

# China Extends New Year Holiday Until February 2 Over Coronavirus Outbreak: Authorities

BEIJING: The Chinese authorities have decided to extend the Lunar New Year holiday until February 2 to allow for more time to mitigate the new coronavirus outbreak as the death toll in the country continues to rise, according to a decree of the Chinese State Council.

"In order to improve the prevention and control over the spread of pneumonia caused by the new type of coronavirus, to effectively reduce the concentration of a large number

of people, to halt the spread of the epidemic, to better protect the health and lives of people ... with the approval of the State Council [we have decided] to extend the New Year holiday until February 2, 2020. The [first] working day will be February 3," the decree read.

The public holiday, which is China's busiest travel season, was previously set for the period from January 24-30.

The decree applies to all provinces, cities of central subordina-

tion, and autonomous regions.

Separate notices will be issued for universities, schools and preschools on when students' holidays will end.

Governments across the world are on high-alert amid the outbreak of a new form of viral coronavirus that was first reported in China's Wuhan in December. According to the latest data from China's National Health Commission, 80 people have died from the virus in China, and over 2,700 cases have been confirmed

in the country. Cases of pneumonia caused by the new coronavirus strain have been reported in other countries, including Canada, France and the United States.

Chinese scientists are conducting research to help provide timely analysis of the epidemic situation and support to formulate targeted strategies for the prevention and control of the novel coronavirus outbreak.

A research team has been set up by the academicians and experts from the Chinese Academy

of Engineering (CAE).

Wang Chen, vice president of CAE and head of the research team, said: "In view of the accelerated spread of the novel coronavirus pneumonia, we should understand the rule of its transmission and pathogenesis as soon as possible, which is very important for epidemic prevention and control."

According to experts, the spread of the virus has not been blocked, the number of cases is rising rapidly and the infectivity

seems to be increasing. Some patients of the novel coronavirus pneumonia have mild symptoms and no fever, which makes identifying cases and prevention of transmission very difficult.

Wang said China's scientific and technological departments have started research on the origin and transmission mode of the virus. Scientists are also studying the biological characteristics of the virus and its variation trend to evaluate its transmission ability and pathogenicity.

In addition, scientists are also conducting research on new effective drugs. The validation results of tested drugs are expected to come out soon. Other potentially effective drugs will also be put into clinical trials.

Researchers are also evaluating the therapeutic effect of serum in convalescent patients and developing neutralizing antibodies to look for effective treatment methods as well as stepping up the development of vaccines.

## About 900 Syrians return home from Jordan, Lebanon over past 24 Hours: Russian Military

MOSCOW:- About 900 Syrian refugees have returned to their home country from Jordan and Lebanon over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides and Refugee Migration Monitoring said on Monday.

"Over the past 24 hours, a total of 877 refugees have returned to the Syrian Arab Republic from foreign states: 244 people (in-

cluding 73 women and 124 children) left Lebanon [for Syria] via the Jaydet-Yabus and Talkalakh checkpoints, while 633 people (including 190 women and 323 children) returned from Jordan via the Nassib checkpoint," the ministry said in its daily bulletin.

According to the bulletin, the Russian military conducted two humanitarian operations over the given period, delivering 800

food sets with a total weight of nearly three tonnes to the Raqqa province and 500 food sets with a total weight of about two tonnes to the Al Hasakah province.

Syrian engineering units have, meanwhile, cleared of mines 3.1 hectares (7.7 acres) of land and destroyed 39 explosive devices over the past 24 hours, the center added.

Since 2011, Syria has suf-

fered an armed conflict between various opposition groups, including terrorist organizations, and the government led by President Bashar Assad. Since government forces have regained control over most of the country from terrorists, the priority is now being given to reaching a political settlement and facilitating the return of refugees.

## Low-Dose Aspirin Administration Helps In Reducing Preterm Birth Risk

Low-doses of aspirin on a daily basis can help reduce preterm birth risks among first-time pregnant. The medication can be administered from the sixth week until the 36th week.

The clinical trial, which involved more than 11,000 women in several low- and middle-income countries, found that women taking daily low-dose aspirin were 11% less likely to deliver before the 37th week of pregnancy, compared to those given a placebo.

The study that appeared in The Lancet was conducted by Matthew K. Hoffman, M.D., of Christiana Care in Newark, Delaware, and colleagues in the Global Network for Women's and Children's Health Research, a clinical trials network funded by NIH's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

"Our results suggest that low-dose aspirin therapy in early pregnancy could provide an inexpensive way to lower the preterm birth rate in first-time mothers," said study author Marion Koso-Thomas, M.D., of NICHD's Pregnancy and Perinatology Branch.

Preterm birth is the most common cause of infant death and the leading cause of long-term neurological disability in children. According to the study authors, advances in newborn care have improved survival for preterm infants,



but this care is limited or unavailable in many parts of the world.

Earlier studies have suggested that low-dose aspirin may reduce the risk of preterm birth and preeclampsia, a potentially life-threatening blood pressure disorder of pregnancy. However, these studies were not large enough to statistically determine the therapy's effectiveness in reducing preterm birth.

The researchers enrolled 11,976 women with a first-time pregnancy from seven sites in India, Pakistan, Zambia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala and Kenya. Roughly half were assigned at random to receive 81 milligrams of aspirin daily; the other group received a daily placebo.

Preterm birth (before 37 weeks) occurred in 11.6% of the women who took aspirin and in 13.1% of the women who took the placebo. Similarly, birth before 34 weeks (early preterm delivery) occurred in 3.3% of the aspirin group and 4% of the placebo group (a 25% reduction).

Women in the aspirin group also had a lower rate of perinatal mortality (stillbirth or newborn death in the first seven days of life), compared to the placebo group (45.7 per 1,000 births vs 53.6 per 1,000 births). The risk of high blood pressure disorders of pregnancy at term did not differ significantly between the groups. The low cost and safety of low-dose aspirin therapy suggest that it could be easily adapted for widespread use.

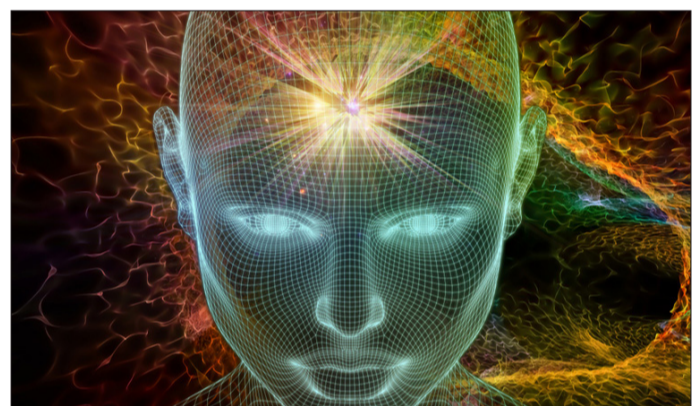
## Continuous Vigilance May Form Memories Via Different Brain Process

Press Trust Of India

A continuous state of vigilance generates a different type of memory in mice than a momentary startle, and these differences are linked to distinct chemical processes in their brains, according to a study which may shed light on how traumatic memories are consolidated.

Researchers, including those at the RIKEN Center for Brain Science (CBS) in Japan, visualised new chemical interactions in the living mouse brain for the first time, observing molecular pathways which support memory function.

They observed these processes in the star-shaped brain cells called astrocytes, revealing how these cells help nerves during memory formation, according to



the study, published in the journal Nature Communications.

Previous studies had shown that noradrenaline—a hormone that is also a nerve activator—is important for modifying the junctions between neurons, involved in form-

ing and consolidating memories.

These studies had established that the astrocytes were crucial mediators of the chemical reactions in these junctions, the researchers said.

In the current study, the scientists artificially stimulated brain

cells with light—an emerging technique called optogenetics—and induced noradrenaline release.

They stimulated neurons originating in a part of the brain called the locus coeruleus, which is located in the brain stem region, and involved in biological responses to stress and panic.

According to the researchers, the hormone's release launched two distinct chains of molecular events, the first involving calcium activity, and the second cAMP—a signalling molecule whose levels are interpreted by cells to understand the status of chemical reactions in other cells.

Following the noradrenaline release, calcium levels in the astrocytes quickly increased, while the cAMP levels had a slower but more sustained increase, the study noted.

## From Front page...

### Met Predicts Another Snow Spell

official added.

The night temperature in Kokernag in south settled at a low of minus 0.8 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara in north recorded a low of minus 4.4 degrees Celsius, the official said.

Leh in Ladakh Union Territory recorded a low of minus 18.4 degrees Celsius, he said, adding the nearby Drass registered a minimum of minus 27.8 degrees Celsius.

### Hizb Militant killed, Soldier

fire with militants.

The combing operation in the village was going on when the last reports came in.

Last Saturday, three Jaish-e-Mohammad militants, including the outfits Kashmir Chief Qari Yasir were killed in an encounter with government forces in HariParigam area of Pulwama.

### Kashmir Focus Of EU

a similar theme with a number of them, such as the GUE/NGL Group, also making a reference to the revocation of Article 370 that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir. They are set to be debated in the European Parliament in Brussels next Wednesday and voted on the day after.

Official sources in New Delhi on Sunday said the EU Parliament should not take actions that call into question the rights and authority of democratically elected legislatures.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is a matter entirely internal to India and the law was adopted through democratic means after a public debate in both houses of Parliament, they said.

The Indian government has stressed that the new Act does not deny any citizenship rights but has been brought in to protect the oppressed minorities of neighbouring countries and provide them citizenship.

The draft resolutions against the CAA make a reference to the Charter of the United Nations, Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as well as the India-EU Strategic Partnership Joint Action Plan signed in November 2005, and to the EU-India Thematic Dialogue on Human Rights as it urges the Indian authorities to engage constructively with those protesting

against the Act and consider their demands to repeal the "discriminatory CAA".

The CAA marks a dangerous shift in the way citizenship will be determined in India and is set to create the largest statelessness crisis in the world and cause immense human suffering, notes the GUE/NGL draft.

Instead of addressing the concerns, offering corrective action, calling for security forces to act with restraint and ensuring accountability, many government leaders have been engaging in efforts to discredit, rebuke and threaten the protesters, the resolution alleges.

As background, the resolution sets out that since the May 2019 election, the government of India has reinforced its nationalistic orientation as it also makes a reference to the revocation of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir.

The draft resolution, which falls under the category of Resolutions on topical subjects, alleges that India has created the legal grounds to strip millions of Muslims of the fundamental right of equal access to citizenship and that the CAA could be used, along with the National Register of Citizens, to render many Muslim citizens stateless.

It seeks to remind the Indian government of its obligations under the 1992 UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, which establishes the obligation of countries to protect the existence and identity of religious minorities within their territories and to adopt appropriate measures to ensure that this is achieved.

Such a motion, which has been characterised under the Relations with Asian countries section by the economic bloc, are used as a basis for engagement of EU member countries with specific nations.

If it is passed next week, it will be formally sent to the Indian government and Parliament as well as to the European Commission chiefs.

### Hope EU Resolutions Are Followed

communal CAB & brutal lockdown in Kashmir. Hope it's followed up with sanctions. GOI's actions are frittering away all of India's assiduously earned soft power," a tweet on Mehbooba's twitter handle reads.

The PDP president's twitter handle is operated by her daughter Iltija after Mehbooba was taken into preventive custody on the wake of abrogation of article 370 in August last year.

"Discriminatory CAB & repressive mea-

sures in Kashmir are India's internal matter only when EU Parliamentarians/international community condemn such actions. Had they spoken about it in glowing terms, the same establishment would lap it up," she added.

The European Parliament is set to debate and vote on a motion tabled by a large chunk of its members against India's new citizenship law, which it alleges marks a "dangerous shift" in the country's citizenship regime.

### Saini To Take Charge As Army

Lt Gen M.M. Naravane, was elevated as army chief.

An alumnus of Sainik School, Kapurthala and the National Defence Academy (NDA), Lt Gen Saini was commissioned into the Jat Regiment in June 1981.

He commanded his battalion (7 Jat), a mountain brigade, a counter insurgency force in Jammu and Kashmir, a corps in the western theatre and then the Southern Army Command.

As Southern Command chief, he steered transformation of its operational philosophy to overwhelm the emerging threats and validation of many new concepts during training exercises.

He has also been weapons instructor in the National Security Guards (NSG) Training Centre, a senior directing staff at the National Defence College, New Delhi and the Commandant of the Indian Military Academy.

Lt Gen Saini had also served as the Deputy Chief Military Personnel Officer in UN Mission in Iraq-Kuwait, attended an exercise on peacekeeping conducted by the Global Peace Operations initiative in Mongolia and a counter-terrorism exercise in Australia.

During his long service, Lt Gen Saini has been conferred with a number of awards, both for gallantry and distinguished service, including the Chief of Army Staff's Commendation, Army Commander's Commendation, the Yudh Seva Medal (YSM), the Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM), and the Ati Vishist Seva Medal (AVSM).

### 2G Restoration Brings Little Relief

of 2G has proved ineffective is also evident from the fact that reporters continue to throng the Media Centre, an internet facility that J&K government has set up for them in the Information Department at Residency Road.

### Life Returns To Normal In Kashmir

traffic was plying normally on the road in civil lines.

The situation was no different in uptown and downtown Srinagar, where business and other activities resumed on Monday morning.

Normal classes were also resumed in coaching and tuition centres after four days in the valley, where authorities had directed administration of these institutes to remain closed till Sunday for security reasons.

Similar reports of normalcy were received from other parts of the valley, including north, south and central Kashmir.

### Train Service Resumes

The train service is an extremely popular means of intra-Kashmir transport. Not just for the people travelling within the valley, but also for those who are heading to Jammu.

The service is very effective during the winters when it snows heavily and restricts the movement of the vehicular traffic.

### No Power Can Stop Pandits

sentiments of any religion but to give relief to victims of religious persecution.

Mahatma Gandhi had told Nehru to give citizenship to minorities like Hindus and Sikhs if they come to India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has fulfilled that vision by bringing in the law, Singh said.

On several non-BJP states refusing to implement the CAA, the defence minister said it is a central law and everyone should follow it.

Accusing the Congress of misleading people on the issue, he said the party should not forget its duty towards the nation just because it is in opposition.

### Row Over Dropping 'Sher-E-Kashmir'

The Jammu and Kashmir administration had on Saturday announced the change in nomenclature of police medal for gallantry and police medal for meritorious service

Principal secretary, home department, Shaleen Kabra, in an order, had said that Sher-e-Kashmir Police Medal for Gallantry and Sher-e-Kashmir police medal for meritorious service' shall henceforth be read as 'Jammu and Kashmir police medal for gal-

lantry and Jammu and Kashmir police medal for meritorious service'.

### Troubled To See Omar Abdullah's

showed Omar Abdullah clean shaven, the next featured him with a medium beard and in the final one an overgrown beard was striking.

"Equally concerned about Farooq Abdullah, @MehboobaMufti & other Kashmiri leaders who are incarcerated without trial or due process. Union Govt must immediately release all political prisoners and restore normalcy in Valley," he said.

The DMK has all along been demanding the release of all leaders in detention in Kashmir following the scrapping of Article 370.

A photograph of Omar Abdullah surfaced on Twitter on January 25 in which he seemed almost unrecognisable sporting a salt and pepper beard, triggering reactions of awe and anger from netizens, including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Omar is among the three former chief ministers of the erstwhile state who continue to be in custody since August 5 when the Centre abrogated the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 and divided it in two Union Territories.

This is first picture of 49-year old Omar to have appeared in public domain after five months in detention. It showed him smiling in a snow covered jacket and sporting an unkempt greyish beard.

### Kupwara Shuts On Massacre Anniversary

observed on the roads. The government offices and banks noticed thin attendance in the town, local newsgathering agency KNT reported. Though no congregational prayers were offered at martyrs' graveyard, Kupwara, but people at individual level visited the graveyard and offered special prayers for the victims.

It was on 27 January 1994 when the troopers of 31 Medium Regiment allegedly gunned down 27 people in Kupwara district for observing shutdown on the eve of Republic Day.

### 550 employees of BSNL opt

will be the last working day for the employees who have opted for VRS. (KNS)