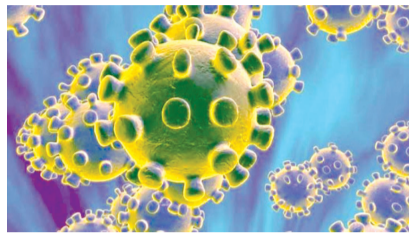


No case of coronavirus in Kashmir, but swine flu threat looms large



SRINAGAR: Even though no case of coronavirus has been detected in Kashmir so far, but the threat of H1N1 virus also known as swine flu continues to pose a big challenge and threat. The authorities, however, claim that situation is under control but state that 14 cases of swine flu patients have been admitted in SKIMS hospital Soura.

According to wire service—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Medical Superintendent of Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) said that so far over 700 people have been tested for H1N1 influenza at the hospital since September last year, adding that 14 among them were tested positive.

He added that eleven of the patients including five males and one children are admitted in the hospital for necessary treatment.

"Due to a drop in temperature, the possibility in increase in the number of cases may go up," he said, adding that such a situation is possible as it is 'a seasonal flu'.

However, he said that the situation is under control and the institute is ready to tackle any exigency, saying that the hospital has adequate number of vaccines, medicines, isolation kits and personal protection gear available to deal with H1N1 virus.

Earlier, reports said that in the past five years, at least 87 people died due to swine flu in Jammu Kashmir, with 2019 witnessing the highest number of deaths.

As per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, which maintains the records of swine flu cases across India under its Integrated Diseases Surveillance Programme (IDSP), at least 27 people died of swine flu in Jammu Kashmir in 2019.

Twenty people died of swine flu in 2015, the year 495 people were detected positive for the seasonal virus. However, in 2016, only few cases were detected positive and there was no death.

Transport Deptt issues clarification on Road/token tax on old vehicles

JAMMU: The Transport Department today issued a clarification regarding levying of the road/token tax on old vehicles.

According to the clarification, for vehicles involving life extension beyond 15 years, written down value method shall be adopted to work out the residual value of the vehicles at the end of their registration period as prescribed in the relevant Act/ Regulation for ascertaining the token tax payable at the time of registration of such vehicle.

With regard to average Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation as the discounting factor, subject to the condition that the registration of old vehicles shall take into account directions, if any, of NGT/CPCB/SPCB before authorizing registration of old vehicles in J&K in respect of non-attainment cities in respect of air pollution. "In case of vehicles below 15 years of age in whose case part token tax stands realized at pre-revised rates, the token tax shall be calculated at revised rate on the value so arrived at as per the method at the time the instalment of token tax has become due and the instalment so worked out shall remain fixed for the remaining period of registration maximum up to 15 years inclusive of the earlier period for which the Road/token tax has been paid at pre-revised rate," states the order. Similarly, vehicles involving body fabrication shall be registered only after body fabrication and sum total of cost of the chassis plus GST thereon and cost of body fabrication plus GST are taken together for levying of road tax, the order said.



Tulip Garden To House 1.3 Million Flowers This Year With 55 Varieties: Govt

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Commissioner Secretary, Department of Floriculture, Parks and Gardens, Shiekh Fayaz Ahmad today said that Government is mulling to establish theme-based gardens in twin capital cities of Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking to delegations at Public Grievances Camp at Banquet Hall, Srinagar, the Commissioner Secretary said that Government was mulling to establish theme-based gardens and the process in this regard has been initiated at all levels. He said that the Government was all set to identify land for these gardens in Srinagar and Jammu cities. He said that the gardens would be developed on scientific basis—which would help Government to attract huge influx of tourists. He said that this would give impetus to the local entrepreneurship and help them to avail benefits. He said that Government was also maintaining 499 gardens, besides

upgrading the heritage gardens, including Mughal gardens across Kashmir region.

He said, making uniquely different gardens do not necessarily mean huge expenditure. "Just one little change and the City could well be on its way to be called the paradise in the world of gardens," he said.

Ahmad said that on regular basis, the Department deputed its officials and workers for the Model Training Course (MTC) on advances in Floriculture and Landscaping held across several centres of the country. He said besides this, training of farmers on plant propagation and nursery management is also carried out by the Department.

The Commissioner Secretary said that several initiatives are taken to strengthen the existing network, which boosts the floriculture sector and makes it more focussed and research oriented.

"We are making sure that this vital sector gets its due priority," he said.

The Commissioner Secretary said that

the famous tulip garden in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar this year would be open for visitors with several new varieties. He said that Government was also mulling to extend the garden with Sakura gardens (early blooming cherry gardens), for which DPRs have been already prepared.

Meanwhile, Director, Floriculture, Kashmir, Farooq Ahmad Rather said that known as Asia's largest tulip garden, it would house 1.3 million flowers this year with 55 variety flowers.

Rather, said that in addition to tulips, flowers of other varieties like daffodils, hyacinths and ranunculus are also grown in the garden. He informed this year some five new varieties have been added, which would add to the breath-taking view of famed garden.

The garden, which is spread over 30 hectares of land, is situated in the mesmerizing foothills of the Zabarwan hills on the banks of the Dal Lake.

Who is to blame for growing man-animal conflict in Kashmir?

Agencies

SRINAGAR: As humankind continues to breach nature's borders to encroach into the habitat of wildlife species, more and more incidents of man-animal conflict are occurring across the Kashmir Valley.

Just two days back, a leopard and a mother bear with cubs were rescued in time by the officials of the wildlife protection department from a heavily populated area of south Kashmir.

"After rescue, these animals were set free in the forest area so that they return to their natural territory", said an official of the wildlife protection department.

Ironically, instead of helping the rescue effort, dozens of locals were seen clicking mobile phone pictures of these wild animals as they remained dazed after being surrounded by so many people.

Environmentalists say the problem is much bigger and of greater consequence than it appears to the common man.

"Fast growing human population has pushed the boundaries of the wild animals far deeper into the forests and other habitats of these species.

"Look at any forest area of the Valley and you will find that humans have done serious encroachments there. Felling for-

ests for timber and fuel, or claiming forest land for cultivation is a common phenomenon in J&K. "This forces the wildlife species to move down into populated areas for food and sometimes in sheer bewilderment and fear",



said a local environmentalist.

Another important reason for man-animal conflict is the increasing numbers of wildlife species because poaching and unauthorised killing of animals for fur etc has almost stopped due to the presence of the security forces in forest areas.

"Poachers hardly dare to venture into the forests. Security forces deployed on counter insurgency duties dominate forest areas to check infiltration of militants. This has discouraged

poaching and hunting in these forests", said a police officer.

Srinagar city has an entire range of Zabarwan hills those have been declared as protected areas for wildlife species.

Areas overlooking the Raj

only in Kashmir and nowhere else in the World.

As construction of houses etc continues in areas surrounding the Dachigam national park, this has caused stress on various species living inside the park.

A government sheep farm which existed inside the park for decades was re-located two years back to avoid competition between sheep and other grazers among the wildlife species.

"There are pastures those overlap into the Dachigam park and flocks of sheep, goats and cattle are taken up into these pastures by nomadic goatherds during the summer months.

"This is another grey area that needs immediate attention to ensure that the population of Hangul and other species remains unaffected", said Bashir Ahmad, a veterinarian who headed the sheep farm inside the national park for three years in the past.

Thousands of migratory birds come each year to spend the winter months in bird reserves and other lakes and water bodies of the Valley.

Vast areas of these bird reserves like the Hokarsar, Mirgund, Hygam and Shallabugh have been encroached as houses and other structures including shops and godowns have come up in these areas.

In addition to this, Dachigam national park is situated barely 14 Kilometres from city centre Lal Chowk in Srinagar.

Dachigam is home to 'Hangul', a sub-species of red deer found

Over 12,500 vacant Panchayat Halqas soon to elect Sarpanches, Panches in J&K

JAMMU: Aiming to restore democracy fully at the grass-roots level, over 12,500 vacant Panchayat Halqas will soon elect Sarpanches and Panches in the Union Territory as the Government has decided to hold elections.

Secretary Jammu and Kashmir Rural Development Department, Sheetal Nanda on Tuesday issued notification that the Government in consultation with Election Authority under Rule 7 of J&K Panchayati Raj Rule 1996 has called

upon the vacant Panchayat Halqas to elect Sarpanches and Panches on the dates to be appointed by the Election Authority.

With the announcement of number of vacant seats by the Secretary RDD, the election process has set in motion.

"We have identified a total of 12,653 vacancies in Panchayats including 1,014 Sarpanchs and 11,639 Panches in all 20 districts of the Union Territory-10 each in Jammu and Kashmir divisions. Ma-

ajority of vacancies were in Kashmir division," official sources here said on Wednesday.

They said that the elections to the over 12,500 vacant posts of Panch and Sarpanch in Gram Panchayats in Jammu and Kashmir will be held on the dates to be appointed by the Election Authority.

The schedule for holding the elections is being worked out and dates shall be announced by the Chief Electoral Officer soon, they added and said, "The Election

Authority might begin the poll process from plain areas and hold elections in higher reaches in last couple of phases in March taking into account the winter weather conditions."

The notification revealed that in Kashmir division, maximum number of vacancies were in Baramulla district (2311) followed by South Kashmir's Anantnag district (2130), Budgam (2098), Pulwama (1588) and Kulgam (1071).

Vacancies in other Valley districts in-

cluded 648 in Bandipora, 726 in Ganderbal, 796 in Kupwara, 815 in Shopian and 164 in Srinagar.

However, the vacancies were negligible in Jammu division with highest 42 in Rajouri district followed by 40 in Jammu, 38 in Kathua, 33 in Doda, 31 in Udhampur, 29 in Ramban district, 26 in Poonch, 25 in Samba, 23 in Reasi and 19 in Kishtwar.

On January 21, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Shailen-

dra Kumar had called on Lt Governor C Murmu and informed him about the preparations for the elections to vacant seats of Panchayats in the Union Territory.

Mr Kumar had briefed the Lt Governor about the various activities undertaken by the Election Commission in Jammu and Kashmir for generating awareness of the electoral process and sensitising the voters especially newly eligible young voters towards their voting rights.

SHORT TAKES

Class 11th results: 64 per cent students pass exams

SRINAGAR: Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (BOSE) on Wednesday declared the result of Higher Secondary Part-I examination for Kashmir division with 64 per cent students being declared successful.

In total, 49749 students were declared successful. According to the wire service—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), officials in the JKBOSE said that a total of 49749 students appeared in the examinations last year while 36956 out of them passed the examinations as per the result declared today.

They said the pass percentage of boy students has been recorded as 73 per cent while as the overall pass percentage of girl students is 76 per cent.

The officials told KNO added that 9896 students out of over 40000 students including boys and girls got distinction in the test. They further stated that 12105 students got reappear and 688 students have failed to qualify any of the subjects in their stream.

Pertinently, the Class 11th examinations started in the month of November and culminated in the month of December last year.

Notably, in wake of the internet gag in the Valley, the BOSE has switched to the manual procedure and has declared the results through gazettes.

Pertinently, the class 10th and 12th results were also declared via gazettes, SMS in view of internet clampdown in Kashmir.

After 12 year hunt, J&K Crime Branch arrests absconder from Delhi

JAMMU: The Crime Branch of Jammu and Kashmir police on Wednesday arrested an absconder after a long hunt of 12 years from Delhi, a spokesman of the investigating agency said.

Tariq Arafat, a resident of Uttarakhand, was arrested from the national capital for his alleged involvement in a case registered in Crime Branch, Jammu in 2005 under various sections of the Ranbir Penal Code, the spokesman said.

"The accused is involved in the case for impersonation of candidates appearing in Common Entrance Tests conducted by the Board of Professional Entrance Examination in 2005 for selection in different professional courses including MBBS and BDS," the spokesman said.

He said the investigation of the case was closed as proved and the chargesheet was filed before the court of law against the six accused persons on June 27, 2008.

"Arafat had gone underground to evade arrest since November 2008 and the court had issued an arrest warrant against him under Section 512 CrPC for his arrest after production of the chargesheet," the spokesman added.

He said the case was registered after revelation of facts surfaced during the investigation of an FIR that some candidates appearing in CET conducted in 2005 had managed their selection in different professional courses by impersonation and fraud.

Nocturnal raids in Pulwama, 3 youth detained

SRINAGAR: At least three youth were detained during night raids in Litter village of South Kashmir's Pulwama district.

According to wire service—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), three youth were arrested during the nocturnal raid late on Tuesday night.

Officials confirmed the raid and detention of three youth stating that they were picked up for questioning. "One of the detained youth is the brother of a slain militant," they said.