. 19-year-old Kashif Mir a student of eleventh standard, as per a family member went missing from his home in Dadsara, Tral on March 20. "We have been looking for him at every possible place however have been unable to locate him for nearly a week

RS 270 CRORE LOAN FRAUD

ACB Charges 2 Former J&K Bank Managers, Others

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Anti-Corruption Bureau on Friday filed a charge sheet against two former managers of J&K Bank and others in the whopping Rs 270 crore J&K Bank loan fraud case.

The ACB has registered a case (FIR No. 15/2019) on 24 July 2019 at police station ACB Srinagar on the basis of an information which was the outcome of a verification conducted into the allegations of financial irregularities in the loans availed by M/s Aman Hospitality Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi from the Ansal Plaza Branch of



the J&K Bank New Delhi, ACB said in a statement. "It was alleged that the officers of J&K Bank Ansal Plaza Branch had given loan worth crores of rupees to this firm and in connivance with the firm the

loan amounts so sanctioned were declared as NPA to facilitate the firm to have a One Time Settlement to its advantage." The firm had apparently availed Rs 227 crores as term Loan alongwith **More On P10**

CAG Report Picks Holes In SRTC Planning, Operations

Agencies

SRINAGAR: A performance audit of the Jammu & Kashmir State Road Transport Corporation between 2014-15 to 2018-19 has brought out instances of certain deficiencies in its planning, operational performance, internal controls etc. In its report for the year ended March 31, 2019, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India have revealed that capital infused by the Government was not efficiently used by the Corporation,

which was set-up in 1976. "Despite 20 per cent increase in paid up share Capital from Rs 204.74 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 245.57 crore in 2018-19, there was a 33 per cent increase in accumulated losses from Rs 1,229.56 crore to Rs 1,639.01 crore which indicated that capital infused by the Government was not efficiently utilized by the Corporation," reads the report. The shortfall in achievement of targets of operative fleet and revenue collection targets during the period from 2014-15 to **More On P10**

Driving Licence, Vehicle Docs Valid Till June: Govt

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The government on Friday extended the validity of motor vehicle documents like driving licence (DL), registration certificate (RC) and permits till June 30, 2021, in view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In an advisory to states, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) said it is extending the validity of fitness, permit, driving licence, registration and **More On P10**

J&K Logs 210 Cases, Highest Single Day Spike

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir recorded sharpest single-day spike in number of coronavirus cases this year as 210 fresh infections, besides one fatality due to the virus were reported in the Union Territory during the last 24 hours. Officials said Friday that one more person succumbed to **More On P10**

Over 84% Active Cases In 4 Districts

The four districts of Jammu and Kashmir count for over 84 per cent of the total active cases of Covid-19. As per **More On P10**

Kashmiri Beautician's Brush With Big Screen

Auqib Javeed

She may be part of yet another domino effect in the valley, but unlike others, Monisa Zargar's rise as a celeb cosmetologist is a childhood love affair almost shattered by her father's sudden demise in her teens. But the departure couldn't gobble her passion, as she found a supporting sibling at her side, before her spouse became her shadow.

There're stories, and then there're glories glossed by her sharp-eyed pursuit.



"Would you believe it," says the 34-year-old makeup artist with a teen's curiosity, "that I did my own makeup on my

wedding day!" Since her childhood, Monisa Zargar has been fond of beauty brushes. She would initially adorn her relatives on special occasions, like marriage ceremonies and other parties.

Over the years, the walled passion became a full-fledged profession for this Srinagar girl. "When I was still trying to explore my dreams, my father passed away," she says. "It was a big blow for me."

As a teenager, she saw her mother struggling as a single parent to support her and her

two siblings. Later, her brother's abroad shift brought the much-needed relief.

Years later, and after her marriage in 2018, Monisa shared the idea of starting a make-up studio with her husband.

With his support, she flew to New Delhi and completed a yearlong course in cosmetology from Lakmé.

When she came back, the concept of makeup art was still emerging in Kashmir, with many young Kashmiri women trying to make career out of it. "I never **More On P10**



Final Israeli Election Results Confirm Deadlock

Agenceis

Final election results have shown Israel in a political deadlock once again, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his opponents falling short of a governing majority.

Tuesday's vote, Israel's fourth parliamentary election in two years, was widely seen as a referendum on Netanyahu's fitness to rule while on trial for corruption.

He put Israel's highly successful vaccination drive at the centre of his campaign but was criticised for earlier missteps during the pandemic and for refusing to step down after being indicted.

Israel's election commission said on Thursday that with 100 percent of votes counted, Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party and his natural allies have won 52 seats in the 120-seat Knesset, Israel's parliament. An ideologically diverse array of parties committed to replacing him won 57 seats.

A right-wing party led by former Netanyahu ally Naftali Bennett won seven seats and an Arab Islamist party led by Mansour Abbas won four. Both are uncommitted, but given the many rivalries in parliament, it is not clear whether either can deliver a required majority.

But on Thursday, head of the Religious Zionist Party, Bezalel Smotrich, said "there won't be a right-wing government with the support of Abbas," effectively closing the door on a possible union between Israel's Islamist and religious Jewish parties.

Gideon Saar, a defector from Netanyahu's Likud who now heads a six-seat party committed to removing him, said "it is clear that Netanyahu does not have a majority to form a government under his leadership. Action must now be taken to realise the pos-

sibility of forming a government for change".

Likud, which won the most seats of any party, fired back, saying such a bloc would be "anti-democratic". It compared Netanyahu's opponents to the religious leadership in Israel's arch-enemy Iran, which vets candidates for high office.

Yohanan Plesner, president of the Israel Democracy Institute, described the deadlock as Israel's "worst political crisis in decades".

"It's apparent that our political system finds it very difficult to produce a decisive outcome," Plesner said.

He added that inherent weaknesses in Israel's electoral system are compounded by "the Netanyahu factor": a popular prime minister struggling to stay in power while under indictment.

"Israelis are split right down the middle on this question."

Several of Netanyahu's opponents have started discussing advancing a bill to disqualify a politician under indictment from being tasked with forming a government, a measure aimed at barring the long-serving prime minister from office. A similar bill was floated after the March 2020 elections, but was never passed.

Netanyahu is on trial for fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three cases. He has denied any wrongdoing and has dismissed the charges as a witch-hunt by biased law enforcement and media.

Despite the charges against him, Netanyahu's Likud party received about a quarter of the votes, making it the largest party in parliament.

A total of 13 parties received enough votes to enter the Knesset – the most since the 2003 election – and represent a variety of ultra-Orthodox, Arab, secular, nationalist and liberal factions.

Yemen Hits Saudi Oil Facilities, Naval Base With Drones, Missiles



Agenceis

Yemeni armed forces have carried out a series of retaliatory missile and drone strikes against Saudi Arabia, targeting state-owned Saudi Aramco oil facilities in the kingdom's southern regions as well as King Abdulaziz Air Base in the Eastern Province.

Spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces, Brigadier General Yahya Saree, said in a statement released on Friday morning that 12 domestically-manufactured Sammad-3 (Invincible-3) combat drones in addition to eight ballistic missiles of Zulfiqar, Badr and Saer types struck targets in the Saudi cities of Ras Tanura, Rabigh, Yanbu as well as Jizan, home to key Saudi Aramco oil installations, as part of large-scale Operation National Day of Resilience.

He said that King Abdulaziz Air Base, also known as Dhahran Air Base, in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province capital city of Dammam was also targeted in the drone and missile strikes.

The Yemeni forces also launched six Qasef-2K (Striker-2K) armed drones against military sites in Saudi Arabia's Najran, situated 844 kilometers (524 miles) south of the capital Riyadh, and

Asir regions.

Saree said the drone and missile attacks struck their designated targets with great precision.

He warned Saudi Arabia and its allies of the dire consequences of their ongoing war and blockade against the Yemeni nation.

He said the Yemeni armed forces and allies are fully prepared to carry out harsher and more severe military operations against targets in the depth of aggressor countries. Saudi Arabia's defense ministry said it plans to take deterrent actions to protect oil export facilities following the attacks, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

A Saudi opposition activist who uses the Twitter handle "Mujtahidd" to expose corruption, inner state of affairs, and under the table workings of politics within the Saudi royal family, wrote in a post that Saudi missile defense systems in Najran and Jizan failed to intercept Yemeni drones and repel their attacks.

Yemenis rally to mark war anniversary

Tens of thousands of people rallied across Yemen Friday to show their support for the popular Ansarullah movement and reiterate their strong resistance in the face of the devastating Saudi-led mili-

tary campaign as the Yemen war entered its seventh year.

Men, women and children gathered in Sabeen Square in central Sana'a since the early hours of Friday morning, waving the red, white and black national flags.

They chanted slogans against Saudi Arabia, which leads the military coalition against Yemen, and denounced US support for it.

They also lashed out at the US main ally in the region, Israel, for destroying their country. Similar rallies were staged in the northern Yemeni province of al-Jawf, and Raymah province close to Sana'a. People in other regions planned to attend similar mass rallies later in the day to mark the National Day of Resilience.

Saudi Arabia has lost war: Deutsche Welle

A senior associate at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs said Saudi Arabia has failed in its military onslaught against Yemen.

"Saudi Arabia has lost the war in Yemen – and that is chiefly because the Biden administration has made clear that it no longer supports the Saudi operations there," Germany's Deutsche Welle (DW) television news network quoted him as saying.

32 Killed, 91 Injured As Two Trains Collide In Central Egypt



Agenceis

CAIRO: At least 32 people were killed and 91 injured when two trains collided in central Egypt on Friday, health ministry officials said.

"Unknown individuals" triggered the emergency brakes on one of the trains causing it to stop, the rail authority said. The second train, which was travelling in the same direction, crashed into the first from behind, it added.

Pictures showed train carriages derailed, several of them badly damaged, above a channel of water, as crowds looked on.

The public prosecutor's office said it had ordered an investigation into the crash, which took place close to the Nile-side town of Tahta, about 365 km (230 miles) south of Cairo.

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah

al-Sisi mourned the victims of the crash in a statement posted on his official social media and said those responsible would be punished.

Sisi also told Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly to head to the site of the crash with the ministers of health and social solidarity, state television reported.

The health ministry said 32 people had died and dozens of ambulances were taking casualties to local hospitals. A health ministry spokesman said 91 people were injured.

Egypt has one of the oldest and largest rail networks in the region and accidents involving casualties are common.

In the country's worst train disaster, a fire tore through seven carriages of an overcrowded passenger train in 2002, killing at least 360 people.

Indonesia Bans Ramadan Exodus Over Virus Fears



Agenceis

Muslim majority Indonesia on Friday banned an annual exodus that sees millions travel across the vast nation to mark the end of Ramadan over fears of a surge in Covid-19 infections.

Travellers pack into airports, train stations and ports across the nearly 5,000-kilometre-long archipelago in a mass migration, known as Mudik, that is similar to China's Lunar New Year holiday or Christmas.

Many head to hometowns in time for celebrations at the end of Islam's holy fasting month, a festival known as Eid al-Fitr. Ramadan ends in mid-May this year.

On Friday, the government said it was banning the exodus as Indonesia – one of the worst-hit nations in Asia – rolls out a massive inoculation campaign.

The country earlier announced an ambitious target to vaccinate

more than 181 million of its nearly 270 million people within a year.

"There will be no Mudik in 2021," Culture Minister Muhadjir Effendy said in a statement, citing fears of spreading the virus and inoculation efforts.

But he added that some may get exemptions for "urgent travel," without elaborating.

Fearing a public health disaster, the government last year slapped a ban on domestic sea and air travel and set up roadblocks to stop the cross-country movement.

But many took advantage of loopholes in the rules – as well as relying on people smugglers and bogus travel documents – to get around the ban.

Indonesia has officially reported nearly 1.5 million infections and more than 40,000 deaths.

But low testing rates mean the crisis is believed to be much more severe than those figures suggest.

PM Modi Hails Bangabandhu's Leadership, Indian Army's Contribution In Bangladesh's Independence War

Press Trust of India

DHAKA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday hailed Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's leadership and the contributions of the Indian Army in Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War as he joined his counterpart Sheikh Hasina and President Abdul Hamid in celebrating the golden jubilee of the country's independence and the birth centenary of its founder.

Addressing Bangladesh's 50th Independence anniversary at the National Parade Square, Modi recalled the role played by the Indian Army in the freedom war and said the blood of those who fought for their liberation and the blood of Indian soldiers are flowing together and this blood will form a relationship that will not break down under any type of pressure.

"I salute the brave soldiers of the Indian Army who stood with the brothers and sisters of Bangladesh in Muktiyuddo. Those who gave their blood in Muktiyuddo, sacrificed themselves, and played a very big role in realising the dream of independent Bangladesh," said Modi, who is visiting Bangladesh on his first trip to a foreign country since

the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Modi, who was wearing a 'Mujib Jacket' as tribute to Bangladesh's Father of the Nation, said that Bangabandhu's leadership and bravery had ensured that no power could enslave Bangladesh.

Under Bangabandhu's leadership, common people of Bangladesh across the social spectrum came together and became 'Muktibahini', Modi said, adding Bangladesh's Liberation War had support from all corners of India, from all parties, every section of the society.

"This is one of the most memorable days of my life. I am grateful that Bangladesh has included me in this event. I am grateful that Bangladesh has invited India to take part in this function. It is a matter of our pride that we got the opportunity to honour Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with Gandhi Peace Prize," he said.

The Gandhi Peace Prize 2020 was conferred on Bangabandhu early this week. It was for the first time that the award was given away posthumously.

At the beginning of the programme, Modi handed over the Gandhi Peace Prize to Bangabandhu's daughters – Prime Minister Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana.

Recalling the 1971 war of independence, Modi said the pictures of atrocities that the Pakistan Army inflicted on the people in then-East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) used to distract people in India. "I must have been 20-22 years old when I and my colleagues did Satyagraha for Bangladesh's freedom," he told the gathering.

The war broke out after the sudden crackdown at midnight past on March 25, 1971 in the erstwhile East Pakistan by the Pakistani troops and ended on December 16. The same year Pakistan conceded defeat and unconditionally surrendered in Dhaka to the allied forces comprising the freedom fighters and the Indian soldiers. Officially three million people were killed during the nine-month long war.

Modi said the next 25 years are crucial for both India and Bangladesh. "Our heritage is shared, our growth is shared, our targets and opportunities are also shared," he said.

He said both India and Bangladesh have the power of democracy and vision for the future, and it is necessary for the region the two countries progress together. "That is why Indian and Bangladesh governments are making meaningful efforts in this direction," he said.

NEWS MAKERS

US University To Pay Over \$1 Billion In Gynaecologist Sex Abuse Settlement

Agenceis

A top California university has agreed to pay more than \$1 billion to hundreds of women who accused a former campus gynaecologist of sexual abuse, lawyers representing plaintiffs said Thursday.

University of Southern California reached agreements totaling \$852 million that were revealed at a Los Angeles court Thursday, on top of \$215 million resulting from an earlier federal class action in 2018.

According to lawyer Gloria Allred, it is the "highest single sexual abuse and sexual harassment settlement against a university in

civil litigation history."

George Tyndall has been accused of abuse by hundreds of female patients during medical examinations over the course of his 30-year career, in a scandal that has engulfed the university. Accusations against Tyndall, ranging from inappropriate touching to rape, date as far back as 1990. The youngest accuser was aged 17.

The doctor, now 74, has been accused of taking photos of patients' genitals, groping their breasts and making lewd remarks about their physiques, as well as racist and homophobic comments.

He allegedly targeted minority students – including many from

the university's large Asian student population. Thousands of former patients have sued the university for failing to adequately respond to the allegations against Tyndall, claiming that the institution was aware of the doctor's actions but continued to allow him access to students.

Tyndall was not investigated by USC officials until 2016, and was allowed to retire under an amicable agreement with the university, reportedly involving a \$200,000 pay-off.

"The nurses who were sometimes present for his exams literally looked the other way," said plaintiff Jane Doe 48 at a virtual press conference Thursday.

Owner Of Ship Stuck In Egypt's Suez Canal Offers Apology

Agenceis

The Japanese owner of a skyscraper-sized cargo ship wedged across Egypt's Suez Canal has apologised for the incident that's imperiling global shipping.

Shohei Kisen, apologised on Thursday over the tremendous worry that the accident has caused to the other vessels and their involved parties. Shohei Kisen said it is cooperating with its technical management company and the local authorities to get the ship afloat, but the operation is extremely difficult.

It added: We are extremely sorry for causing tremendous worry to the ships that are traveling or

schedule to travel in the Suez Canal, and all the related people.

At least 150 vessels are waiting to use the Suez Canal after a skyscraper-sized cargo ship wedged across the vital waterway. That's according to canal service provider Leth Agencies. It says the backup Thursday affected ships both needing to travel into the Mediterranean and the Red Seas.

The Ever Given, a Panama-flagged ship that carries cargo between Asia and Europe, ran aground Tuesday in the narrow, man-made canal dividing continental Africa from the Sinai Peninsula. It remains unclear when the obstruction will be cleared.

Agenceis

The cargo ship blocking the Suez Canal is holding up traffic that carries nearly \$10 billion worth of goods every day, so a quick clearing of the logjam is key to limiting the economic fallout.

Efforts continued Thursday to dislodge the Ever Given container ship and restore traffic on the critical man-made waterway that connects the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and provides a shipping shortcut between Europe and Asia.

How vital is the canal to shipping? About 10% of all global trade flows through the 120-mile-long (193-kilometre-long) canal, which allows tankers and container ships to avoid a long trip around the southern tip of Africa.

The iconic shipping journal Lloyd's List estimates that goods worth \$9.6 billion pass through the canal every day. Lloyd's says about \$5.1 billion of that traffic is westbound and \$4.5 billion is eastbound.

About one-fourth of that traffic is on container ships – like the one that is currently burrowed into one side wall of the canal. Lloyd's says more than 50 ships traverse the canal on an average day, carrying 1.2 billion tons of cargo.

What effect will this have on supply chains?

When it comes to shipping goods from Asia to Europe, there are virtually no alternatives such as rail or truck transportation, said Sharat Ganapati, an economics professor at Georgetown University. The blockage will delay a range of parts and raw materials for European products such as cotton from India for clothes, petroleum from the Middle East for plastics, and auto parts from China, he said.

"The fact that you have the most pivotal node in the trading network being blocked is going to have important welfare effects around the world," said Woan Foong Wong, an economics professor at the University of Oregon.

There will be less direct impact on the United States, which receives most shipments from Asia on the West Coast. Still, imports from Europe may be delayed, and the blockage will prevent empty shipping containers from being returned to Asia, adding to a container shortage caused by rising demand for consumer goods during the pandemic.

"If you get a bump in one place, that is going to percolate through the system," Ganapati said. "It is going to take a while to get things un-gummed up."

Is the supply chain in trouble? The Suez situation could compound issues for a supply chain already under pressure from the pandemic and a surge in buying.

Ship Blocking Suez Canal Holds Up Goods Worth USD 10 Billion Every Day



Agenceis

Virus-related restrictions have trapped crews on merchant ships. Congested ports have led to container ships anchoring off the California coast, unable to dock and unload their goods. Shortages of semiconductors and rare-earth elements have plagued manufacturers of cars and other consumer products.

"We have lots of things indicating a vulnerable supply chain at risk for disruptions, and now you put one more thing on top of that," said Julie More than, a logistics expert at North Carolina State University.

How will consumers be affected?

It's possible that U.S. consumers will feel some impact if shipping is disrupted for more than a few days. Finished products from Asia to the United States go over the Pacific. However, some components for products that are assembled in Europe and shipped to the U.S. could be delayed by the canal closure. Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, said the canal blockage likely won't have much impact on the U.S. or global economies unless it drags on for weeks or months.

It may push up oil prices, "but we are not talking dollars on the barrel, we are talking pennies on the barrel," Zandi said.

Germany's economy could suffer, though, if the blockage delays the shipment of auto parts to that company's large car manufacturers, Zandi said.

And Spain, Italy, and France could see higher gas prices because they rely on oil shipments through the canal, Ganapati said.

What about oil shipments?

About 1.9 million barrels of oil a day go through the canal, according to Lloyd's. That's about 7% of all seaborne oil. The closure could affect shipments of oil and natural gas from the Mideast to Europe. S&P Global Platts Analytics said about 1 million barrels of crude and 1.4 million barrels of gasoline and other refined products flow from the Middle East and Asia north through the canal to Europe on the average day.

Jim Burkhard, who heads crude oil research at IHS Markit, said the impact on the global oil market will be limited if the canal is cleared soon. Energy demand is still weak due to the pandemic, and the Samed pipeline has unused capacity to move oil around the canal, from one end near Alexandria, Egypt, to a terminal near the Red Sea.

"If this were to last a month, there are other options – you can sail around Africa. Of course, that would add cost," Burkhard said. "If this ship is moved in the next week, it will be a footnote in history when it comes to the oil market."

VC SKUAST-J, Social Activist Call On LG



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Prof. JP Sharma, Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST-Jammu, Friday called on the Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha at Raj Bhavan.

The Vice-Chancellor briefed the Lt Governor on various ongoing outreach activities, and research programmes in the University, besides other issues of academic and administrative importance.

The Lt Governor asked the VC to lay special emphasis on seamless transfer of technology from labs to fields, and bring in qualitative improvement in the overall functioning of the University, strengthening the teaching and research ecosystem, with a special focus on most recent advancements.

The Lt Governor and the VC discussed various issues pertaining to the establishment of Faculties for Horticulture, Agriculture Engineering and Dairy Technology, be-

sides KVKS at Ramban, Kishtwar and Udhampur.

Meanwhile, Dr. CK Gariyali, a retired IAS officer, who is working for the welfare of Kashmiri Pandit Migrants also met the Lt Governor and apprised him of various concerns of the community.

Dr. Gariyali was accompanied by the office-bearers of HelpLine Humanity-an NGO. She also presented her book titled "Kashmir - the Land of Kashyapa" to the Lt Governor.

The Lt Governor, while interacting with the delegation, observed that the UT Government is working with the agenda of equitable development and is committed to safeguarding the rights and welfare of every section of the society.

On being apprised of the issue of recruitments of Kashmiri Pandit Migrants under Prime Minister's Package, the Lt Governor observed that the work on 6000 jobs for them has been accelerated.

Twin Road Accidents Kill 12-Year-Old Girl In Rajouri, Injure 10 Others

Observer News Service

RAJOURI: A 12-year-old girl died on the spot and eight others were injured in a road accident in Rajouri district on Friday.

According to reports, the accident took place near Thana Mandi when the vehicle went out of control of the driver, rolled off the road and fell into a ditch a few meters deep.

A senior police official while confirming the accident said, "As a result of the accident, 12-year-

old Shahida Konsar daughter of Muhammad Altaf died on the spot and eight others were injured".

Two persons were injured in another road accident in Manjot area of the district. The two men riding on a motorbike collided with a roadside structure.

Meanwhile, the duo have been identified as Mohammad Atiq and Mohammad Sami who have been shifted to GMC Rajouri for treatment. According to the senior officials of GMC Rajouri, condition of the persons is said to be stable. (CNS)

SKUAST Wadoora Campus Students Complain Of Unhygienic, Substandard Food

Observer News Service

SOPORE: The girl students of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology (SKUAST) Campus in Wadoora Sopore area of North Kashmir's Baramulla district Friday alleged that they are being served substandard and unhygienic food in hostel mess.

The students said there are 3 batches of students who are taking food at mess. "We don't know what's happening at boys mess, but the mess for girls is unhygienic. Recently, we spotted worms in the food. This is not what we pay for. Nobody is concerned when it comes to the wellbeing of the students," the students said.

"Self cooking is not allowed in the hostels. We have now stopped visiting mess and rely on junk food that we order from outside," the students said. The students said that they have complained to the warden many times but he is yet to act. They said recently they brought the matter into the notice of Assistant Students Welfare Officer but still nothing changed.

Assistant Students Welfare Officer Ajaz Ahmed Qureshi said that he will definitely take note of it. "It is a Cooperative mess where students manage the affairs through a committee, however, supervisor and cooks are from University. Why these students face such problem will be looked into," Qureshi said.

'LEAK IN KISHANGANGA DAM' 30 Families Evacuated As Landslides Hit Bandipora 'Experts To Ascertain Cause Behind Frequent Landslides'



Agences

BANDIPORA: Authorities in north Kashmir's Bandipora district Friday evacuated 30 families to safer places after the fresh landslides occurred at Chak-Mantrigram area of the district, officials said.

Officials said that 30 families were shifted to safer places including government quarters and other places during an evacuation process, conducted under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner Bandipora.

He said the Deputy Commissioner also visited Chak-Mantrigram area and took stock of the evacuation of the families.

Meanwhile, locals alleged that there is leakage in Kishanganga Hydroelectric power project, adding, days after the power project was commissioned; a similar situation took place in the area following which they staged a protest also to press for the demands.

The locals also said that the landslides, which are causing threat to the village, are occurring

due to Kishanganga hydroelectric project dam. They said that the excessive water leakage and persistent landslides has threatened the nearby orchards and left the houses vulnerable to collapse.

Moreover, Deputy Commissioner Bandipora said that they are calling the experts from outside to verify the cause behind the frequent landslides. "We are monitoring the situation closely," he said.

He, however, appealed the people not to worry as there is no threat as of now—(KNO)

PAGD Maintains Silence On Mehbooba's Questioning By ED

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), a conglomerate of different political parties including J&K's single largest party National Conference (NC), and other regional parties have opted to maintain a 'pin drop silence' over PDP Chief's questioning by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Mehbooba Mufti was grilled by the probing agency for all but five hours on Wednesday. Soon after coming out from hours-long questioning by ED from its Rajbagh Zonal office, the PDP chief unfolded that during the course of questioning she was 'forced to sign a statement.

However, the allies of PDP in PAGD have not uttered a single word or statement in favor of solidarity with Mehbooba Mufti, who is also holding the vice-president post in the alliance.

While criticizing PAGD, senior Journalist & Political analyst Ahmed Ali Fayyaz took to Twitter and wrote, "Not a word from @JKPAGD, other Kashmir parties over @jpkdp president @MehboobaMufti being grilled by ED for 5 hours and 'forced' to sign a statement. Is it now 'paneve panev'?"

Moreover, when the NC chief and PAGD President, Farooq Abdullah was previously grilled by the same probing agency in



connection with a money-laundering probe in a case related to the alleged embezzlement of Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association funds, Mehbooba Mufti had then strongly reacted over Farooq's grilling and had termed the summoning and subsequently questioning as a political vendetta.

She had then said, 'sudden' summons to Farooq shows the Centre's nervousness over the coming together of Jammu and Kashmir's mainstream political parties for the restoration of special status."

Insiders said that when NC's Farooq Abdullah was questioned by ED all political parties including 'PAGD' had issued statements condemning the move but ironi-

cally this time around NC has not returned the favor.

"If PAGD can't defend its key member, how can we expect them to defend other lower rung politicians in general and interests of people of J&K in particular," they questioned.

A Political analyst wishing anonymity said that the silence of the PAGD allies is intriguing and indicates that no mainstream party in Kashmir wants to be against the ruling BJP.

He said, moreover it is a weakening sign of the mainstream political parties.

"The mainstream political parties seem crushed too after the abrogation of article 370, which is weakening their electoral ground in the Valley," he added. (KDC)

Kupwara Village Demands Replacement Of 'Worn Out' Transformer

Observer News Service

KUPWARA: The residents of Mirnag village in Hyhama in North Kashmir's Pulwama district Friday demanded immediate replacement of a 6.3-MVA transformer. The transformer was damaged due to the landslides in the area following continuous rains.

The residents said the town was reeling under darkness as they are without electricity for the last one week.

"It is very difficult to say how we are living in darkness," said John Muhammad, a resident of the Hyhama area in the town, adding that the transformer had suffered damages several times in the last three years.

"It is not the first time that we have been reeling under darkness but during the last three years the transformer has suffered damages several times," said Maqbool Ahmad, a resident of Mirnag, adding that they fail to understand why the transformer has not been replaced.

Superintendent Engineer of the area said the transformer was damaged due to landslides and promised that the transformer would be replaced soon. He said the locality was getting power supply on a rotation basis and the transformer was worn out and needed to be replaced. "We have proposed a new transformer with more capacity that could bear the load of the feeders it feeds," he said. (CNS)

DC Anantnag Asks Officers To Ensure Hoisting Of 'National Flag' On Govt Buildings

Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Piyush Singla Friday issued a circular for hoisting of National Flag on all government buildings and offices across the district.

It has been impressed upon all

district, sectoral, tehsil and block level officers to comply with the directions therein and ensure that the National Flag is flown on all Government buildings within a period of 15 days. The district heads have further been instructed to submit the progress report on a daily basis in this regard.

Hoisting Of 'National Flag' On Govt Buildings Made Mandatory In Jammu

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Divisional Commissioner office Jammu has asked all the Deputy Commissioners and Heads of the Departments to implement the directions of Lieutenant Governor, J&K regarding hoisting of National flag on all the Government buildings within next fifteen days.

As per a communiqué by the Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, the Deputy Commissioners/Divisional Heads of various Departments of Jammu Division have been asked to ensure strict compliance of the directions of the Lieutenant Governor, J&K, as per the provisions of Flag Code of India within next fifteen days, under intimation to the Div com office.

Development Only Visible In Hashtags And Shoddy Media Propaganda: NC

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: National Conference (NC) on Friday stated that the much touted "change" is not visible on ground in Jammu or Ladakh, saying the entire region continues to remain on edge.

In a statement issued by the party, Provincial President Nasir Aslam Wani said this while addressing scores of party functionaries office bearers from Amira Kadal constituency at party headquarters Nawa e subha, Srinagar. On the occasion Nasir launched the party's membership drive.

Addressing the functionaries he said development is only visible in the hashtags of social media and shoddy propaganda on the media. The promised flood of fresh investments, employment extravaganzas, and up gradation and augmentation of basic infrastructure is also not visible on ground. The Political vacuum and ever increasing gap between administration



and people is another stark feature of the ruling BJP's new version of Naya Kashmir," he said.

He said the much touted development agenda, employment and up gradation of infrastructure is nowhere in the to-do list of the government. On the contrary, the government is busy doing window dressing. The response of the government to the successive weather vagaries since autumn last year coupled with its failure to curb the resurgence of COVID-19 is also a telling indictment of indifference of the unrelated bureaucracy towards issues confronting people—(KNO)

Statehood Only Panacea To People's Sufferings: Apni Party

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Apni Party President Altaf Bukhari Friday observed that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are enduring immense agonies on account of an unnecessary delay in their political empowerment.

Addressing a joining ceremony at the Party office in Lal Chowk, Srinagar, Bukhari said that there is no substitute to an elected government and a bureaucratic regime can never address the aspirations of the people

"People give vent to their day-to-day based sufferings when they meet us. I think the sense of accountability is missing in our bureaucratic set-up. But it happens when you have no elected government in place," he said, while underlining the need for early restoration of the Statehood.

Bukhari said that Apni Party has been repeatedly urging the government of India not to delay the restoration of statehood to J&K. "And we are of firm belief that the Statehood alone can prove panacea to the people's sufferings," he remarked.

He also said that the situation in J&K remains appalling with regard to the abrupt stagnation of developmental projects due to the lackadaisical approach of the current administration.

"Apni Party wants resolution to the problems faced by the people at large. The developmental works have come to a standstill in absence of a democratically elected government and it has become imperative at this point of time that the right to elect an accountable government is given back to the people," Bukhari said.

He further said that Apni Party adheres to the principle of 'politics of truth' which demands sincerity and efforts at grass root levels. The new entrants from Shopian thanked the Party leadership for providing them with such a platform and avowed to strengthen the party at grass root level.

SKUAST-K Conducts Plantation Drive At Faculty Of Forestry And Fisheries

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Plantation drive was Friday conducted at Faculty of Forestry, Benhama-Watlar campus, Ganderbal, SKUAST-K.

The Programme was inaugurated by Professor Tariq H Masoodi, Dean Faculty of Forestry. The week long programme of Plantation drive is going on at the campus.

"Today the students of M.Sc and Ph.D Programme participated in the drive. Prof. Masoodi emphasised upon the importance of the plantation drive. The campus is going green day by day. Today's Programme incharge Dr Parveez A Sofi told students to take care of the plants afterwards. Dr Asif A Gato, Scientist and Dr Syed Naseem Geelani, Senior Scientist/HoD (organising Secretary) also participated in the drive," a SKUAST statement said.

Another Plantation drive was organised at Faculty of Fisheries, Rangil Ganderbal. This was in collaboration with the Faculty of Fisheries.

The students of Faculty of Forestry and Fisheries took part in the plantation drive. The Plantation was done at Sheikh Hamza Boys Hostel, Rangil. Faculty of Forestry provided free of cost the plants to all those who are willing to go for such plantations. The drive was inaugurated by Professor M.H.Balkhi, Director Education



cum Dean, Faculty of Fisheries in presence of Professor K.K.Sharma, former Dean, Jammu University and Dr Gowhar Bilal, Dr Bilal A Bhat, Dr Inayatullah Chisti, Dr Mansoor, warden Boys Hostel, Naseema Bandy, Assistant Registrar from Faculty of Fisheries. Dr Syed Naseem Geelani, Head Division of Social and Basic Sciences and Students Welfare Officer from Faculty of Forestry, represented Dean, FoF in the Plantation drive programme.

On the occasion Students of Boys Hostel organised a farewell party on the Superannuation of Professor MH Balkhi who is superannuating on 31st March, 2021.

On the occasion Dr Syed Naseem Geelani said that Professor Balkhi has done his best in establishment of Faculty of Fisheries. He has used his every source and energy to establish the faculty at its present position.

Masoodi Seeks Augmentation Of Public Healthcare System In J&K

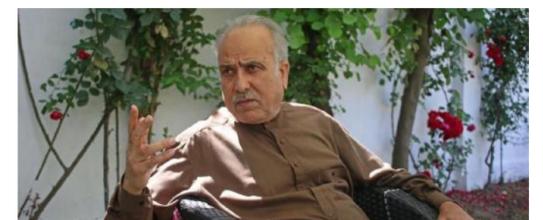
Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC) Member of Parliament from Anantnag Hasnain Masoodi Friday sought augmentation of public healthcare system and strengthening of District Child Protection Units (DCPU) across Jammu and Kashmir.

Masoodi, participating in the discussion in Lok Sabha on Health and Allied Workers Bill reminding the government that an exercise to regulate Health and Allied Workers would not get the desired results, unless the government sets up institutions to train the requisite workforce to supplement the existing inadequate manpower.

Emphasising that almost the entire rural population and urban poor depend on the public healthcare system, he said it is important to have Paramedics like radiology Assistants, Lab technicians, Dialysis Assistants etc available at least at PHC, Sub District Hospital level.

"The situation on ground in Jammu and Kashmir is far from satisfactory, it was pointed out. Therefore the government should establish at least one Paramedical College in each district and create opportunities for the available trained and expected to



be trained manpower," he said.

Masoodi expressing reservations to the amendments in Juvenile Justice Act that provide for centralisation of powers under the Act in a District Magistrate stated that a District with different roles is overburdened and may have little time for a sensitive issue like child care and child protection.

He asked the government to instead strengthen the District Child Protection Unit and post a senior officer with commitment to the cause as District Child Protection Officer. He reminded the Minister that child rights were a priority for Jammu and Kashmir and the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir was the first such document in the Sub-Continent that recognised a happy childhood and free and compulsory education till 14.

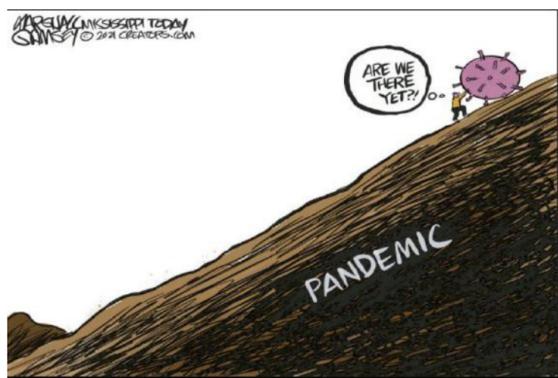
While prescribing the high academic standards was a welcome step, Masoodi cautioned that the vacant positions would attract the talent available in the marketplace only if better emoluments were offered. Earlier responding to a question asked by Masoodi, the Minister of Mines and Minerals informed Masoodi that an amount of Rs 33000 crore was collected on account of Mineral Fund in Jammu and Kashmir during 20-21 and out of it Rs 23,000 crore spent. He was assured that he would be associated with the use of funds collected during the current financial year.

Masoodi stated that Jammu and Kashmir as a conflict zone witnessed large scale violence during the last three decades giving rise to grave mental health issues and asked the government to strengthen the mental healthcare system—(KNO)

KASHMIR
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NO HOLDS BARRED



Several rich nations, from the UK to Canada, have hoarded enough doses to vaccinate their entire populations several times over. Of the 225 million vaccine doses that have been administered so far, the vast majority have been in a handful of rich countries, while most low- and middle-income countries have been left to watch and wait

Path Breaking or Anti Small Businesses?

On Late Fees on Filing 'Nil' GST return

KRISHNA AGARWAL

The GST Council must understand the ground reality and problems faced by the people. The basic intention and aim of the legislators while delegating such power to GST council is to ensure that the act is implemented in its spirit and no or less hurdles are faced by the concerned stakeholders

The current taxation regime has multiplied the complexities for small businesses when these small businesses are already facing financial difficulties due to lack of business transactions because of the ongoing pandemic situation that the world is witnessing. Present taxation regime has been a danger, rather, a nightmare for small businesses. Under the present taxation regime, a person who has no business transaction has to file a 'nil' GST return (GSTR3B). To have a better understanding, 'nil' GST return means that for a particular month (for which 'nil' GST return has to be filed) no transactions were done in the said business.

Therefore, in cases where no transactions were done by businesses (maybe, owing to the pandemic situation viz. buying and selling was done during the said month) they have to file a 'nil' GST return. Given the very low literacy rate, many who are not aware of how to file 'nil' GST return or couldn't find a GST practitioner due to financial difficulties or couldn't find a GST practitioner or were in difficult health situation or his/her family members were in facing health issues has troubled a lot of small business. A 'system generated' notice is issued under Section 46 of Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, if a person fails to submit the monthly GST returns. Thereafter, the individual is charged a per day penalty of Rs. 20 (in case of 'nil'



return) till the date, GST return is filed. This per day penalty is charged 'separately' for every single month for which GST return is not filed.

Also, if an individual wants to file GST return for the latest month, s/he cannot do so, unless and until previous returns are duly filed. If a person wants to continue his/her business, then in such circumstances, individual is left with no option but to file return along with heavy penalty, in case, s/he is not aware of how to file 'nil' GST return and couldn't find a GST practitioner because of the pandemic situation. Given that, a person who is filing nil

GST return, it is implied that that the firm is already facing financial crisis and in addition to this crisis – a heavy penalty is levied. The GST penalty keeps on adding and works as a traumatizing gamut for the individual, who has not filed GST returns. If for a reason an individual is not able to submit a GST return for six or more months, then in such circumstances, the individual is served with a notice for Suo-Motu Cancellation of registration. Albeit, a person is given a time-period of 10 days for filing the clarifications. Till the expiry of the time period of notice for Suo- Motu Cancellation of registra-

tion – the GST registration status shows 'Suspended'. If the person files for clarification and GST returns along with late fees then the GST registration status will be changed to Active, but, if in case, fails to file clarification and GST returns along with late fees then it would show the GST registration status as cancelled. Once the GST registration is cancelled, the individual cannot file for another GST registration number.

The GST Council must understand the ground reality and problems faced by the people. The basic intention and aim of the legislators while delegating such power to GST council is to ensure that the act is implemented in its spirit and no or less hurdles are faced by the concerned stakeholders. Because of the abovementioned situation and reasons, it is, therefore, argued that: this very exercise of cancellation of GST registration on such unreasonable grounds is arbitrary and stands violative of Article 19 (1) (g). I reckon (that) it is high-time to give reliefs to such small businesses.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer

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The hidden ideological obstacles to vaccination

Not only production and distribution difficulties but also ideologies of western supremacy are hindering global vaccination efforts.

SANTIAGO ZABALA

So far, most world governments have managed to weather the storm of COVID-19. Countless administrations that have been unable or unwilling to implement the necessary measures to protect their citizens from the deadly virus are still in office over a year into the pandemic. This, however, could soon change as countries have now entered a race to vaccinate their citizens against COVID-19, reach herd immunity and, finally, leave this unprecedented public health emergency behind.

Governments around the world are aware that the fastest and least-costly way out of this pandemic is through widespread vaccination and they have been under immense pressure to immunise their populations as quickly as possible since the first safe and effective vaccines were announced in November 2020.

However, rapid mass vaccination has proved elusive for many countries for multiple reasons – many of them political or even ideological rather than practical. Injustices surrounding vaccine production and distribution left many countries without sufficient vaccine doses to immunise even the most vulnerable segments of their populations. Certain countries' efforts to engage in so-called "vaccine diplomacy" and use the vaccines they produced or acquired as a soft power tool further widened the gap between those who have access to vaccines and those who do not. The distrust in scientists and political elites, meanwhile, resulted in a growing wave of vaccine refusal, especially in the West.

If these obstacles to widespread vaccination are not rapidly addressed, new variants will continue to emerge and prolong a health crisis which already claimed more than 2.7 million lives and devastated the global economy. The failure to reach herd immunity soon can also result in wide-

spread political instability and the fall of several governments who so far managed to remain in office despite their many mistakes and missteps.

The "me-first" approach taken by rich and vaccine-producing countries – which make up only 14 percent of the world population – is not simply delaying vaccination but also paving the way for the emergence of variants that are less susceptible to vaccines.

Several rich nations, from the UK to Canada, have hoarded enough doses to vaccinate their entire populations several times over. Of the 225 million vaccine doses that have been administered so far, the vast majority have been in a handful of rich countries, while most low- and middle-income countries have been left to watch and wait.

According to the general director of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, this approach is not sustainable because it permits the virus to spread and mutate in regions that do not have access to vaccines, which could undermine the efficacy of existing vaccines everywhere. Pharmaceutical companies and Western governments have blocked proposals to waive patents for the vaccines, making it even more difficult for many low- and middle-income countries to immunise their citizens.

The rich countries' tendency to use their surplus vaccine doses to reinforce their own foreign policy agendas is also hindering efforts to reach global herd immunity through vaccination. Israel, which only recently started inoculating Palestinians living under its occupation, for example, sent thousands of doses exclusively to countries that support its ongoing bid to have Jerusalem recognised as its capital by the international community. Such acts of so-called "vaccine diplomacy" do little to expand vaccine access to all those in need and, instead, leave the globe's least politically connected, and vulnerable, nations to fend for themselves.

If these obstacles to widespread vaccination are not rapidly addressed, new variants will continue to emerge and prolong a health crisis which already claimed more than 2.7 million lives and devastated the global economy

Meanwhile, vaccine hesitancy is growing in many countries and raising serious questions about their ability to reach herd immunity anytime soon. The problem is particularly severe in the West. Nearly four in 10 people in France, more than 25 percent of those in the US, and 23 percent in Germany say they definitely or probably will not get vaccinated against COVID-19, according to a survey conducted by Kantar Public in January 2021.

This hesitancy is a result of the growing lack of trust in political and scientific elites, as well as cultural backsliding caused by social media. Social media has tricked many into believing that traditional vectors of authority and legitimation are no longer useful in interpreting facts. Information is no longer passing through trusted filters of mediation before reaching the public, instead, it is being immediately serviced to the masses through social media. Facing a torrent of unverified

and un-collaborated information in need of interpretation, people easily fall victim to confirmation bias, conspiracy theories and fake news in their efforts to not blindly follow elites who they believe have hidden ideological agendas.

The illusion of ideological transparency these technologies provide is responsible for the distrust espoused by many about the efficacy of vaccines that have been approved by government health agencies and the WHO. Anti-vaccination activism operated at the fringes of political society for a long time. But as the pandemic heightened suspicions and fears about the actions of Big Pharma and political elites, these groups who have long been using social media to spread their message have emerged as important players in the global fight to end the pandemic.

The prejudices against vaccines that were developed in non-Western countries is another major obstacle in front of global vaccination efforts. Many across the world, and especially in the West, say they would refuse any vaccine that has not been developed by a Western nation/corporation.

This prejudice is based not only on the authoritarian nature of these governments, as many believe, but also the still-prevalent ideology of Western superiority. According to recent polls, the majority of American and European citizens are more inclined to use Western vaccines simply because they perceive them as superior regardless of scientific evidence.

Even though China and Russia started inoculating their citizens last year before publishing the efficacy results from their phase 3 clinical trials, which inevitably raised legitimate concerns, these vaccines have since been proven safe and efficient. The medical journal The Lancet published in February results from late-stage trials showing that Sputnik V, the Russian vaccine, has an efficacy rate of 91.6 percent. At least twenty-five countries around the world, meanwhile, have approved and are administering

Sinopharm, one of the Chinese vaccines, with seemingly successful results.

This conviction in Western scientific and technological superiority is so established that it does not seem ideological any longer. The Western nations have become so consumed by their perceived superiority that they cannot even imagine non-Western success in vaccine development. Moreover, this unfounded notion, which has its roots in centuries of colonialism and the Cold War, has also influenced public attitudes in some non-Western countries and led to unfounded suspicions about the vaccines that are currently available for use there.

If we are to end this pandemic, we must perceive and confront the hidden ideology of Western superiority as a crucial obstacle to mass vaccination. We must also acknowledge how the breakdown of the interpretation of information marshalled by fringe political actors on social media is turning the masses against safe and efficient vaccines.

Initiatives such as the WHO's global programme COVAX – which aims to provide equitable COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines to poorer countries – cannot succeed if the international community ignores or fails to address these issues.

We can only move beyond this pandemic and avoid further loss of life and economic devastation if we commit to vaccinating as many people as possible, as fast as possible, in every corner of the world. Political leaders, and especially those from rich and vaccine-producing countries, need to understand this fact. If they continue to allow hidden ideologies and social media misinformation campaigns to hinder vaccination efforts, they would be putting at risk the health and wellbeing of not only their own citizens but the entire global community.

Al Jazeera

The Jam at Suez Canal

What the ship wedged in the Suez Canal means for global trade

MICHAEL BELL

“The blockage of the Suez Canal will undoubtedly cause shortages of specific products around the world, either because they don’t arrive at their destinations on time or because manufacturers run short of key inputs or components. Shortages will remind manufacturers of the fragility of global supply chains

In the early hours of March 23, the container ship Ever Given was blown off course by high winds on its way through the Suez Canal. At 400 metres long, the Ever Given is longer than the canal is wide, and the ship became wedged firmly in both banks, completely blocking traffic.

Dredgers, excavators and tug boats are working frantically to free the ship, but the operation may take weeks, according to the head of one of the rescue teams. About 10% of the world’s maritime trade passes through the canal, which allows ships to shorten the trip between Europe or the American east coast and Asia by thousands of kilometres, saving a week or more of travel time.

Around 50 ships a day pass through the canal under normal circumstances, split almost equally between dry bulk carriers, container carriers (like the Ever Given) and tankers. As the blockage continues, some shipping lines are considering diverting ships around Africa rather than wait for it to clear.

Coming on top of the COVID-19 pandemic, this event has highlighted the fragility of global supply chains – and is likely to accelerate changes in the world economy that were already under way.

Good news for oil tankers

The blockage is disrupting important energy trades, but probably not dramatically as there are alternative routes and sources should the blockage last a long time.

About 600,000 barrels of crude oil are shipped from the Middle East to Europe and the United States via the Suez Canal every day, while about 850,000 barrels a day are shipped from the Atlantic Basin to Asia also via the Suez Canal. While the SUMED pipeline, which runs parallel to the Suez Canal, will enable some crude to continue to flow between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, European and North American refiners will want to replace Middle East oil with oil from sources that don’t usually pass through the canal. Similarly, Asian refiners will want to replace North Sea crude oil.

Interest is growing in shipping crude oil around the Cape of Good Hope, which adds seven to ten days to the shipping time from the Middle East to Europe and North America, increasing the demand for ultra large crude carriers.

While the rerouting of crude oil is unlikely to have much effect on oil prices generally, as inventory levels are currently high, this comes at an opportune moment for crude oil tanker owners, as the charter rates for such ships have been rock bottom due to the depressed global demand for oil and the aftereffects of pandemic lockdowns. Owners of tankers carrying refined oil or LNG can expect a similar increase in demand for their ships and therefore charter rates.

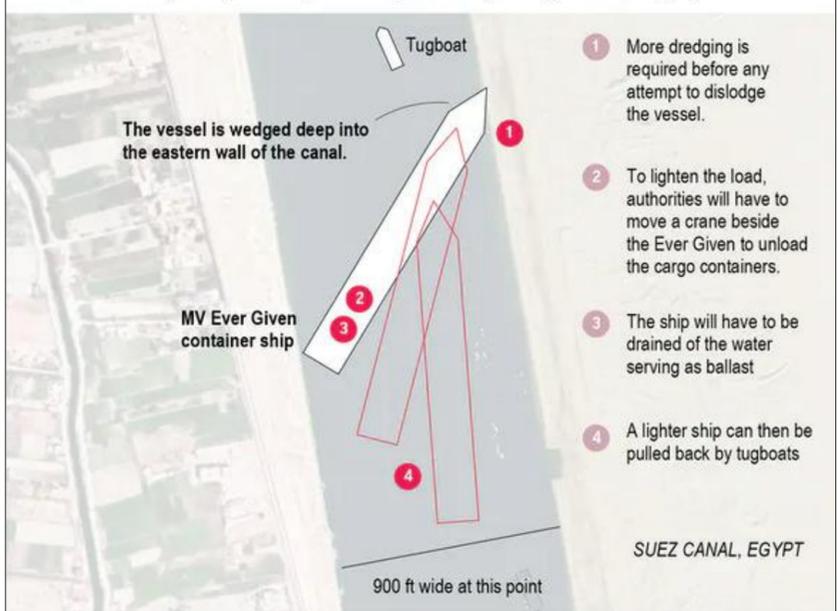
A reminder of supply chain fragility

For commodities such as oil, LNG, coal and iron ore, there is a world demand and a world supply which must balance. However, one source can often be substituted by another. This means the blockage of the Suez Canal will affect the spot price of commodities locally and the charter rates for the ships that carry them, but the trade will continue.

It’s a different story for products carried by container ships like the Ever Given. These products tend to be highly differentiated and more difficult to substitute. The blockage of the Suez Canal will

Authorities attempt to lighten wedged container ship

The Ever Given’s massive weight, some 220,000 tons, is making it very difficult to dislodge and float. Instead, the team says it may have to lighten the ship and then try to nudge the ship using tugboats.



undoubtedly cause shortages of specific products around the world, either because they don’t arrive at their destinations on time or because manufacturers run short of key inputs or components.

Shortages will remind manufacturers of the fragility of global supply chains, and they may look at how to reduce their dependency on specific sources, particularly those that are distant and rely on container shipping.

Global supply chains are already shrinking

Advances in technology associated with digitisation and automation are making manufacturers less dependent on large skilled workforces found only in certain parts of the world. Production is becoming more mobile and therefore able to locate closer to the markets served.

More mobile production, along with the continued miniaturisation of some products (for example, flat screen TVs becoming ever flatter) and the advancing digitisation of things like books and manuals, is gradually shrinking global supply chains and reducing freight-kilometres, measured in terms of value or volume. Major disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the blockage of the Suez Canal can only hasten this development.

This trend predates the pandemic and the current blockage. It can be seen in a number called the world seaborne trade-to-GDP multiplier, which measures how much of the world’s economic activity depends on shipping.

After the global financial crisis of 2008-09, this number fell below 1% on average. This tells us that a 1% increase in world GDP now leads to a less than 1% increase in world seaborne trade.

Who will pay the price?

The cost of the disruption caused by the blockage of the Suez Canal will weigh heavily with the insurers of the Ever Given. The ship is owned by Japanese firm Shoei Kisen Kaisha and chartered to the Taiwanese line Evergreen. The hull and machinery are insured on the Japanese marine insurance market, but at the moment damage to the ship appears to be minimal.

The major costs are loss of earnings by the Suez Canal Authority while the canal is closed to traffic, and losses incurred by the owners of the cargo in the many ships held up by the blockage. Depending on how long the blockage lasts, these may lead to huge insurance claims. Third party claims are covered by the London P&I Club, which is reinsured by the International Group of P&I Clubs.

In the long term, however, the blockage may be a good thing. If it offers a further nudge to shorten supply chains, the benefits to the global economy and environment will surely outweigh the cost to the insurers.

by arrangemetns with
The Conversation

Setting Right Goals for Success

KATHARINE BROOKS

Maybe you set goals in 2020. And maybe those goals and plans were scuttled as everything shut down and your day-to-day living changed dramatically. Your plan to move ahead at work was tempered when others around you were laid off or furloughed and you had to take on more duties. Or maybe you were furloughed and for the first time found yourself at home with no work. Or you had to manage children at home, basically becoming a substitute teacher. So you set new goals, like find a new job. Or focus on work-life balance. Figure out how to manage children at home. And so on.

Did your goals work? Were you able to achieve them? If you’re like most people, probably not. At least not in the way you hoped. You might have abandoned some of your goals — or maybe even abandoned goal-setting. I mean, what’s the point when you’re living in such uncertainty and events out of your control constantly affect your plans?

Now might be a good time to revisit your goals and set new ones that will work this time. Numerous studies have shown that goal-setting is valuable and positively influences performance (Latham & Locke, 2007), and many of us have been taught to use classic goal-setting concepts such as SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-based) to ensure a positive outcome. Unfortunately, even following those guidelines doesn’t always result in success.

But what if there’s a new trick in goal-setting? What if there was a simple concept you could apply to all your goals that would greatly improve the odds of success? There is. Ask yourself a simple question about each goal: Am I ready to perform competently, or am I still learning?

Try reviewing the goals you set in 2020. Were they focused on performance? And were you ready to perform or did you need to stop and learn first? Did you allow yourself the time needed to learn? Answering these questions might give you insight into why some of your goals didn’t work.

So what’s the difference between a performance goal and a learning goal, and why does it matter? Let’s say you want to learn a musical instrument.



You buy the instrument, get some instruction guides, watch some videos, and start teaching yourself. You’re happy, but you’d like to make faster progress, so you set a goal to perform at an open mic in 6 months. A reasonable-sounding goal that will propel you forward. Motivated for the moment, you start practising. But within a few weeks you realise you’re not progressing as rapidly as you hoped. Playing an instrument is harder than you thought, and the fun is slipping away. That open mic looms. Now it’s becoming a chore and you feel pressured to practise in order to achieve your goal. Ultimately, the instrument goes into the closet and the goal is abandoned.

What went wrong?

You set a performance goal when you really needed a learning goal. A learning goal focuses on

“Did your goals work? Were you able to achieve them? If you’re like most people, probably not. At least not in the way you hoped. You might have abandoned some of your goals — or maybe even abandoned goal-setting. I mean, what’s the point when you’re living in such uncertainty and events out of your control constantly affect your plans?”

skill and knowledge improvement, not in a specific performance outcome. So a learning goal might be: “I will learn to play the C scale on my instrument.” Then, once you have learned the C scale, you can finally set a performance goal of playing the C scale faster and faster until you achieve a certain competency. And when that goal is achieved you move to the next scale. Or you might set a goal to learn a particular song, breaking that song down into smaller parts and learning each part. Ultimately, when you have learned your instrument and can play with a certain level of competence, you can then set a performance goal of an open mic session, if you still want to do that. By setting a performance goal too quickly, the learning process is ignored, mistakes are often made, you become discouraged, and the goal now seems unattainable. You can apply this concept of learning versus performance to any challenge you are taking on — playing golf or basketball or any sport, learning a new skill like graphic design, or even seeking a job.

People who are new to the job search (either because they are just coming out of school or have been laid off after many years in the workforce) try to jump too quickly into performance without learning. Setting a performance goal like “I will send out 50 resumes this week and apply for 50 jobs” might sound productive and even fit all the SMART characteristics, but if you haven’t taken the time to learn how to write a targeted resume, use relevant keywords, and effectively connect yourself to that specific employer, your time will likely have been wasted. With the job search, fewer, more targeted applications make more sense. Now that you’ve learned this simple trick for improving goal-setting, review your goals from last year and the ones you are currently setting. Are they predominantly performance goals? And if they are, do you have enough knowledge and do you have the right skills to competently complete them? Or would it be better to take a step back and establish learning goals first? This simple decision may make all the difference in your success.

Katharine Brooks has been providing career services for more than 25 years, specialising in the career needs of college students

Experts explain the reasons why everyone is exhausted

Graeme Massie | Independent

It's not just you. There is only so much puzzling, making bread, doing tie dye or learning to play a musical instrument you can do. The year of pandemic mask wearing, social distancing, Zoom work calls and remote schooling has left everyone exhausted and desperate for normality to resume. It is a feeling being shared across social media platforms, despite the vaccines now providing a pathway to hope. "Anyone else finding it hard to catch a break these days? So many folks are just exhausted (including me)," Dr Desmond Upton Patton, a social work professor at Columbia University, wrote on Twitter. Nathalie Theodore, a Chicago psychotherapist, says that the exhaustion may be caused by the fact that society has now spent a full year under chronic stress. And she told Salon that the ways an individual would normally alleviate their stress has been taken away for an extended

period of time.

"Living with this chronic underlying stress means we have less bandwidth to deal with the ups and downs of daily life, or other emotional triggers," she said.

And she added that "decision fatigue" also played a role in excessive tiredness.

"Due to the pandemic, any activity we choose to engage in requires a risk analysis, which is exhausting," she said.

Ansley Campbell, a licensed marriage and family therapist and Clinical Director of The Summit Wellness Group, said that the vaccines may actually be playing a role in societal exhaustion.

She told Salon that our nervous systems have been in survival mode for a whole year and with an end to the pandemic in sight it suddenly feels safe to relax.

This in turn has led to the challenges of the past year fully sinking in.

"Now that the infection rates have been decreasing, people are getting vaccinated, and some returning to more normal lives or feelings of safety, that space of feeling the



need to constantly survive is also decreasing," said Ms Campbell.

"This is causing many clients to now have the time and space to pause and realize the impacts of the past year, which is leading to greater exhaustion."

The exhaustion may also be caused by routines and schedules being thrown off by the pandemic.

Dr Aude Henin, co-founder and co-director of the Child Cognitive Behavior Program told Salon that lockdown was like being "perpetually jet-lagged."

"Our daily routines — from the time we get up, to how we get ready for work or school, to when we eat lunch, when we exercise, or spend time with family and friends, to when and how we go to bed — are key to setting our body clocks and regulating our energy levels during the day," Dr Henin said.

"The amount and timing of daylight also plays a key role; the sudden and dramatic changes in daily routines, and the lack of time outdoors because of quarantining and social distancing have interfered with our biorhythms and have greatly decreased our energy levels."

Study suggests leader's gender plays role in local govt policymaking

Agencies

The findings of a recent study by researchers from Binghamton University and State University of New York suggest that when it comes to local government, in certain ways the gender of a mayor or county executive plays a role in sustainability policymaking.

Kristina Lambright, associate professor of public administration, and George Homsy, associate professor of public administration and director of the environmental studies program, explored the cor-

The pair used data from the 2015 Local Government Sustainability Practices Survey conducted by the International City/County Management Association, which was completed by 1,672 local governments across the country. There are fewer women heading local governments than men, although the numbers have improved significantly through the decades, from 1 per cent in 1974 to 17 per cent in 2018. In addition to gender, the researchers took into account the impact of other variables, such as a political party.

Democratic leaders were 18.5 per cent



relation between female leadership and local government adoption of sustainability policies in "Beyond community characteristics: a leader's gender and local government adoption of energy conservation practices and redistributive programmes," published recently in *Local Environment: The International Journal and Justice Sustainability*.

In Lambright and Homsy's study sample, local governments with a female leader adopted 29.2 per cent more community energy policies than communities with male leaders. This group of policies focuses on helping citizens, non-profits and businesses reduce energy consumption by, for example, providing or funding energy audits and weatherization programs.

The researchers also found a 12.7 per cent increase in the number of redistributive programs in communities headed by women. These programs support vulnerable populations by bolstering the social safety net. This type of program includes incentivizing affordable housing and funding childcare.

With the third set of policies, Lambright and Homsy found no correlation between a leader's gender and the adoption of government energy conservation practices. This group of policies includes such measures as updating streetlights with energy-efficient bulbs and purchasing hybrid vehicles for the municipal fleet.

"There's a pretty well-documented literature of past research that indicates women and men do look at issues differently," Lambright said. "I am intrigued that there is this difference in the general population, with women being generally more pro-environment, but that doesn't translate when they're in positions of power into greater support for government energy conservation efforts. I'm really interested in why that is, why this area."

more likely to adopt social welfare programs, but these municipalities were no more likely to have energy conservation measures of either type. Looking at national trends, you would expect that Democrats would be more supportive of all three sustainability practices than Republicans. National trends, however, don't necessarily influence the day-to-day operations of local governments, which provide such services as road maintenance and trash pickup.

"In most local governments, it doesn't matter whether they are Republican or Democrat, they still have to provide lighting and plow the streets," Lambright explained.

Collective thinking and conservation. There are theories that explain gender differences in politics. Women, for example, are more likely to find themselves in a vulnerable income position, and thus would benefit from social safety programs. Socialization may also play a role: women are often expected to assume caregiving roles and to consider the welfare of others — in other words, thinking of the collective good rather than the individual.

This female socialization could lend itself to female policymakers' support of measures that require collective thinking, such as the adoption of social welfare programs and community energy-saving measures.

Local governments must make significant investments to implement these initiatives. However, municipalities do not directly financially benefit from these efforts; instead, community residents and businesses do, Homsy explained.

By contrast, efforts to conserve a government's energy use will save a municipality itself money in the long run, perhaps making it an easy choice for elected officials regardless of whether they prioritize collective interests or not.

Tips to Make Your Furniture Last Longer

SPONSORED FEATURE

It is important to know how to make your furniture last longer before you decide to let go of them. There are a lot of things that need to be considered while choosing the furniture for rent in Mumbai. First of all one should determine the purpose and the size of the furniture that you want to let go. The furniture that is used daily and the furniture that are kept inside the house as a showpiece or a decorative item can be given more maintenance than furniture that is kept at home. Hence, the type of maintenance that the furniture needs would also depend on the place where it is let.

When choosing furniture for rent in Mumbai, it is important to take into account the climatic conditions of the area of rented accommodation. For example, furniture that is placed in a terrace would require more care and more maintenance than furniture that is kept at the side of the building. The furniture should be checked regularly to see that there is no damage or repair needed. Before letting the furniture go for display, check whether the repair cost of the furniture would not make the rent payable for the day. If it does, you can rent another piece of furniture that would not add to the repair cost. You should try to negotiate with the owner of the furniture rental service to get reasonable furniture for rent.



It is advisable to study the contract very carefully so that there are no discrepancies between the furniture lease agreement and the real estate property laws of the state or the country. This is because a small difference in the content of the contract can have a big impact. There are some companies who even offer an extensive guarantee and this is something that would be very attractive for a client.

There are two common types of furniture to be leased out. These would be the furniture that are used by the public on a regular basis and also the furniture that are custom made. In the furniture lease agreement, it is vital that you specify the kind of furniture you want to

lease out. Some of the important things to be specified would be the number of year you want the furniture to be used, its use, purpose and the material used to manufacture the furniture.

If you do not specify these details in the agreement, the company will not be able to determine the furniture's suitability for the intended use and this may create problems later. When leasing out the furniture, make sure that you check all the details and make sure that they are not misspelled or words that are ambiguous in any way. The lease document must be signed by both the parties to ensure that it does not contain any errors.

'Cancer cell gene deactivation boosts immunotherapy for head, neck cancers'

Agencies

Researchers from the UCLA School of Dentistry were able to significantly slow the growth and spread of tumours in mice by targeting an enzyme that plays a key role in head and neck cancer cells. They were also able to enhance the effectiveness of immunotherapy, to which these types of cancers often become resistant.

Their findings, published online in the journal *Molecular Cell*, could help researchers develop more refined approaches to combatting highly invasive head and neck squamous cell cancers, which primarily affect the mouth, nose and throat.

Immunotherapy, which is used as a clinical treatment for various cancers, harnesses the body's natural defenses to combat disease. Yet some cancers, including head and neck squamous cell carcinomas, don't respond as well to the therapy as others do. The prognosis for these head and neck cancers is poor, with a high five-year mortality rate, and there is an urgent need for effective treatments.

The UCLA research team, led by distinguished professor Dr. Cun-Yu Wang, chair of oral biology at the dentistry school, demonstrated that by targeting a vulnerability in the cellular process of tumour duplication and immunity, they could affect tumour cells' response to immunotherapy.

The enzyme they focused on, KDM4A, is what is known as an epigenetic factor -- a mol-



6 We know that the KDM4A gene plays a critical role in cancer cell replication and spread, so we focused our study on removing this gene to see if we would get an opposite response

ecule that regulates gene expression, silencing some genes in cells and activating others. In squamous cell head and neck cancers, overexpression of KDM4A promotes gene expression associated with cancer cell replication and spread.

It is well known that tumour cells can spread undetected by the immune system and, without surveillance, can metastasize to lymph nodes or other parts of the body. In this instance, tumour cells that develop in the epithelial layer that lines the structures of the head and neck can turn into head and neck squamous cell carcinoma when unchecked.

Cancer cell replication occurs through the abnormal spread and activation of signaling pathways for cancer cells, and the researchers

asked the question: If we can disrupt these processes and identify a vulnerability, can we change the body's response to fighting cancer cells and its response to outside immunotherapy?

"We know that the KDM4A gene plays a critical role in cancer cell replication and spread, so we focused our study on removing this gene to see if we would get an opposite response," said Wang, the study's corresponding author and a member of the UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center.

By removing the KDM4A gene in their mouse models, the researchers witnessed a notable decrease in squamous cell carcinomas and far less metastasis of cancer to the lymph nodes -- a precursor to the

spread of the disease throughout the body. Surprisingly, they also discovered that the KDM4A's removal also led to the recruitment and activation of the body's infection-fighting T cells, which killed cancer cells and stimulated inherent tumor immunity.

They then sought to uncover why the squamous carcinoma cells had such a poor response to immunotherapy treatment. In another set of mouse models, they again removed KDM4A and introduced a PD-1 blockade, which signals immunotherapy drugs to attack cancer cells. The combination of immunotherapy and KDM4A removal further decreased squamous cell cancer growth and lymph node metastasis.

Next, the researchers tested whether a small-molecule inhibitor of KDM4A could improve the efficacy of the original PD-1 blockade-based immunotherapy. They found that the inhibitor also significantly helped remove cancer stem cells, which are associated with cancer relapse.

The findings hold promise for the development of more specific inhibitors for KDM4A and more effective cancer immunotherapies.

"I am continuously impressed by Dr. Cun-Yu Wang and his team for breaking through barriers in our understanding of cancer-causing cellular processes," said Dr. Paul Krebsbach, dean and professor at the UCLA School of Dentistry. "The results of this study have major implications for the development of more effective, life-saving cancer therapies."

India Calls Saudi Advice On Oil 'Undiplomatic'



Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Union Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday described his Saudi counterpart's advice to reduce oil stores to tackle high crude prices as "undiplomatic".

"That was in a way (an) undiplomatic answer by some of our old friend. I politely disagree with that kind of approach. Certainly India has its own strategy, when and how to use our own storage, and we are conscious about our interests," Pradhan said at Times Network's India Economic Conclave in Delhi.

Pradhan has criticised OPEC and Saudi output cuts aimed at supporting prices and suggested India will have to look for energy alternatives to Gulf oil, its main source of crude.

With India hard hit by rising oil prices, Pradhan has repeatedly called on the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, known as OPEC+, to ease supply curbs.

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman in response has suggested India dip into strategic reserves filled with cheaper oil bought last year.

India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, has asked refiners to speed up diversification and cut reliance on Middle Eastern oil.

Indian refiners are planning to cut imports from Saudi Arabia by about a quarter, sources told Reuters this month.

"Today Iraq is the number one supplier of our requirement, we are taking a substantial amount from UAE also. UAE is a very reliable partner," Pradhan said, adding Indian companies are free to buy oil from any country.

He said to cut import dependence India would look to meet incremental requirement through renewables.

On Thursday Pradhan said that African nations could play a central role in India's effort to diversify its oil sources.

Separately, HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd, a joint venture between state-run Hindustan Petroleum Corp and steel tycoon LN Mittal, on Friday confirmed Reuters story that it has made India's first purchase of Guyanese oil Liza for processing in April as it seeks to diversify crude sources.

62% Of Employees Happier When Working Remotely: Survey



Agenceis

NEW DELHI: As parts of the world open up and hybrid work becomes a reality amid the pandemic, about 62 per cent of employees said working remotely makes them happier, according to a new survey on Friday.

About 56 per cent of employees said they are more productive when working remotely and 61 per cent said they can get more done in an eight-hour workday when remote, said the Forrester study commissioned by LogMeIn, a leading provider of Cloud-based solutions GoToMeeting.

However, only five per cent of decision makers surveyed believe remote workers are more productive, and 70 per cent said employees in the office are more trustworthy.

The study showed that nearly three-quarters of workers said the pandemic made them want to work more remotely in the future, with 83 per cent of employees saying that they are more likely to stay at their company if they are allowed to work flexibly.

About 60 per cent of respondents said they were even willing to accept less pay in a trade for flexibility. The study was conducted using two online surveys—one of 582 remote work decision-makers, such as those leading human resource or IT departments, and a second survey of 427 employees—each at global organisations of 10-2,500 employees, shows they may not be.

The research suggests that companies need to invest in establishing flexible work policies and programmes, and address a sizeable disconnect in trust between decision makers and employees. IANS

J&K Tourism Enthralls Jam Packed Audience In New Delhi



Agencies

NEW DELHI: Department of Tourism J&K in collaboration with the Travel Agents Association of Kashmir (TAAK) organized a grand promotional evening and roadshow in New Delhi in which more than 200 prominent travel agents including heads of main travel bodies, various signatories and senior officers participated.

The highlight of the event was an enthralling presentation from J&K Tourism by Secretary Tourism, Sarmad Hafeez and Director Tourism Kashmir Dr. G.N Itoo.

The road show and promotional evening programme were organized for promotion of JK Tourism in the national capital, after the sector was badly hit by the coronavirus.

However, encouraged by the good response of the travellers during the winter season which saw over 60000 travellers visit Kashmir alone in the past two months, the JK Tourism department went on an aggressive marketing campaign.

The promotional evening programme and press meet here in New Delhi is a part of the marketing campaign to attract domestic travellers to Jammu and Kashmir.

The Secretary Tourism and Director Tourism Kashmir highlighted the known and lesser-known destinations besides UT's art and craft, pilgrimage and adventure tourism and the upcoming events and festivals. The Secretary Tourism and culture JK invited travellers to visit JK and enjoy not only the beauty but also the rich hospitality of the region.

The Secretary Tourism also sought support from the local travel trade fraternity and the heads of the Associations for promoting J&K's tourism potential.

Madan Prasad Bezbaruah Former Sec-

retary Tourism GOI who was one of the distinguished guests and keynote speaker praised JK's beauty and said the place has immense tourism potential and the people from all over the country should visit the region for holidays.

Director Tourism Kashmir Dr. GN Itoo during his presentation apprised the audience that service providers were vigorously following COVID SOPs to ensure tourists are safe while holidaying.

Director Tourism Kashmir assured the travel trade of all necessary support from J&K tourism in making the traveller's stay in JK memorable.

During the event, various heads of travel trade Associations and officers put forth their suggestions to further improve the tourism services in the UT.

The team of J&K tourism was also represented by Majid Khaleel Drabu, M.D JK Cable Car Corporation, Dr. NJ Chowdhary Director Tourism Jammu, Bakshi Javid Hamayun Director SKICC, Raja Waseem Addl. Secretary Tourism.

Among the prominent personalities from travel and tourism trade including Jyoti Mayal President TAAI, Pradip Lulla President TAFI, Uday Shankar President FICCI, Rajiv Mehra President IATO, Anil Oraw, ADG tourism, Rajan Sehgal President IGTA, Ankush Nijhawan MD Travel Boutique Online, Capt. Swadesh Kumar Past President ATOAI, Capt. Amit Kapoor, professional skier, spoke at length on JK's vast potential. Representatives from ESOL/RTSOI, TAAI, IATO, FICCI, TAFI, ATOAI, were also present on the occasion.

Earlier, President TAAK Farooq A Kut-hoo in his welcome address said JK was receiving huge domestic tourist flow due

to aggressive marketing campaigns by the JK government and also by the government of India through the incredible India campaign Dekho Apni Desh.

General Secretary TAAK Showkat A. Khankashi, former presidents Rauf A Trambboo, Peerzada Faiyaz, Ashfaq Siddiq, and other office bearers and general members of TAAK were also present on the occasion.

The dignitaries praised J&K tourism for the grand roadshow and reiterated their unflinching support for tourism in J&K.

The audience was mesmerised by colourful, ethnic musical performances by famous Kashmiri Classical Singer Dhananjay Kaul and his team during the event.

Earlier, J&K Tourism led by Secretary Tourism and Culture, Sarmad Hafeez along with TAAK President and other office bearers also addressed the press in the afternoon which was attended by more than 60 different media houses, including prominent newspapers, electronic media, bloggers, social media influencers.

During the interaction, Secy Tourism apprised the media about the current tourism scenario in J&K and the promotional activities launched by the tourism department within the UT and outside markets.

J&K tourism department has launched a massive promotional campaign within UT by organising various events and festivals recently.

To promote tourism outside the UT, the Department has been organising around 20 roadshows in different parts of the country.

Besides, the department has also been participating in various travel marts and has launched the promotional campaign at airports, railway stations, metros and through print, electronic and digital media.

KU VC Vows Establishment Of New Centre To Facilitate Innovation, Entrepreneurship

Agenceis

SRINAGAR: Vice-Chancellor University of Kashmir Prof Talat Ahmad Friday inaugurated an innovators' meet at the varsity's Institute of Technology (IoT), Zakura Campus.

According to a statement, the day-long meet was organised by the National Innovation Foundation Cell-JK, established at the University of Kashmir under the aegis of National Innovation Foundation-India, an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.

Addressing academics and grassroots innovators on the occasion, Prof Talat announced establishment of the Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship at the Zakura Campus, with an outlay of Rs four crore under RUSA, to facilitate grassroots innovators to float their innovative ideas and go for their patenting.

"We are committed to foster the culture of innovation in the university and provide a professional platform to students and youth from J&K UT to learn about innovation and incubation in a proper innovation ecosystem," he said.

Director NIF-India Dr Vipin Kumar delivered the inaugural address in online mode, highlighting the country-wide scenario of 'Innovators of Tomorrow' scheme under the NIF's Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge (MANAK) programme.

Appreciating Kashmir University's active collaboration with the NIF-India, Dr Kumar assured that a large number of youth from J&K will get nurtured under the MANAK scheme in the years to come.

In his special remarks, Dean School of Engineering Prof Muzaffar Andrabi said innovators are assets for the society and need to be encouraged and provided with all kinds of support until they actually convert their ideas into useful industrial products.



In his welcome address, Prof GM Bhat, Director NIF Cell-JK, said they have scouted and supported over 100 indigenous technological innovations so far while developing working prototypes for many innovations.

"69 patents have been filed in favour of Kashmiri innovators through the NIF Cell, including 22 for herbal practices. Seven patents have been awarded in favour of Kashmiri innovators, even as several innovators have been awarded at the national level. Some innovations scouted and incubated at the NIF Cell have also been commercialised," he said.

An Innovation Exhibition, managed by NIF-Cell, has been established at Zakura Campus, where students can visit for a practical

exposure to working innovations, he said.

"NIF is also looking after implementation of INSPIRE award scheme in J&K. 6942 innovations of school children from J&K have been shortlisted for 2019-2020 INSPIRE-Manak Award scheme. As such, J&K stands at 14th position in the country-wide INSPIRE nominations. Nine student innovators have so far visited Japan under the INSPIRE scheme," Prof Bhat said.

The inaugural function, among others, was attended by Prof Iqbal Hakeem, Prof Showket A Shah, Dr Altaf Hussain Pandith, Akhtar Hussain Malik, District Nodal Officers of NIF JK-CELL/INSPIRE programme and scores of grassroots' innovators.

India Will Not Extend 2022 Deadline For Tighter Fuel Efficiency Rules For Carmakers: Report

Agenceis

India will not extend an April 2022 deadline to tighten fuel efficiency standards, in a potential setback for carmakers which are lobbying for more time, government and industry sources told Reuters.

The corporate average fuel efficiency (CAFE) requirements are designed to reduce carbon emissions from vehicles as India pushes auto manufacturers to invest in more fuel-efficient cars or in cleaner technologies like electric and hybrid.

"The deadline to meet CAFE norms will not be extended," a senior government official told Reuters, adding that some concessions could be considered if it sees serious intent by automakers to invest in clean technologies.

The push to delay the rules by two years is being led by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), a trade group that represents major carmakers in India including top sellers Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai Motor Co.

On March 2, executives from SIAM met India's transport ministry officials to discuss, among other things, a delay in implementation of the norms, three industry sources said.

India introduced the first phase of CAFE rules in April 2017, giving carmakers until the end of March next year to cut carbon emissions from new passenger cars to under 130 grams per kilometer. In a second phase starting from April 1, 2022, India has proposed tightening carbon emissions to 113 grams per kilometer.

Carmakers have argued that they would find it difficult to make further investments to meet the stricter requirements, especially as profits have been hit by slumping sales over the last two years, three industry sources said.

An economic slowdown in 2019 and the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 caused annual passenger vehicle sales to fall by around 30 percent over the period.

Sticking to the deadline, however, would allow India to cut its fuel import bill and curb pollution.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set aggressive carbon reduction targets under the Paris Accord and not extending the deadline to tighten the CAFE requirements could be part of this agenda, one industry source said.

"There eventually might be a middle path that does not hurt the companies financially but also allows the government to maintain its aggressive attitude towards carbon reduction," the source said.

One Year Since COVID-19 Lockdown: India Still Recovering From Unemployment Blow

Agenceis

India is still not out of the woods as far as unemployment is concerned after a year when the lockdown was imposed to contain the spread of deadly COVID-19 on March 25 last year as pandemic-induced job loss has not tapered off consistently.

The government had imposed a lockdown to curb the spread of the pandemic but this impacted economic and commercial activities and resulted in job loss and later on the exodus of migrant workers which rocked the entire nation.

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data, the unemployment rate was recorded at 6.9 per cent in February 2021 which is slightly better than 7.8 per cent in the same month last year and 8.8 per cent in March 2020, during which lockdown was imposed. The data showed that the unemployment rate had peaked to 23.5 per cent in April and remained at 21.7 per cent in May. It started tapering off from June onward when it was recorded at 10.2 per cent in the month and further improved to 7.4 per cent in July.

However, the unemployment rate again rose slightly to 8.3 in August and improved to 6.7 per cent in September last year, as per CMIE data. In October, unemployment again rose slightly to 7 per cent and then eased to 6.5 per cent in November last year as per the data.

The CMIE data showed that the unemployment rate had risen to 9.1 per cent in December 2020 and improved in January to 6.5 per cent. Experts said that the CMIE data indicated improvement in the unemployment scenario from July onwards, but there is a need for consistency which would only come after an increase in buoyancy in the manufacturing and services sectors.

They were of the view that the farm sector has done well which engages over 55 per cent of the country's population but there is a need for improvement in hiring in urban and industrial areas. They opined that the government has taken many steps to boost fresh hiring in the country but repeated policy interventions and monitoring of existing schemes and initiatives at the ground level are required to achieve consistent improvement in the employment scenario in the country.

According to labour ministry data, around 16.5 lakh people have benefited from the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ABRY) which was launched in October to encourage hiring in the country amid the COVID-19 pandemic till March 9, 2021. The scheme was introduced on October 1, 2020, to incentivise the creation of new employment along with social security benefits and restoration of loss of employment during the pandemic.

This scheme, being implemented through the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), reduces the financial burden of the employers of various sectors/ industries and encourages them to hire more workers.

Under the ABRY, Government of India is crediting for a period of two years both the employees' share (12 per cent of wages) and employers' share (12 per cent of wages) of contribution payable. Under the ABRY, about 16.5 lakhs beneficiaries registered themselves with the Scheme from October 1, 2020 and out of this, approximately 13.64 lakhs are new joiners with UAN (universal account number) generated on or after October 1, 2020, and approximately 2.86 lakhs are re-joiners who were rendered unemployed during the pandemic from March 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020, and rejoined from October 1, 2020, onwards.

The experts said that the government intends to create 50 lakh to 60 lakh jobs through the ABRY in two years' time, but it required close monitoring and well-planned implementation to achieve the desired objective.

Under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY), Government of India has contributed both 12 per cent employee's share and 12 per cent employer's share under Employees Provident Fund (EPF), totaling 24 per cent of the wage for the wage month from March to August 2020, for the establishments having up to 100 employees with 90 per cent of such employees earning less than Rs 15,000. Under the PMGKY scheme, Rs 2,567.66 crore was credited in EPF accounts of 38.82 lakhs eligible employees. The recently released latest EPFO payroll data showed that net new enrolments with the retirement fund body grew about 28 per cent to 13.36 lakh in January compared to the same month in 2020.

The data also reflected a growth of 24 per cent for January 2021 over December last year.

The EPFO has added around 62.49 lakh subscribers during the first ten months of the ongoing fiscal year, the data showed. During 2019-20, the number of net new subscribers rose to 78.58 lakh as compared to 61.12 lakh in the preceding fiscal.

Explained: How will the Suez Canal Blockage Affect Supply Chains?

Agenceis

The cargo ship blocking the Suez Canal is holding up traffic that carries nearly \$10 billion worth of goods every day, so a quick clearing of the logjam is key to limiting the economic fallout.

Efforts continued on Thursday to dislodge the Ever Given container ship and restore traffic on the critical man-made waterway that connects the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and provides a shipping shortcut between Europe and Asia.

How vital is the canal to shipping?

About 10% of all global trade flows through the 193-kilometer-long canal, which allows tankers and container ships to avoid a long trip around the southern tip of Africa.

The iconic shipping journal Lloyd's List estimates that goods worth \$9.6 billion pass through the canal every day. Lloyd's says about \$5.1 billion of that traffic is westbound and \$4.5 billion is eastbound.

About one-fourth of that traffic is on container ships — like the one that is currently burrowed into one side wall of the canal. Lloyd's says more than 50 ships traverse the canal on an average day, carrying 1.2 billion tons of cargo.

What effect will this have on supply chains?

When it comes to shipping goods from Asia to Europe, there are virtually no alternatives such as rail or truck transportation, said Sharat Ganapati, an economics professor at Georgetown University. The blockage will delay a range of parts and raw materials for European products such as cotton from India for clothes, petroleum from the Middle East for plastics, and auto parts from China, he said.

"The fact that you have the most pivotal node in the trading network being blocked is going to have important welfare effects around the world," said Woan Foong Wong, an economics professor at the University of Oregon.

There will be less direct impact on the United

States, which receives most shipments from Asia on the West Coast. Still, imports from Europe may be delayed, and the blockage will prevent empty shipping containers from being returned to Asia, adding to a container shortage caused by rising demand for consumer goods during the pandemic.

"If you get a bump in one place, that is going to percolate through the system," Mr. Ganapati said. "It is going to take a while to get things un-gummed up."

Is the supply chain in trouble?

The Suez situation could compound issues for a supply chain already under pressure from the pandemic and a surge in buying.

Virus-related restrictions have trapped crews on merchant ships. Congested ports have led to container ships anchoring off the California coast, unable to dock and unload their goods. Shortages of semiconductors and rare-earth elements have plagued manufacturers of cars and other consumer products.

"We have lots of things indicating a vulnerable

supply chain at risk for disruptions, and now you put one more thing on top of that," said Julie Swann, a logistics expert at North Carolina State University.

How will consumers be affected?

It's possible that U.S. consumers will feel some impact if shipping is disrupted for more than a few days. Finished products from Asia to the United States go over the Pacific. However, some components for products that are assembled in Europe and shipped to the U.S. could be delayed by the canal closure. Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, said the canal blockage likely won't have much impact on the U.S. or global economies unless it drags on for weeks or months.

It may push up oil prices, "but we are not talking dollars on the barrel, we are talking pennies on the barrel," Mr. Zandi said.

Germany's economy could suffer, though, if the blockage delays the shipment of auto parts to that company's large car manufacturers, Zandi said.

Ghost Of 2016

The court said "there was not even whisper" regarding Parra's involvement in the original charge sheet, adding that there was a statement in February 2020 of an accused that allegedly implicated him.

However, he was arrested by the counter intelligence wing of the CID in Kashmir in a case related to nexus between mainstream politicians and secessionists, and continues to be in jail since then. His bail was rejected by the NIA court in Srinagar.

The PDP had earlier claimed that the Centre was adopting pressure tactics for ensuring that their leaders switched sides and joined outfits enjoying patronage of the BJP.

The NIA charge sheet alleged that Parra had paid Rs 5 crore to Shah, who was also considered a close aide of Geelani.

The money was handed over to Shah, who was part of the Hurriyat Conference faction, to "keep the situation boiling in the Kashmir valley after the killing of Burhan Wani", it claimed.

The amount was given by Parra on behalf of the PDP to Hurriyat Conference and during the turmoil, Shah was in close touch with the party's youth leader, it claimed.

Parra was considered a close confidant of Peoples Democratic Party chief and then chief minister Mehbooba Mufti, who was having an alliance government with the BJP in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Kashmir witnessed the longest spell of unrest post the death of Wani in 2016 with curfew and hartal for around 53 days, during which around 100 people lost their lives and thousands, including 4,000 security personnel, injured.

Shah is already in judicial custody after he was arrested by the NIA in July 2017 for allegedly being involved in racket of providing funds to separatists and militant groups in Jammu and Kashmir.

Govt Trying To

GOI (Government of India) is trying to dismantle PDP by luring & threatening its members. Investigative agencies like ED are being used to intimidate me."

Accusing the government of trying to subject her to political vendetta, she said, "To make matters worse, I'm being denied of my fundamental right to a passport. If this isn't political vendetta then what is it?"

After the questioning, Mufti had told reporters that dissent has been criminalised in the country and central agencies like NIA, CBI and ED were being misused to silence the opposition.

"Dissent has been criminalised in this country. ED, CBI and NIA are being misused to silence the opposition tactically," she charged.

She further charged that anyone opposing the current government was hounded by trumped up charges like sedition or money laundering.

"This country is not being run by the Constitution but the agenda of a particular political party," she alleged.

Asked about the questions put forth to her by the ED, the PDP chief said she was asked about the sale of her ancestral land in Bijbehara area of Anantnag district and the use of the Chief Minister's discretionary funds. (PTI)

India, Pak Armies

Understanding 2021, a Brigade Commander Level Flag Meeting was held between Indian and Pakistan Army at Poonch-Rawal Kot Crossing Point on 26 Mar 2021 to discuss implementation mechanism as per the understanding," the army tweeted.

On Thursday, Army Chief Gen MM Naravane said the LoC has been silent for the first time in around five to six years as not a single shot was fired in March barring an odd incident.

"I am glad to inform that in the whole month of March, we have not had a single shot fired at the Line of Control barring an odd incident. It is for the first time in about five or six years that the LoC has been silent. That really bodes well for the future," Naravane had said.

China Is India's

to adhere to the 2003 ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir.

"We always wanted normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan. Everybody knows what that means. If there are trends in that direction, of course, I would welcome it," he said.

Asked during the interaction on whether India will engage with the Taliban, Jaishankar noted that it would like to clearly see a sovereign democratic and inclusive Afghanistan that takes into account the interests of its minorities.

"There is something called the peace and reconciliation process and everybody else is saying that the Taliban is reaching out and changing etc. Let us wait and watch."

To a question whether China has become indispensable to economic calculations, Jaishankar said the Chinese have a salience in the global economy.

"I do not think anybody can deny it. I think one needs to appreciate what they have done to their national capabilities in the last 40-odd years," he said.

He said the Chinese in many ways, starting with the then US President Richard Nixon and former US Secretary of State Henry A Kissinger, had "outthought" the West, adding "not just them but their successive generations."

"And not just America, the West as a whole which explains why they are where they are today," he added.

At the same time, Jaishankar noted that it would be difficult to say what will happen in the future as there are a lot of "contradictions and frictions" out there today.

"But when it comes to us, we need to ask ourselves: so we have this neighbour who has done spectacularly well. So do we just stand there with our hands in our pocket and marvel at what they have done or do we say this is an inspiration, I need to also strengthen my competitiveness and my capabilities

and so on," he said.

Jaishankar clarified that his comments are not a political statement and that it is an international relations or even a domestic governance observation.

"We were about the same size of economy when Rajiv Gandhi went to China in 1988 and look at the difference today. So for me I have always seen lessons in China's growth," he said.

"To me, in many ways, yes China is a neighbour and it is in many ways a challenging neighbour," he added.

Following a series of military and diplomatic talks, India and China completed withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of Pangong lake in line with an agreement on disengagement last month. The two countries were locked in a tense border standoff since May 5 last in eastern Ladakh.

Asked whether the agreement between the DGMOs of India and Pakistan and the talks between Indus commissioners of the two sides were a sign of thaw in ties, Jaishankar said, "I think the agreements between the DGMOs is a sensible agreement because I don't think Pakistan either did themselves or us good by encouraging or facilitating infiltrators and militants across the Line of Control and the IB (international border)."

When pressed whether these are positive developments, Jaishankar said "yes".

Jaishankar confirmed that he was travelling to Tajikistan capital Dushanbe to attend the "Heart of Asia" conference but did not give a specific reply to questions on whether he will meet his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mahmood Qureshi on the sidelines of the event.

"My scheduling is in progress. So far I do not think any such meeting (is scheduled)," he said.

The Heart of Asia conference is scheduled to take place on March 30.

The external affairs minister identified infrastructure, manufacturing and education as some of the key sectors for India and listed steps taken by the government in these areas.

Lawaypora Attack

LeT commander, dropped in at the house of one of his relatives, Muzaffar Ahmad Mir at Maloora Mugund and asked him to give him two OGWs as he wants to carry out an attack," the IGP said, adding, "Muzaffar then asked one Javid Ahmad Sheikh, who deals in timber with him, and later both met Nadeem."

Three together—Nadeem, Muzaffar and Javid—on March 24 carried a recce of the area and in the second half of March 25 carried out the attack, he said.

"Through our sources, Bandipora police arrested Javid in a car and on searching the vehicle some empty rounds were found," the top police officer said as per GNS, adding, "Upon interrogation, he revealed the entire story."

Later, he said, Muzaffar was also arrested and his car (HR10Q-6583) used in the incident was seized.

"Both OGWs have been arrested while Brar along with two foreigners will be tracked soon," he said, adding, "Already police, along with army and CRPF carried out the operations at two places."

Incidentally, he had escaped from the hideouts as he had got the information that both (Javid and Muzaffar) have been arrested. Both of them also confessed to the crime."

Responding to a question if the militants came by foot to carry out the attack, the top officer said the gunmen were dropped some 150 metres away from the spot and after firing the militants they ran away in the vehicle. "Javid dropped them in the Sumbal area."

Asked if any weapon has been snatched, he said, "one gun." As already reported, militants fled with an AK-47 rifle after carrying out the attack.

To another question if the militants were shifting base to Srinagar, he said, "if you check history of ten years, Srinagar outskirts have remained very hot especially this axis as it connects with Barmulla, Bandipora, Budgam, Srinagar."

"We are changing strategy."

We have brought SSP operations in Srinagar and Budgam. Both the SSPs are working together and very soon the militants will be neutralized."

Asked if these attacks have any bearings on ensuing Amarnath Yatra, he said: "Till then this group will be neutralized." Responding to a question about three robberies within a span of last 12 days in Srinagar, Baramulla and Budgam, he said, "Budgam police has already arrested one person who has confessed involvement in 2 robberies. Very soon the case will be cracked and details shared."

Country Can't Be

appearing for the petitioner, said Rohingya children were subjected to killing, maiming and sexual exploitation and Military in Myanmar has failed to respect international humanitarian law.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said he is stating the problems which persist in Myanmar.

He said they are not refugees at all and this is the second round of litigation as the top court had earlier dismissed an application filed by the petitioner.

There was a similar application for Assam earlier. They (petitioners) wanted that no Rohingya be deported, we had said that we will follow the law. They are illegal immigrants. We are always in touch with Myanmar and when they confirm that the individual is their citizen, then only deportation can take place, he said.

The bench asked can it be said that the government will deport only when Myanmar accepts.

Mehta said yes, the government cannot send an Afghan national to Myanmar.

"We cannot be the capital for all illegal immigrants, Mehta said.

Bhushan referred to a verdict of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and argued it has said that Myanmar has not presented any concrete measures aimed specifically at recognising the rights of the Rohingyas to exist as a protected group.

He said that Jammu and Kashmir administration has detained Rohingyas in Jammu, who have refugee cards and they will soon be deported.

I am seeking directions to not detain and deport these Rohingyas to Myanmar under Article 21 of the Constitution, Bhushan said. During the hearing, the counsel appearing for the United Nations special rapporteur referred to the application filed by him.

The application filed earlier by the United Nations special rapporteur has said that the Centre's decision for mass deportation of Rohingya as being "impermissible under international human rights law" and India should ensure that the Rohingyas enjoy "equality before the law and equal access to judicial remedies and individualised forms of due process".

On March 11, an interim plea was filed in a pending PIL seeking immediate release of detained Rohingya refugees in Jammu.

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 Prashant Bhushan, has 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.

ACB Charges 2

Bank guarantee of Rs. 15 crores for the construction of a five star hotel in Delhi with a project cost estimated at Rs. 866.89 crores, the ACB said.

"The rest of the loans were availed from other banks by the firm as part of consortium loan for construction of the five-star hotel," it said.

The firm had pledged mortgaged land including the building of five-star hotel and rentals which would accrue on the commercial area which was proposed to be leased out, hypothecation of all other current assets and personal guarantee of Raj Singh Gehlot who was the Managing Director of M/s AHPL worth Rs. 41 crores favouring a consortium of banks including J&K Bank as the lead bank as part of mortgaged properties, it said.

"However, while looking into the allegations mentioned in the FIR investigation revealed that instead of using the loans sanctioned for the purpose of construction of hotel it was diverted / siphoned out for various other purposes and misappropriated by the borrower Raj Singh Gehlot."

Investigation, the ACB said, also established that out of the Rs. 100 crores sanctioned as Term Loan in the first phase to M/s AHPL amount of Rs. 35 crores has been diverted by Raj Singh Gehlot Managing Director of M/s AHPL in connivance with the Bank officials and other co-accused and through fictitious firms which were created for the purpose and also by layering the funds through other banks in a complex maze of transactions. "In this manner they cheated the J&K Bank Ansal Plaza Branch to the tune of Rs. 35 crores.

Further investigation into the remaining diversions is in progress apart from the allegations of illegally entering into an OTS to the firm advantage by J&K Bank officials."

A charge sheet has been filed by the Anti Corruption Bureau in the concerned court in Srinagar u/s 120-B, 409, 420 RPC and section 5(1)(c), 5(1)(d) r/w 5(2) of the JK PC Act against Raj Singh Gehlot Managing Director of M/s AHPL and co-accused Mohan Singh, Sheela Gehlot and Madhu Bakshi (private persons) and public servants Rakesh Kumar Kharyal and Kuldeep Gupta who were the erstwhile Managers of J&K Bank Ansal Plaza Branch, New Delhi besides the firms M/s Ambience limited, NGR Consultant Pvt. Ltd. and Raj Commercial & Agencies. "Further investigation in the case is in progress."

Driving Licence,

other documents whose extension of validity could not be granted due to lockdown and which had expired since February 1, 2020, or would expire by March 31, 2021.

It had earlier issued advisories dated March 30, 2020, June 9, 2020, August 24, 2020, and December 27, 2020, in connection with extension of validity of documents related to the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989.

It is advised that the validity of the documents that have expired since February 1, the same may be treated to be valid till June 30, 2021, the ministry said in an advisory to states.

Enforcement authorities are advised to treat such documents valid till June 30, 2021, the MoRTH said adding that "this will help out citizens in availing transport-related services".

Stating that this may be the last advisory

in this regard, the ministry has asked the states to implement this advisory in letter and spirit, so that citizens are not harassed or face difficulties.

Earlier through various notifications, it was advised that the validity of fitness, permit (all types), licence, registration or any other concerned documents may be treated to be valid till March 31, 2021.

J&K Logs 210

coronavirus from Kashmir Valley, taking the fatality count to 1984-732 in Jammu and 1252 in the Valley.

Among the fresh cases which include 57 travellers, officials said, 41 cases were reported from Jammu division and 169 from Kashmir Valley. While it was for the first time that 200 cases were reported in a single day, it was also for the tenth consecutive day that more than a hundred cases were recorded in the J&K.

Giving district wise details, they said, Srinagar reported 98 cases, Baramulla 33, Budgam 12, Pulwama 5, Kupwara 2, Anantnag 9, Bandipora 3, Ganderbal 2, Kulgam 4, Shopian 1, Jammu 30, Udhampur 4, Rajouri 2, Kathua 1, Samba 1, and Ramban 3.

Meanwhile, out of 129413 positive cases, officials said, 1681 are active positive. 125748 people have recovered and 1984 have died. (With GNS inputs)

Over 84% Active

the figures available, the active cases in Srinagar, Baramulla and Budgam in Kashmir division are 767, 201 and 122 respectively which count for 87.6 per cent of the total active cases in the Kashmir division.

In the Jammu division, of 412 total active cases, 325 are in Jammu district which counts for 78.88 per cent of total active cases.

Out of a total 1681 active cases, 1415 cases are in only four districts namely Srinagar, Baramulla, Budgam and Jammu count 84.17 per cent of the total cases.

In the rest of the 16 districts the active cases are highest in Pulwama where active cases are at 51 while there is just a single active case in the Kishtwar district of Jammu.

Pertinently, active cases in J&K were less than 600 last month but active cases are increasing and the recovery rate is decreasing with each passing day.

Experts had recently said the second wave is already in J&K and now everything depends on how it will behave.

They have also appealed authorities to gear up for vaccination drive besides to increase testing rate also—(KNO)

CAG Report Picks

2017-18 ranged between 28 per cent to 33 per cent and 31 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively, the auditor says.

"The overall shortfall in achievement of target of revenue during the period from 2014-15 to 2017-18 was Rs 165.22 crore," reads the report tabled in Parliament on Monday.

The SRTC, according to the CAG, failed to earn its operational revenue, as operation loss ranged between Rs 15.03 per Km to Rs 34.68 per kilometer during the period from 2014 to 2019.

"The Corporation could not improve on the availability of vehicles as the overall fleet strength during the period from 2014-15 to 2018-19 decreased by 133 vehicles (14 per cent), despite addition of 142 vehicles during the same period. Fleet Operations during the period from 2014-15 to 2018-19 ranged between 51 per cent and 59 per cent and detention of vehicles in workshop ranged between 29 per cent and 44 per cent. Percentage of idle vehicles increased from five per cent in 2014-15 to 19 per cent in 2018-19," the report states.

The Corporation has also been slammed by the CAG over management of its assets. "Failure to acquire the ownership title of properties, non-valuation of properties, non-recovery of compensation of land transferred, non-utilisation of properties, non-renewal of leases, indicated inadequate initiative of the Corporation to optimally manage its assets," the report reveals.

The CAG has also revealed that services of drivers/ conductors were not utilised effectively, as the drivers/conductors remained attached with the vehicles detained at workshops despite the required staff available at the workshops, resulting in payment of Rs 44.95 crore to staff remaining idle.

"Internal control mechanism of the Corporation was inadequate, board meetings, monthly meetings, administrative inspections and vigilance checks were not conducted regularly," reads the report.

The report also reveals that planning wing of the Corporation had not prepared any perspective plan or long term plan for its revival

Teen Brother

in separate encounters in 2010 and 2014 respectively. Kashif has two brothers, one sister besides his elderly parents.

A local news agency KNO quoted an unnamed police officer as saying that efforts were on to trace the missing teenager

"He will be given a proper chance to return even if he has joined any militant outfit," he said.

Modi Honours

Bangabandhu' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and hold talks with his counterpart Hasina.

Speaking at the National Day programme of Bangladesh, Modi said it was an honour for India to confer Gandhi Peace Prize on Mujibur Rahman.

He handed over the award, a citation, a plaque and a shawl to Sheikh Rehana in the presence of Prime Minister Hasina.

The Gandhi Peace Prize is an annual award instituted by the government of India since 1995, the 125th birth anniversary commemoration year of Mahatma Gandhi.

Modi earlier said Bangabandhu was a champion of human rights and freedom, and a hero to Indians as well.

The award carries an amount of Rs 1 crore, a citation, plaque and an exquisite traditional handicraft/ handloom item.

Mujibur Rahman was imprisoned in Pakistan when Bangladesh was born. Pakistan was forced to set him free on January 8, 1972.

He returned to Dhaka on January 10, 1972. He later took over as Prime Minister of Bangladesh but was assassinated by some military officers during a coup d'etat on August 15, 1975. His wife, brother, sons and daughters-in-law were also assassinated along with him. Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana survived as they were in Europe.

Kashmiri Beautician's

wanted to be a street bridal makeup artist," Monisa continues.

"Wearing the right makeup is not as easy as it looks. You need a lot of experience and patience, to give a complete diva look. And that's why I did that makeup course, so that, I could take the art to the next level in the valley."

Astute decision-making ability is a game-changer in the beauty business, says Monisa who also treats skin disorders, pimples and hair-fall.

"You need to understand what the subject demands and then apply the right products."

Lately, her social media-driven journey culminated into her own bridal fashion studio, titled "Glamup with Anu".

She now gets big assignments for bridal makeup under this brand only.

One such assignment came this winter.

This past February, when ex-Bigg Boss contestant Shehnaaz Gill and popular music rapper Badshah landed in famous ski-resort Gulmarg for a video song shoot, Monisa was called for beautifying the Bollywood celebrities in town.

She didn't miss the opportunity offered by KJ Productions—a Srinagar-based line producing firm dedicated towards promoting Kashmir as a film destination.

"I was so thrilled and excited," Monisa recalls the moment. "This was my first project with any actress."

Prior to that, she had handled a project with Jigar Saraiya—a popular singer and music director—during her song shoot in Kashmir in November 2020.

Today, she may have cemented her place as among the best beauticians of town, but Monisa is crediting gentlemen in her life for everything.

While behind every successful man there's a woman, but in Monisa case, her sibling and spouse proved to be her difference makers.

"If I'm doing something in life today, the due credit goes to my husband and brother," she says.

"It's not possible for any woman to work in the field without the support of her family members. I'm lucky to have such gentlemen in my life!"

Rockslides Block

"Due to rockslide at Sarmoli, Srinagar Jammu highway is closed, restoration work is going on as men and machinery have been already been pressed to clear the debris," an official said.

"Decision regarding the opening of the highway will be taken on Saturday morning after the road is cleared of the debris," an official said.

According to the traffic plan and advisory for 27-03-2021, issued by the Jammu and Kashmir Traffic Police Headquarters, "Jammu-Srinagar NHW is closed due to a rock slide at Samroli. Restoration work is going on, decisions regarding the movement of traffic shall be taken tomorrow after clearance of debris."

Earlier this week the rainfall caused the disruption in vehicular movement on the highway due to landslides and shooting stones at different locations.

Meanwhile, Mughal road continues to remain closed due to the snow accumulation

2 Non-Locals

them in person, the two accused tried to kidnap the girl. However, after receiving information about it, the police was able to intercept them in main town Uri, a police official said.

Meanwhile SDPO Uri Junaid Wali said that an FIR Number 25/2021 under sections 366, 109 IPC has been registered at Police Station Uri in this regard and further investigations taken up.

Shooting Stone

advised to undertake journey on the highway after confirming the status from the traffic authorities—(KNO)

Ex NHAI Officer

named M/s Rakesh Kumar Chaudhary for conspiring with the officials and managing to get the work order in a tender dated 10/01/2018, for improvement and routine maintenance of Lakhampur-Jammu section for Rs.9.34 crore (approx.), in violation of terms and conditions of the said tender, a handout said.

"It was further alleged in the PE that the then Regional officer, NHAI, entered into conspiracy with the said proprietor and favoured the firm in the award of said tender. It was also alleged that the experience certificates submitted by the said firm along with the bid, did not mention whether the road constructed from Atholi to Palali section in Kishtwar district was a 02/04/06 lane highway," the statement said.

"Whereas in the experience certificates of other 04 qualified bidders, they had specifically mentioned that the roads constructed by them were 02/04/06 lane highway. It was further alleged that the fact was overlooked while processing the bid of said firm and consequently favourably processed the bid," it added.

Moreover, the statement said that the experience certificates submitted by the said firm through its Proprietor were allegedly found to be fake & forged. In this manner, the accused allegedly cheated NHAI.

"Searches were conducted today at seven places in Jammu, Chandigarh & Ropar which led to recovery of incriminating documents, hard disks, and other digital evidence. A cash of more than Rs. 65 lakh from the premises of the contractor and cash of Rs. 2 lakh (approx) from the premises of the then Regional Officer, NHAI were also recovered. Investigation is going on," the statement added.

Missing Driver's

body will be handed over to his legal heirs after conduct of necessary medico-legal formalities.

Ben Stokes Gets Warning From On-Field Umpires After Using Saliva On Ball



Press Trust of India

PUNE: England all-rounder Ben Stokes received another official warning from the on-field officials after he mistakenly applied saliva on the match ball during the Indian innings in the second ODI here on Friday.

The incident occurred in the fourth over, when Stokes was found to have forgetfully applying saliva on the ball and promptly the on-field umpires Nitin Menon and Virender Sharma warned skipper Jos Buttler. Incidentally, he also

took a catch in the slips in the same over to dismiss Shikhar Dhawan of Reece Topley.

Applying saliva has been banned by the ICC after matches resumed post COVID-19 forced break. As per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), the ball was sanitized before proceedings resumed.

This is the second time that Stokes has been warned on this tour for applying saliva on the ball. The first instance happened during the Pink Ball Test in Ahmedabad, last month.

Navi Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar Chosen As Venues For 2022 Women's Asian Cup



TransStadia in Ahmedabad has a capacity of 20,000.

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Navi Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Bhubaneswar were on Friday finalised as the three venues for the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup football tournament to be hosted by India.

India is hosting the premier continental tournament from January 20 to February 6 next year. India is also scheduled to host the next edition of the FIFA Women's U-17 World Cup in 2022.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) general secretary Dato' Windsor John, said: "Women's football in Asia is world-class, and the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and the LOC have selected exceptional venues that will deliver a true spectacle befitting the stature of the tournament.

The DY Patil Stadium (Navi Mumbai), TransStadia (Ahmedabad) and the Kalinga Stadium (Bhubaneswar) will host the matches.

"The AFC is grateful to the AIFF, the LOC and the three host cities for their dedication and we are confident that the tournament will serve as a catalyst to take

women's football in India, which continues to make significant strides, to even greater heights in the coming years," John said.

"We applaud them for their vision and wish the AIFF and LOC the very best of success in their ambitions to showcase their capability to stage a successful international showpiece."

AIFF president and FIFA council member Praful Patel said: "We are excited to kick off the new year with the AFC Women's Asian Cup. Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar and Navi Mumbai have put in a lot of work to upgrade their footballing infrastructure.

"While we have seen Navi Mumbai deliver spectacularly in 2017 for the FIFA U-17 World Cup, we are taking the game to new places with Bhubaneswar and Ahmedabad through the two women's tournaments next year, which is really encouraging for our overall football ecosystem."

The Qualifiers for the tournament are set to take place from September 13 to 25 in centralised venues with the draw scheduled to be held on May 27 at the AFC headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

Real Kashmir End I-League Campaign With Victory Over Mohammedan Sporting



Press Trust of India

KALYANI: Real Kashmir FC ended their I-League campaign with a 2-1 victory over Mohammedan Sporting at the Kalyani Municipal Stadium, in Kalyani on Thursday.

Danish Farooq (34th minute) and Mason Robertson (51st) scored for the Snow Leopards while Pedro Manzi pulled a goal back in the 72nd minute for the Black Panthers.

With this win, Real Kashmir ended their campaign in fifth place, accumulating 21 points from 15 games.

Coming on the back of a 0-1 loss to Punjab FC, Real Kashmir tried to take an early lead by starting on the front foot. Although the Snow Leopards hurled bodies upfront in order to capitalise from

long balls, it was their opponents Mohammedan Sporting that had the first real chance of the match.

In the eighth minute, Pedro Manzi went for a goal from outside the box. His effort, albeit well hit, was saved easily by the opposition goalkeeper.

Five minutes later, Mason Robertson found himself in the thick of the action when a long ball found the towering defender inside the box. Robertson, although clinical in the air, lacked the accuracy to guide the ball home as the Black Panthers survived a dangerous spell of play.

The stalemate was broken in the 33rd minute courtesy of a corner kick. Lalhmangaihsanga Ralte's corner kick met the head of Danish Farooq who thumped the ball home from close range.

Real Kashmir could have found

the net again in the 48th minute had Adnan Ayoub not skewed his shot wide of goal, after combining for a one-two with Danish Farooq.

However, it was only a matter of time before the Snow Leopards struck again. In the 51st minute, Mason Robertson scored from the penalty spot after a rash tackle had prompted the referee to point to the spot, as Real Kashmir doubled their advantage.

Even after Shankarlal Chakraborty had made an attacking change, bringing on Faisal Ali, at the start of the second half, the Black Panthers seemed to lack creativity in the final third.

All of that changed with the substitution of Tirthankar Sarkar. In the 72nd minute, Sarkar's corner found Pedro Manzi, who thumped the ball home from close range.

Sports Competitions Organised By Kishtwar Administration Under BBBP

Observer News Service

KISHTWAR: District Administration Kishtwar, in collaboration with District Youth Services and Sports department, today organised a sports competition under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao for girls here at Chowgan Ground.

District Development Council Kishtwar Chairperson Pooja Thakur; Deputy Commissioner, Ashok Sharma; Block Development Council chairman Suresh Sharma; DDC member Kishtwar Zakir Hussain Butt; DDC member Palmar, Tahir Masood; ADC Pawan Parihar; Assistant Labour Commissioner Anoop Kumar; Dy. Sp HQs Davinder Singh Bandral; DYSSO, Kharati Lal Sharma; Masters, PETS besides girl students were present on the occasion.

During the programme a Cricket Match and Tug of War competition were organised in which students from different schools participated. BVM School Kishtwar was declared 1st in inter-school tug of war competition. The 2nd and third positions went to ABN Public School and Jamai Public High School, respectively.

Cultural programme and Nukkad Natak on Beti Bachao Beti Padhao were also presented on the occasion.



In her address, DDC Chairperson, Pooja Thakur said that parents play an important role in shaping the future of their children and asked them to treat both boys and girls equally. She also laid stress on the importance of providing education to girls and added that girls are important stakeholders in the development

of society and it is our collective responsibility to take care of their needs and empowerment.

She also stressed upon the importance of physical and mental fitness of the girls for their overall development.

Prizes were also distributed among the winners at the end of the function.

New Zealand Wins 3rd ODI Against Bangladesh By 164 Runs, Sweep Series 3-0

Agencies

WELLINGTON: Maiden centuries by Devon Conway and allrounder Daryl Mitchell lifted New Zealand to a 164-run win over Bangladesh in the third one-day cricket international Friday and a 3-0 sweep of the series.

South Africa-born Conway made 126, including a century from 95 balls, and shared a record 159-run partnership with Mitchell as New Zealand made 318-6 batting first after winning the toss. Mitchell took 17 runs from the 50th over to complete his century, in 92 balls, from the last delivery of the innings.

Matt Henry then crashed through the Bangladesh top order, taking 3-13 from his first four overs to undermine the tourists' reply.

Bangladesh slumped to 26-3 when Trent Boult pulled off a spectacular catch at third man to dismiss Litton Das, and eventually was all out for 154 in the 43rd over.

Mahmudullah prolonged the innings with an unbeaten 76 for Bangladesh, and Jimmy Neesham returned career-best ODI figures of 5-27 for New Zealand.

Earlier, Conway's steady 110-ball innings led New Zealand's rally after it had been 57-3 in the 11th over.

Mitchell provided the drama at the end with his race against time to reach his hundred.

He came to the last over on 83 and hit three fours from the first three balls from Mustafizur Rahman, the third from a no ball, to go to 95.

Mitchell and Mitchell Santner scrambled two runs from the ensuing free hit but Mitchell managed only a single to be 98 and off strike with two balls remaining.

Santner hit the next ball deep into the outfield and, taking advantage of the ground's broad boundaries, the pair sprinted through for three runs to bring Mitchell back on strike.

He clipped the final ball into the leg side and the pair stretched a single into two, helped by a loose throw from the field.

"There was obviously a bit of running there and I was blowing a bit," Mitchell said.

"It was nice to get the job done and Dev (Conway) batted awesomely to get a score for us. For me it was just about being positive, trying to pick your moments to put pressure on them and try to get a bit of luck along the way."

Conway's century, his first for New Zealand in any format, followed his unbeaten 99 in a Twen-

ty20 international against Australia in February.

There is nothing showy about Conway's style; he accentuates technical correctness over any kind of flourish.

But he has become a relentless run-maker in both domestic and international cricket since transferring his allegiance from Gauteng and South Africa to Wellington and New Zealand in 2017.

Conway has been a fund of runs for New Zealand in white ball cricket since his debut in November, making 366 runs in 11 T20 internationals at an average of 52.2 and now 225 runs in three one-day internationals at 75.

"I think for me it's about trying to keep it nice and simple, keeping a positive mindset," he said. "Credit to Daryl, he came in and played his natural, positive game."

Conway went to the crease on the sun-drenched Basin Reserve with New Zealand 44-1 in the eighth over after a sound opening partnership between Martin Guppitt and Henry Nicholls (18).

Guppitt (26) was out soon afterwards and Ross Taylor's return to the New Zealand team after missing the first two matches of the series with a hamstring strain wasn't fruitful.

He was out for 7 in the 11th over when New Zealand 57-3.

Conway began rebuilding the New Zealand innings in a 63-run fourth wicket partnership with stand-in captain Tom Latham, who made 18 before falling to the first ball from Soumya Sarkar.

Mitchell took time to establish himself, taking only nine runs from his first 23 balls before launching a ball from Mehidy Hasan Miraz over mid-wicket for six. Mitchell and Conway forged an ideal partnership in which Conway provided solidity and steady accumulation and Mitchell was able to hit out judiciously, reaching his half century from 63 balls.

Conway went to his century with an elevated cut shot off Taskin Ahmed and his partnership with Mitchell became New Zealand's highest for the fifth wicket against Bangladesh, and the highest for any wicket in a one-day international on the Basin Reserve.

"The two guys (Conway and Mitchell) batted beautifully," Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal said. "They didn't give us any chances."

"But sometimes the small things hurt you more, the dropped catches and run-out chances. New Zealand was exceptional throughout the series. We were just not good enough."

Sumit Antil Breaks Own World Record In F44 Javelin Throw During National Para Athletics

Press Trust of India

BENGALURU: Tokyo Paralympics-bound Sumit Antil broke his own javelin throw world record in the F44 category with an effort of 66.90m to claim the gold medal during the National Para Athletics Championship here on Friday.

The 22-year-old Antil bettered his own record of 66.43m which he had recorded during the Indian Grand Prix organised by the Athletics Federation of India at Patiala. He had competed with able-bodied athletes in that event.

He qualified for the Tokyo Paralympics during the 2019 World Para Athletics Championships where he had won a silver behind another Indian Sandeep Chaudhary.

Chaudhary, who has also qualified for Tokyo Paralympics after winning the gold at the 2019 World Para Athletics Championships and a former world record holder before Antil broke it, finished second with a best throw of 60.90m.

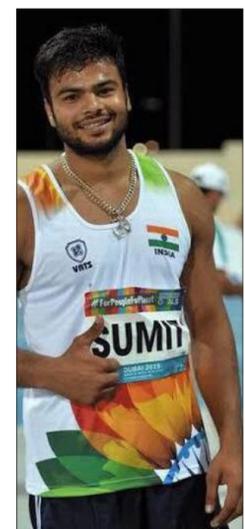
Chaudhary was recently embroiled in a controversy when he went missing when a team of dope testers from abroad came for an out-of-competition test at his training base in New Delhi.

The International Paralympic Committee later said Chaudhary's missed dope test will not constitute a whereabouts failure as he had taken permission for the leave.

The F44 category athletes have leg amputations or reduced function in one or both legs, and they compete without a prosthesis.

Meanwhile, the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) has responded to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) which sought a report after it emerged that facilities at the championships were not wheelchair-friendly and COVID-19 protocols were also "not being adhered to".

The PCI said in the letter that COVID-19 compliance measures were implemented for the safety



of the athletes, technical, professional and other staff members.

"No spectators were allowed, no opening/closing ceremony is being conducted, separate (11) mini buses have been provisioned for local transportation, separate (10) toilets have been arranged," the PCI said.

"Number of widely dispersed tents were provisioned, sanitised bottles arranged, track events are dispersed, events are being conducted at two venues to reduce exposure and ensure dispersion, random COVID tests carried out by Municipal officials."

Regarding accessibility of the para-athletes to the competition areas, the PCI said all the arrangements were in place and the entire stadium (Kantiveerva) was accessible.

"A very small patch was under renovation for laying of track, due to last minute shifting from Tamil Nadu. This work could not be completed, hence temporary measure for accessibility now ensured."

Young Indian Grandmaster Leon Mendonca Wins 2nd Kumania Tournament in Hungary

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Young Indian Grandmaster Leon Luke Mendonca emerged victorious in the 2nd Kumania GM chess tournament in Kisújszállás, Hungary, with a score of 6.5 points from nine rounds.

The 15-year-old Goa player, who became India's 67th Grandmaster in December last, remained unbeaten and finished with four wins and five draws in the tournament which concluded on Thursday.

"Feeling happy to retain the title despite playing the world school online tournament side by side," Mendonca said, adding that it was a strong event with five other young Grandmasters in the fray.

Mendonca, with an ELO rating of 2532, finished equal on points with Slovakia's Milan Pacher but took the top position on the basis of a better tie-break score.

He started the tournament with a



draw before notching up four consecutive victories and then four straight draws to finish with 6.5 points.

The Indian scored a fine victory in round 2 against IM Peter Lizak after the latter made a positional error before going on to beat GM Gergely Kantor comfortably in the third round.

In the penultimate round, Mendonca fought well against GM

Gergely Aczel and secured a draw in 95 moves with some good defending in the end-game.

He shared points in his final round game against American Alexander Velikanov.

He had last month won the Vezzerkepzo IM Round-Robin tourney. The Indian teenager had also won the first edition of Kumania Championship in November 2020.

World Cup 2022 Qualifiers: Spain Held By Greece, Ibrahimovic Returns For Sweden

Agencies

MADRID: Spain's newcomers couldn't add the spark "La Roja" needed in its World Cup qualifying opener.

Youngsters Bryan Gil and Pedri Gonz lez came off the bench to make their national team debut on Thursday but couldn't keep Spain from being held to a 1-1 home draw against Greece.

In the other Group B match, Sweden defeated Georgia 1-0 as Zlatan Ibrahimovic set up the winning goal on his return to international soccer after almost five years.

The 39-year-old AC Milan striker came out of international retirement ahead of this summer's European Championship, having last played for Sweden at Euro 2016. He set up the goal after receiving a pass on his chest and scooping the ball into the middle of the area for Viktor Claesson's close-range shot in the 35th minute.

In Granada, Alvaro Morata put Spain ahead in the first half but the

visitors equalized with a penalty converted by Anastasios Bakasetas early in the second period in one of the team's few scoring chances. Spain coach Luis Enrique brought Pedri and Gil on to improve the team's attack but they couldn't do much to change the game's outcome.

"Bryan played well, he created some chances," Luis Enrique said. "Pedri was unlucky because they put a man just to defend against him, but he will have more opportunities."

Spain entered the match heavily favoured after routing Germany 6-0 in the Nations League in its previous match. It hadn't conceded at home in seven matches, since a 2-1 win over Norway more than two years ago in European qualifying.

"We obviously didn't expect this result," Luis Enrique said. "We lacked finesse in front of the goal. It's my job to make sure that we improve in that area." Greece's players celebrated loudly after holding on to the draw at the Nuevo Los Carnenes Stadium.

BJP Has Become 'Borrowed Janata Party', TMC's Victory Will Herald Change In 2024: Yashwant Sinha

Press Trust of India

KOLKATA: Former Union minister and newly appointed TMC vice president Yashwant Sinha feels the BJP has become "Borrowed Janata Party" which is fighting elections with the hired leaders of other parties and said victory of Trinamool Congress in the West Bengal assembly polls will trigger a change in 2024 general election.

Noting that BJP doesn't have a credible face to counter Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal and is dependent on outsiders "Shah-Modi", Sinha said the desperation to win Bengal is driven by the fact that it has slim chances of winning polls in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Union Territory Puducherry and a victory in Assam, where it is in power, won't be a big prize.

He despised thinking that he joined TMC for the sake of getting Rajya Sabha membership, saying "it is a very cheap way to look at my decision".

Sinha, who served as finance and external affairs minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee cabinet, commented the present-day BJP is controlled by "two-people", who call the shots.

"The BJP has turned itself into a Borrowed Janata Party in Bengal. They are fighting elections with leaders and workers from other parties. They don't have their own leaders to match Mamata Banerjee in Bengal," he told PTI in an interview.

Talking about the Bengal elections, Sinha said the saffron party would bite the dust despite creating an unprecedented hype around the state assembly elections.

"Four states-West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Assam-and Union Territory of Puducherry are going to the polls this time. "They are the ruling party in Assam already, so a win there won't be a big prize. Therefore, the only real prize worth getting is Bengal, and that is why the BJP is putting most of its efforts there," he said.

Noting that the Bengal polls results will have national implications, Sinha said it is a must to stop the saffron party for the sake of the country.

"The BJP has created an unprecedented hype around the elections. They think they can overcome and overrun all the opposition in the country. But, despite all the noises they are creating, they don't have a ghost



of a chance in Bengal.

"The win of TMC in West Bengal assembly polls will ring the changes in 2024 general elections and defeat the BJP. The entire country is looking at this election, it will unite the opposition," Sinha said.

The veteran politician, who started his political career with Janata Party in 80s, feels the BJP lacks a credible face as a challenger to Mamata Banerjee in Bengal.

"The fact that BJP doesn't have a credible face in Bengal to counter Mamata Banerjee itself keeps TMC ahead of the BJP," he said.

Speaking on the insider-outsider debate in Bengal, Sinha said this ought to come up as BJP is seeking votes by projecting Narendra Modi and Amit Shah.

"Had the BJP projected any local leader as CM face, this narrative would not have come up in this election, as they could have easily said that they are here to assist the local leadership.

"But the party is projecting Shah-Modi as its faces, and that is why they are termed as outsiders," he said.

When asked about he too being branded as an outsider in Bengal by the BJP leadership, he said, "I am not here to contest election neither I am projected as a face here. I am here to assist Mamata Banerjee and the TMC".

Sinha had joined TMC in mid-March to assist the feisty Bengal leader against the saffron party.

The bureaucrat-turned-politician, a bitter critic of Modi and Shah, had left BJP in 2018.

His son Jayant Sinha remains in the saffron party and is MP from Hazaribagh in Jharkhand.

Speaking about BJP projecting 88-year-old "Metro man" E Sreedharan in Kerala, and a TMC turncoat Rabindranath Bhattacharya of the same age in Bengal, Sinha said, "it is complete violation of its own policy that all leaders above 75 years should retire from active politics".

Amid Tight Security, West Bengal, Assam Set For First Phase Polling

Agencis

KOLKATA/GUWAHATI: Over 1.54 crore voters in the eastern states of West Bengal and Assam will exercise their franchise on Saturday in the first phase of polling to decide the fate of key candidates and whether the former Naxal-affected 'Junglemahal' area of Bengal will transfer its loyalty to the BJP.

Polling in the 30 Assembly segments in West Bengal, most of which are in Junglemahal region, will be almost a straight fight between the BJP and ruling TMC. The Bharatiya Janata Party feels it has the upper hand in the area as it had managed to win most of the Parliamentary seats in the region in the 2019 general elections.

The elections will be held amid tight security with the Election Commission deploying around 684 companies of central forces that would guard 10,288 polling booths housed in 7,061 premises, officials said.

Besides, the state police will also be deployed at strategic locations, they added.

In the first phase, polling will take place amid strict COVID-19 guidelines in all nine seats in Purulia, four in Bankura, four in Jhargram and six in Paschim Medinipur, besides the seven seats in high-stakes Purba Medinipur - the home ground of BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari.

The TMC and BJP have fielded candidates in 29 seats each, while the Left-Congress-ISF alliance has put election candidates in all 30 seats, even as there are "friendly fights" in some.

In Jhargram, 11 paramilitary personnel will be deployed per booth, the highest for any election held in the state so far, officials said. In the other districts, an average of six paramilitary personnel will be deployed per booth, officials said.

"Declaring all 1,307 booths in 1,010 premises as Left Wing Extremist (LWE) areas in Jhargram, we have decided to deploy 127 companies of the central forces only for



booth management," an Election Commission official told PTI.

Another 14 companies of central forces will be used as Quick Response Teams (QRTs), one company for the maintenance of strong room and another two companies will be kept reserved as district and sub-divisional striking force, he said.

Altogether, 144 companies of central forces will be deployed in Jhargram for the election, he added.

"The central forces will be mainly deployed in and around the booths and the state force will be used for the maintenance of law and order. The constables will be used for queue management," the official said.

With the first phase, polling will be over in two districts—Purulia and Jhargram.

The Trinamool Congress is fighting in 29 of the 30 seats, while supporting an Independent in the Jyapur assembly segment in Purulia as the nomination of its official candidate Ujjwal Kumar was rejected by the EC due to a discrepancy.

The BJP is also contesting the polls in 29 seats, while its ally AJSU Party of Jharkhand fielding a candidate in Baghmundi.

Congress heavyweight Nepal Mahato is the alliance candidate from the seat, even as the Forward Bloc fielded Debranjani Mahato. AJSU Party has nominated Ashutosh Mahato, while the TMC

fielded Sushanta Mahato.

As per the official seat-sharing arrangements of the opposition alliance, the Left is fighting in 18 seats, Congress in 10 and ISF two. However, 'friendly fights' between the Left parties and Congress are on the anvil in some seats, including Baghmundi and Jyapur, as negotiations could not be concluded.

Among the other notable seats going to the polls in the first phase are Salboni, where the CPI(M) has fielded former minister Susanta Ghosh against BJP's Rajib Kundu and TMC's Srikanta Mahata. Ghosh, the MLA of Garbeta from 1987 to 2016, was in jail in the skeleton recovery case and is at present out on bail.

The TMC has fielded actor June Malia, a known face on the Bengali silver screen, from the Medinipur seat against BJP's Samit Kumar Dash. The Left-led alliance candidate is Tarun Kumar Ghosh of the CPI. In another significant contest, Santhali actor Birbaha Hansda is fighting on a TMC ticket from Jhargram against BJP's Sukhamay Satpathy and CPI(M)'s youth leader Madhujha Sen Roy.

The seven seats in Purba Medinipur—Patashpur, Kanthi Uttar, Bhagabanpur, Khejuri, Kanthi Dakshin, Ramnagar and Egra—will also be closely watched in a prestige fight between the influential Adhikari family which has gone over to the BJP and the TMC.

SC Reserves Verdict On Plea For Immediate Release Of Rohingya Refugees In Jammu

Press Trust of India



NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday reserved verdict on 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 of Chief Justice Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian after hearing detailed arguments on the plea said: "We are closing it for order".

During the hearing, advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner, said Rohingya children were subjected to killing, maiming and sexual exploitation and Military in Myanmar has failed to respect international humanitarian law.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said he is showing the problems which persists in Myanmar.

Bhushan referred to verdict of International Court of Justice and said that it has said that Myanmar has not presented any concrete measures aimed specifically at recognising the rights of the Rohingya to exist as a protected group.

He said that Jammu and Kashmir administration has detained Rohingyas in Jammu, who have refugee cards and they will soon be deported.

"I am seeking directions to not detain and deport these Rohingyas to Myanmar under Article 21 of the Constitution," Bhushan said.

Mehta said they are not refugees at all and this is the second round of litigation as this court had earlier dismissed an application filed by the petitioner, who is also a Rohingya.

"There was a similar application for Assam earlier.

They (petitioners) wanted that no Rohingya to be deported, we had said that we will follow the law. They are illegal immigrants. We are always in touch with Myanmar and when they confirm that the individual is their citizen, and then only deportation can take place", he said.

The bench said that can it be said that you (Centre) will deport

only when Myanmar accepts. Mehta said yes, the government cannot send an Afghan national to Myanmar.

The bench said that it is closing the matter for orders.

On March 11, an interim plea was filed in a pending PIL, seeking immediate release of detained Rohingya refugees in Jammu, and sought restrain orders from the court to 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© 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.

Looking Forward To New Indian Sub-Continent: Bangladesh Foreign Minister

Agencis

DHAKA: Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on Friday rooted for the creation of a new Indian sub-continent with improved connectivity and energy sharing between countries in the region.

"We have developed strong connectivity with our neighbours, particularly India. We have developed very strong connectivity by road, railways, waterways as well as air route. We have more to do in waterways because it is cost-effective." Mr Momen told news agency ANI.

"I am looking forward to a new Indian subcontinent where we can help improve the connectivity of all the waterways. It would be good for India as well as Bangladesh. We also developed connectivity in our energy sharing," he added.

Speaking further, the Foreign Minister said: "We want the other neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar to join in this new south Asia where we all can have good connectivity. I am looking for a day that we will not need any passport to travel within this region."

He said that the relationship between the two countries has reached new heights under the leadership of

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and PM Modi.

"Without a single bullet, we are achieving our goals. For India, their eastern border is secure because of a strong relationship with Bangladesh. For us, land boundary, the maritime boundary and the water sharing of Ganga have been finalised," the minister said.

AK Abdul Momen stressed India has always provided active support to Bangladesh.

"India was there with us throughout, and we are happy to celebrate our 50th Independence Day with the leader of the largest democracy of the world, Narendra Modi," he added.

PM Modi had arrived at the Dhaka airport earlier today for his two-day visit to Bangladesh. He received a warm welcome from his counterpart Sheikh Hasina. The Prime Minister's visit comes as Bangladesh is celebrating its 50th independence Day and the centennial birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

PM Modi will later call on Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid during the visit and hold restricted delegation-level talks with his counterpart Ms Hasina. This is PM Modi's first foreign visit since the coronavirus outbreak.

Partial Impact Of Oppn Sponsored "Bihar Bandh"

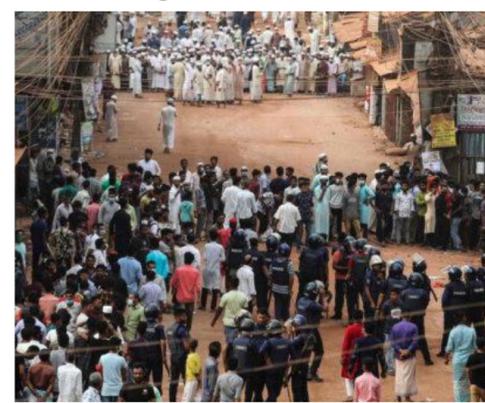
Press Trust of India

PATNA: Workers of RJD, Congress and the Left parties hit the streets across the state on Friday as part of "Bihar Bandh" call given by them in support of farmers cause and also to protest police action against the opposition MLAs in the assembly three days back. The shutdown decision has also included matters relating to unemployment and farmers demand for withdrawal of new farm laws, on which a call for all India bandh has been given by the farmers bodies. The bandh had partial impact on normal life in the state as protesting opposition parties workers blocked national highways, state highways and squatted on railway tracks at few places. They raised slogans against the state government, burnt tyres at some places and held small meetings at prominent places in different towns. No untoward incident has been reported during the bandh from any part of the state. The protesters forced delay of trains for a brief period in some places in the state. RJD leader Tejashwi Prasad Yadav could not participate in the bandh which he had announced the previous day. "Our party leader was supposed to lead the bandh in the state capital but he could not participate as he has to attend funeral of his uncle Mahavir Rai, Lalu Prasad's elder brother, who died yesterday in the state capital," RJD spokesman Mrityunjay Tiwary said. Workers of the Left parties- CPI, CPI(M) and CPI(ML)- were seen on the roads of Patna especially

at Dakbungalow square waving party flags. RJD workers also also blocked bypass road (NH-30) near Nandlal Chapra in the state capital, hampering traffic movement for some time. Though, the call for Bharat bandh was already given by the farmers unions to protest against the three farm Acts. But, since the state government resorted to police action on March 23 inside the Assembly in which opposition MLAs were thrashed by the police while forcibly evicting them from the House. "So we are also protesting against the governments anti-democratic and autocratic style of functioning," CPI(ML) state secretary Kunal said. He sought an apology from chief minister Nitish Kumar for police action against legislators in the assembly and also for bringing the Bihar Special Armed Police Act, which he termed a "black law". Reports reaching from various district headquarters said, bandh partially hit normal life in Muzaffarpur, Hajipur, Darbhanga, Begusarai, Bhagalpur where protesting party workers blocked NHs, burnt tyres, raised anti government slogans and held small meetings at various roundabouts in cities. The impact of bandh was witnessed in Muzaffarpur, the largest town of north Bihar, where shutters were downed in good numbers in the areas where RJD is strong while people preferred to remain indoor because of the bandh. RJD workers held demonstrations at Bairiya chowk, Chandni chowk, Akhara ghat, zero mile chowk besides burning tyres at Akhara ghat, zero mile

chowk to protest against police action and Police Act. Similarly in Darbhanga town, RJD workers enforced bandh at three-four places including prominent area of Laheriasarai besides blocking roads to leading towards Darbhanga bus stand and also blocked NH-57 (Muzaffarpur-Darbhanga) for some time, sources said. The agitators stopped Jaynagar-Saharsa Janki Express train at Laheriasarai for 20-25 minutes. Some local trains were also halted for a brief period in Jehanabad, Madhubani and Nalanda districts. RJD workers also blocked NH-139 and NH-110 for some time in protest against police action in Arwal. RJD workers also jammed Hajipur-Muzaffarpur NH besides blocking the stretch between Ramashish chowk in Hajipur town upto Gardania chowk near Gandhi setu that led to huge traffic jam on Gandhi setu, sources said. Bhagalpur too witnessed partial affect of bandh as shops at main bazar remained closed and protesters held public meeting at station chowk and raised anti government slogans. In Begusarai, RJD and the left parties workers together blocked NH 28, 31 and State Highway 55, though markets and offices remained opened. Former CPI(M) MLA and senior leader Rajendra Prasad Singh, CITU leader Suresh Singh, farmers leader Anil Kumar Anjan and RJD district president Mohit Yadav held a small public meeting in Begusarai and demanded withdrawal of the three farm bills and condemned police action against the opposition MLAs. PTI

4 Killed In Bangladesh During Protests Against PM Modi's Visit



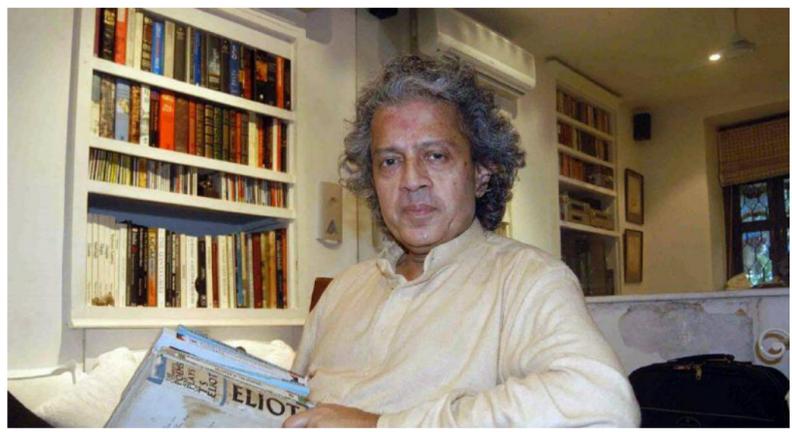
Agencis

Cox's Bazar: At least four people were killed in Bangladesh's Chittagong on Friday after police fired rubber bullets at protesters during a demonstration against the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a police official said.

"We had to fire teargas and rub-

ber bullets to disperse them as they entered a police station and carried out extensive vandalism," Rafiqul Islam, the police official told Reuters, referring to protesters.

Protests against PM Modi's visit also flared in the capital Dhaka, where dozens of people, including two journalists, were injured in clashes with police, witnesses said.



Noted Journalist And Author Anil Dharker Dies

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: Noted journalist and author Anil Dharker died here on Friday, a former colleague said.

Dharker (74) was the founder and director of the Mumbai International Literary Festival, held in November every year and was also the founder and director of Literature Live! which holds literary evenings throughout the year in the city.

He underwent a bypass procedure at a Mumbai hospital on Thursday and died there Friday morning, the colleague said.

Over a five-decade-long illus-

trious career, Dharker had been a columnist and writer, an architect, a member of the advisory committee of the film censor board and more.

Dharker had been the editor of a variety of publications, starting with Debonair (a monthly), Mid-Day and Sunday Mid-Day (evening papers); The Independent, a morning broad-sheet from the Times of India group and The Illustrated Weekly of India.

He was a columnist for The Indian Express newspaper and author The Romance Of Salt, a book on Mahatma Gandhis Dandi March. Dharker had also worked as a TV

show producer and anchor, and head of a news television channel.

He was a member of the Advisory Boards of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Door-darshan, the Children's Film Society of India and several film funds for the production of films in India. He was also a recipient of several awards for journalism.

Expressing grief over Dharker's demise, columnist Bachi Karkaria tweeted: "Extremely saddened by the passing of the many talented Anil Dharker. I can safely say no other Indian Litfest curator had his deep, emotional commitment or drive. Knew him for well nigh 50

years. Flourish as much up there, dear Anil."

In her tributes to Dharker, fellow author and columnist Shobhaa De tweeted: Goodbye dearest Anil. An elegant mind, a stylish writer, and a loyal friend. You will be missed by all those whose lives you touched. RIP."

Lyricist and Chairman of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) Praseon Joshi tweeted: "Saddened to hear about Anil Dharker passing away. Will miss and cherish the discussions we had about life. A stimulating mind, nurturer of literature and art who thrived on ideas."