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Minimum : 09°C
Humidity : 78%

SUNSET
Today 07:04 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 05:57 AM

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....LIFE & TIMES

P5

ONLINE PREDATORS PUT MILLIONS OF CHILDREN AT RISK DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN

Millions of children around the world are at increased risk of online sexual exploitation, violence and cyberbullying as they spend more time on virtual platforms due to the closing of schools amid COVID-19 lockdown, the UN has said. More than 1.5 billion children and young people have been affected by the closing of schools worldwide and many are online now taking classes and socialising, the UN's children's agency UNICEF said. "Spending more time on virtual platforms can leave children vulnerable to online sexual exploitation and grooming, as predators look to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic. A lack of face-to-face contact with friends and partners...."

News Digest

28 Lockdown 'Violators' Held

Srinagar: Police on Thursday arrested 28 people for allegedly violating prohibitory orders in Handwara tehsil of the frontier Kupwara district. 28 people were arrested and four shops were sealed in Handwara by police today for violating government orders imposed in view of coronavirus pandemic, a police spokesperson said. He said the arrests were made despite police making time to time announcements urging people to comply with the lockdown orders. Police urged people to follow the government orders so that the deadly disease could be controlled.

200 Professors Promoted

Jammu: Department of Higher Education on Thursday ordered promotion of 200 Associate and Assistant Professors serving in various Government Degree Colleges across the Jammu and Kashmir. "Department promoted 54 Associate Professors as In-Charge Principals while as 30 Assistant Professors were promoted in the Academic Grade pay of Rs 7000 and 109 Assistant Professors were promoted in the Academic Grade Pay of Rs 8000," an official statement said. With the promotion of 54 Associate Professors (including in 50 new degree colleges), all the 148 Government Degree Colleges of the J&K have now got independent Principals. Further with the release of higher grade, a long pending demand of Assistant Professors has been addressed, the P-02

'Mentally Unfit' Woman Found Dead

Srinagar: A mentally unsound woman on Thursday was found dead in a stream in central Kashmir's Budgam district, reports said. A police team recovered body of a mentally unfit woman from a nallah after locals spotted it, news agency GNS reported. The deceased is a resident of Waterh village of the district. A police official said that after medico-legal formalities, the body was handed over to the family for last rites.

3 Gamblers Arrested From Bemina: Police

Srinagar: Police on Thursday claimed to have arrested three gamblers in a raid in Bemina area of the city. Acting on an input, a police team raided a gambling site and arrested three gamblers from Bemina area, a police spokesperson said today. He said playing cards and an amount of Rs 3010 were recovered from the alleged gamblers. Police identified the accused as Fayaz Ahmad Katjoo, Manzoor Ahmad Goroo and Noor Mohd Dar, all residents of Bemina. "Case FIR No. 54/2020 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Parimpora," the police spokesperson added.

Is 4G Ban Failing Kashmir's Covid-19 Fight Back?

Jyotsna Bharti

Srinagar: On the evening of April 15, as a government review committee sat to decide the fate of the high-speed internet in Jammu and Kashmir, Dr. Murtaza became hopeful in his hospital chamber. The 2G internet had played a big spoiler in his efforts to get online interactions with overseas experts and download research matter and guidelines on the Covid-19 crisis.

However, the evening of April 15 looked promising for this PPE-donning Covid-19 warrior in Kashmir. And given how Supreme Court of India had recently served a notice to the union territory government about the high-speed internet in the region further assured him of its full restoration. But to his chagrin, and that of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, many of whom took to social media to accuse New Delhi of being

'insensitive during the global health crisis', the young doctor had to make uneasy peace with the status quo, once again. That evening, instead of long-awaited high-speed internet, came another date of the review: April 27. "Problem is," Dr. Murtaza said, "they've made 4G internet a repeated casualty of security situation in Kashmir, when it's a basic human right for all of us." The doctor unwittingly invoked

the Indian apex court's recent ruling wherein it termed the internet as the "fundamental right" for every citizen. "But in Kashmir," the doctor continued, "the internet remains caught between the wishes and whims of Babus, who're bent to administer Kashmir through repeated internet gags. They should understand that such iron curtain move to manage Kashmir and its inherent problems won't



A DOCTOR AT SMHS SRINAGAR SHOWING her resolve to defeat the virus inspite of challenges- KO Photo Abid Bhat

"WE'VE BEEN SAYING THIS FROM DAY ONE THAT 4G MATTERS THE MOST DURING this health crisis," said Dr. Shabnam, another Covid-19 warrior from Kashmir. "But the administration seems to have some other plans."

Only A COVID-19 Vaccine Will Allow Return To 'Normalcy': UN Chief

UNITED NATIONS- A COVID-19 vaccine may be the only thing that can bring back "normalcy," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Wednesday, hoping for just that before the end of the year.

A safe and effective vaccine may be the only tool that can return the world to a sense of 'normalcy,' saving millions of lives and countless trillions of dollars," he added during a video conference with the 50 or so African countries that are members of the United Nations. He called for its accelerated de-

velopment and accessibility to all, adding it must have a "universal global benefit" and "allow us to control the pandemic." "We need an ambitious effort to ensure that international stakeholders operate through a harmonized, integrated and leveraged approach to maximize the speed and scale needed for the universal deployment of such a vaccine by the end of 2020," he insisted.

Guterres said his appeal on March 25 for 2 billion in donations for a comprehensive UN humanitarian response to the pandemic had so far raised about 20 percent of that amount.

Through the World Health Organization, the United Nations has been able to equip 47 African countries with COVID-19 tests, he said.

The UN chief also praised the efforts of several African P-02



António Guterres, the secretary general of the United Nations

Coronavirus Tally Reaches 314 In J&K As 14 More Test Positive

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir show no sign of decline as 14 more people, including a minor girl and her father tested positive for Covid-19 in Kashmir valley, taking the number of infected people across the Union Territory to 314, officials said.

"14 new cases- all from Kashmir Division. Total cases now 314. Jammu Division-54 and Kashmir Division-260. Further details in daily bulletin," Government spokesperson Rohit Kansal tweeted. With these 14, the total number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir has gone up to 314 - 260 from Kashmir and 54 from Jammu.

Out of 314 positive cases, 272 are active as 38 have recovered and 4 have died.

Among the fresh cases reported today, ten are from north Kashmir's Bandipora, two from Srinagar and one each from Ganderbal and Budgam districts of the Valley, reports said.

Budgam Cop Tests Positive

SRINAGAR: A policeman from central Kashmir's Budgam district tested positive for coronavirus on Thursday. The cop hailing from Rath-suna village of Budgam tested positive for coronavirus P-02

Srinagar's two new cases came from SakaKadal locality of the Old City, where a P-02

8 J&K Districts In Union Health Ministry's Hotspot List

SRINAGAR: Eight districts of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory have been identified as COVID-19 hotspots by the Union Health Ministry, reports said.

According to the details, eight districts of J&K figure in the list of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare's COVID-19 hotspots. Of them, six have been classified as hotspots with large outbreak of COVID-19 and two as hotspots with clusters, news agency KNO reported today.

According to details, Srinagar, Jammu, Bandipora, Baramulla, Udhampur and Kupwara districts have been identified as hotspots with large outbreak of COVID-19 cases. The remaining two districts -Shopian, Rajouri- have been identified as hotspots with clusters.

It is worthwhile to mention here that 90 Red Zones have been identified in Jammu and Kashmir so far, in order to prevent the spread of the deadly coronavirus, 14 hotspots for COVID-19 P-02



In the era of social distancing two elderly Kashmiris sit on the banks of desolate Nageen Lake

...HC To J&K Jail Authorities

Ensure Measures To Prevent Covid-19 Spread

Agencies

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Thursday directed the jail authorities to take all measures to prevent spread of coronavirus in the area of lodgement.

A bench of Justice Ali Mohammad Magrey passed the directions in at least three bail applications. "Pending decision in the application, the Jail Authorities shall ensure that all preventive measures for spreading of Corona Virus in the area of lodg-



File Pic

ment is taken," the court said.

"They shall also ensure strict adherence to the guidelines issued by the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs and provide P-02

"ALSO, THERE SHOULD NOT BE ANY delay in shifting sick person to a Nodal Medical Institution in case of any possibility of infection is seen."

ATMs, Banks Shut In Kupwara Red Zones

SRINAGAR: The district administration in north Kashmir's Kupwara on Thursday ordered closure of all the banks and ATMs in the areas declared 'red zones' after cases surfaced from there. Deputy Commissioner P-02

14 Head Home After Quarantine In Amritsar

JAMMU: Fourteen people, including nine medical students, who were quarantined in Punjab's Amritsar for nearly a month after arrival from Pakistan, were sent back to their homes in Kashmir valley, officials said on Thursday. P-02

Rapid Anti-Body Testing In Red Zones Soon

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Thursday announced to start very soon rapid anti-body testing in all the 80 'red zones' identified by the authorities.

Chairing a meeting today to review containment policy measures in Red Zones, the Divisional Commissioner P-02

2300 Lockdown Violators Held

JAMMU: Over 2300 people have been arrested by police in the ongoing crackdown against the lockdown violators across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, police said Thursday.

As many as 2303 people have been arrested for defying the government orders, while 1012 first information reports P-02

GMC Denies Test Kits Shortage

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Thursday denied media reports that a consignment of test kits from ICMR meant for Srinagar were diverted to Jammu.

Principal GMC Dr Samia Rashid said today that the testing kit consignment was first delivered in Jammu and the P-02

Govt Asks Airlines To Refund Tickets Booked During Mar 25-Apr 14



Press Trust Of India

The Civil Aviation Ministry on Thursday said the passengers who had booked flight tickets during the first phase of lockdown for travel up to May 3 must get a full refund from the airlines without any cancellation charges if they ask for it. Several passengers have been

complaining on social media as domestic airlines have decided not to give refunds in cash for cancelled flights due to the lockdown and instead issue credit for future travel.

India imposed the first phase of lockdown from March 25 to April 14 to curb the spread of coronavirus. The second phase of lockdown is from April 15 to May 3

Cyber Police Files 8 FIRs Over Fake News

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: The cyber wing of Jammu and Kashmir Police has registered eight cases against social media users for allegedly posting fake news and promoting militant activities in the valley, police said on Thursday.

"During the recent monitoring and patrolling of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and LinkedIn, some of the users were found posting fake news, fake documents, incriminating / hateful posts and posts to glorify militants or promote militants' ideologies by using fake identity," a police official said.

He said these kinds of posts not only destabilise the social fabric and disturb order in the society, but also escalate militant activities. P-02

Army Chief in Kashmir Amid Growing India-Pak Tension Along LoC

SRINAGAR: Army chief General M M Naravane reviewed the security situation in the Kashmir Valley on Thursday, a defence spokesperson said here.

The Army chief is on a two-day visit to the Valley, Colonel Rajesh Kalia said, adding that he was accompanied by Northern Army Commander Lt Gen Y K Joshi and Chinar Corps Commander Lt Gen B S Raju during his visit to the formations and units in the hinterland.

"The Chief of Army staff was briefed by the Chinar Corps Commander at Badami Bagh Cantonment on the overall situation per-



Gen Naravane applauded the jawans for their morale P-02

Ex-Deputy Mayor Freed After 8 Months

SRINAGAR: Former Deputy Mayor of Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) Sheikh Imran on Thursday was released from the Central Jail here after 8 month detention.

Imran, who was ousted from the post of Deputy Mayor after a no-confidence motion, was released today from Central Jail and taken to a police station, news agency KNT reported. He was later set free to go home.

The former Deputy Mayor is also facing heat from the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) over the illegal appropriation of the subsidy given to his P-02

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Virus Of Communalism

After the media glare on Markaz at Nizamuddin, the global headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat, where thousands of delegates, several of whom later turned out to be Covid-19 positive, had gathered for a conference in the run up to lockdown, the coronavirus outbreak in the country has been increasingly communalized. The Nizamuddin event has been projected on all Muslims. So much so that now even Muslim vendors are being boycotted by the non-Muslims. To ensure they too are not boycotted, Hindu vendors put up flags to demonstrate their religious identity. This is such a sad state of affairs. But it is of a piece with the existing state of affairs in the country where even a pandemic is supposed to have a religion.

That said, other than a section of politicians, the media has played a dubious role in promoting this mindset. One can't help experiencing a helpless sense of outrage at the way the facts are thrown to winds when it comes to analyzing the issues facing the country and the way an entire community is demonized. Most of the leading anchors and the talking heads, dabble profusely in communal innuendo against Muslims on coronavirus to hammer their arguments home.

One leading channel even did a show on Madrasa hotspots where poor children are provided religious education and lodging and boarding by mounting a sting operation on a few such institutions. The show was widely criticized for deliberately and selectively targeting Muslims but this had little impact on the channel which earlier in a revealing illustration had broke up the number of COVID-19 cases in the country along communal lines.

True, Tablighi Jamaat does share some blame for continuing with the conference in defiance of the social distancing advice. The organization, however, has offered an explanation for its conduct that too merits consideration. But while the issue should have ended with the dispersal of the conference, it has not. On the contrary, the religious outfit's conduct has been extrapolated to entire community. And shockingly enough, this demonization has been mainstreamed. Even the opposition parties have been largely subdued in their criticism. Thankfully, a group of 109 academics, students, lawyers, activists and others from across various walks of life have released a statement condemning the communalisation of the COVID-19 spread in India and the automatic criminalisation of Muslims in media and by the government. The statement slammed "a brand of raw communalism unleashed on Tablighi attendees in particular and Muslims in general". But such saner voices have hardly been sufficient enough to dent or alter the drift of the communal discourse in the country. How one wishes that the government intervenes and steers the conversation back to combating the disease. But in the given circumstances, it is too much to expect from the government.

OTHER OPINION

The dilemma with migrants

On Tuesday afternoon, just hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the extension of the lockdown for another 19 days, hundreds — some reports indicate thousands — of migrant workers made their way to Mumbai's Bandra (West) station. They had been waiting for the lockdown to end — and had assumed that they could return home. Some reports say this assumption was based on an erroneous news report about special trains. With restrictions in place, including on inter-state bus and rail travel, this was not to happen. The same day, in Surat, hundreds of textile workers staged a sit-in, demanding that they be allowed to return home. This yearning is not new. Soon after Mr Modi declared the lockdown on March 24, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers began making their way home, some walking long distances to do so.

These large congregations of workers — at close proximity with each other — are disturbing. They represent a sense of desperation, which is emerging from economic suffering and emotional anxiety. They also undermine the principle of social distancing, for one infected person in any of these gatherings has the potential of infecting hundreds, who may then come in contact with hundreds of others. It requires one incident to begin another chain of transmission, which can set back India's efforts in the battle against the pandemic.

And that is why a two-pronged approach is necessary to allay the anxieties of migrant workers. The first is recognising that they are economically insecure, without incomes, and often, without food. As Kerala finance minister Thomas Isaac pointed out, without income support, compliance with the restrictions will be low. The government needs to immediately expand its cash transfer measure — and include workers in the unorganised sector, perhaps even incentivising those who stay in camps for migrant workers, at least till May 3. The partial lifting of restrictions in areas less vulnerable to the infection after April 20, as notified by the home ministry, will help a segment of workers. But they need more direct financial and food support. There is a second element. Many workers are anxious to return home because they are frightened — of the disease, of staying alone in the city, of the fate of their families back home. Travel will mean a high degree of risk because social distancing norms cannot be enforced in trains and buses. Travel is also difficult because their home states are not receptive to these workers, given the fear that they may spread the infection in villages. These are all real constraints, but the issue requires more sensitive communication — and the announcement of measures which allay their anxieties and encourages migrant workers to stay where they are

HINDUSTAN TIMES

Paddy Nursery Management Amid Covid-19 Pandemic

ABRAR AHMAD KHAN

Although paddy being the staple food crop of Kashmir valley, its cultivation has reduced drastically owing to conversion of paddy land into horticulture, particularly apple cultivation and other non-agricultural purposes. The lower yield of the existing conventional varieties of paddy mostly used by the farmers also adds to the problem. Over the years, scientists of SKUAST Kashmir particularly, MRCFC Khudwani station have developed a number of rice varieties suitable for varied topographies of the valley. The important to mention is the Shalimar series (SR-1, SR-2, SR-3, SR-4 and SR-5) which are high yielding, resistant to lodging, diseases and pests. The full potential of these varieties can only be exploited if recommended management practices are followed.

The ideal equilibrium which the nature has bestowed among various environmental domains has been deteriorated by the unchecked human activities of the contemporary era. This, along with other furries has led to the gravest situation in the current pandemic of COVID-19.

Agriculture is the main economic activity of the Kashmir valley and contributes 21% to GDP of J&K and 70-80% of the population directly or indirectly depends on it, therefore should not suffer as also directed by Govt. of India that the agriculture activities should go on by following standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Although paddy being the staple food crop of Kashmir valley, its cultivation has reduced drastically owing to conversion of paddy land into horticulture, particularly apple cultivation and other non-agricultural purposes. The lower yield of the existing conventional varieties of paddy mostly used by the farmers also adds to the problem. Over the years, scientists of SKUAST Kashmir particularly, MRCFC Khudwani station have developed a number of rice varieties suitable for varied topographies of the valley. The important to mention is the Shalimar series (SR-1, SR-2, SR-3, SR-4 and SR-5) which are high yielding, resistant to lodging, diseases and pests. The full potential of these varieties can only be exploited if recommended management practices are followed.

Paddy cultivation starts with the establishment of paddy nursery. For an area of 1 Kanal of land we require an area of 1 marla for nursery which should be well puddled and weed free. Nursery should always be prepared in strips 1 meter wide and of any convenient length. Bed area should be ploughed 2-3 times to bring the soil to fine tilth with removal of weeds and stubbles of the previous crop and levelled so that 2-3 cm of uniform water layer is maintained in the nursery. Apply 40-50kg FYM, 12.5 kg ash, 275 grams of urea, 450 grams of DAP and 200 grams of MOP per marla right at the time of soil preparation of nursery bed.

For the successful cultivation of any crop seed is the basic input and production/productivity is directly proportional to the quality of seed, thus it should be healthy and disease. Self selected seed of previous crop needs seed treatment (Organic or Inorganic) before sowing. Among the inorganic treatments, use Tricyclozole or Carbenidazim 6g/10 litre and 1g/litre of water respectively, by soaking the seed in the solution for 10-20 minutes. Soaked seeds should be shade dried before sowing. Whereas, in organic seed treatment, we use Tricoderma spp., Phosphobac-



teria, Pseudomonas etc. @10g/kg seed. However the seed procured from the agriculture departmental stores stands chemically treated and need not be treated again. Temperature fluctuations during the month of April and first fortnight of May due to spring rainfall often leads to week nursery and sometimes even complete failure of the nursery. In order to avoid this risk and uncertainty, Protected nurseries are recommended over conventional ones. In protected nurseries, seed bed is covered with polythene sheets placed on fixed willow sticks in such a way that a low tunnel is created. During day time if it is sunny remove the sheets by rolling and cover the same if it is rainy or cloudy. Keep the nursery covered during night for at least first 15 days.

The ideal sowing time in the Kashmir valley for paddy nursery is 3rd week of April to 1st fortnight of May. Seed should be soaked in water for 24 hours before incubation; chaff and partially filled seeds should be removed at the time of soaking. Incubate the seeds for 24-36 hours. Broadcast pre germinated seeds @3 kg/Kanal in lower belts and 4 kg/Kanal in higher belts and maintain 2-3 cm uniform water layer till establishment of the same. Weeds pose a serious threat for yield reduction by 15-20%. In order to keep the growth of weeds in check, proper hand weeding at the time of bed preparation followed by application of pre-emergence herbicides like Butachlor 75g/marla, Pretilachlor 2ml/litre of water or Oxadiargyl 5.5 g/kanal of nursery area 3-5 DAS gives good results. With regard to irrigation, it is to be mentioned that the use of cold water leads to major abiotic constraint of cold injury which severely restricts the growth of the seedlings and sometimes even death. In order to avoid this stress, farmers should dig small pits of suitable size around the nursery for storage the water.

The water stored will get heated up by sunlight during the day and the same should be used in the evening for irrigating the nursery.

Sometimes there is algal bloom in the seed bed which may be due to the use of undecomposed organic matter, improper incorporation of fertilisers especially DAP and use of muddy water for irrigation. It can be controlled by draining out water from the bed and if algal growth is visible apply copper sulphate @0.5 g and lime 0.5 g per litre of water and drench with the same after drainage of the previous water. In case yellowing of the seedlings is noticed drain out water for few days and apply 250 grams urea per marla of nursery area. The seedlings are ready for transplanting in 25-35 days after sowing and should be transplanted with utmost care without damaging the root system of the seedlings.

Blast is the principle disease of paddy in the valley which occurs at nursery stage also. It can be controlled by seed treatment as mentioned above in endemic areas. In case it appears in the nursery spray Tricyclozole 75 WP @0.6g/litre of water or Propiconazole 25 EC @1ml/litre of water or Carbenidazim 50 WP @ 1 g/litre of water. Among the pests infesting the nursery paddy snails, army worm and cray fish are worth to mention. Paddy snails and cray fish can be controlled by releasing ducks into the nursery before sowing the seed, preventing their entry into the nursery by using sieve at the point of entry of water and by applying copper sulphate+lime (2:5) @ 0.5 kg/kanal or Chlorpyrifos 10 G @ 1kg/kanal. For army worm use Dimethoate 30 EC @ 1 ml/litre of water or Phosalone 35 EC @1.4 ml/litre of water

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Effective Delivery System Imperative For Effective Lockdown

DR ISHFAQ JAMAL

Jammu and Kashmir was the first region in India to suspend all classes in schools, colleges and universities on 11th March due to the Coronavirus scare. It was followed by a total lockdown barring few essential services to fight the nCovid-19. A right step at a right time as the region witnesses a spike in corona virus positive cases. Fear looms among people of J&K that if the situation goes out of control it would be impossible for authorities to deal with the situation looking at the health sector and the infrastructure we have in Jammu and Kashmir.

The way people responded to the lockdown is highly admirable. Most of the people realised need of the hour and all of sudden everyone started convincing each other the need and importance of this lockdown. Social media trends like #stayathome and #TalsaGharreyBehew became trends and this way most people were convinced that if we truly want to fight this pandemic staying home is the best way to do that.

So far governments response has been fairly good. Administration

immediately started a holistic approach in dealing with the situation. Our medical staff and bureaucracy are at the forefront in dealing with the situation. Identifying persons who returned from outside India and J&K, screening, isolating them and in case of positive cases, contact tracing, a most hectic yet most important task, is being carried out rigorously and thanks to these steps situation seems under control so far.

spread in dense slums etc but we have our own specific problems to deal with. Very far flung areas and difficult terrain is a challenge for administration as providing necessary rations and other facilities in such inaccessible areas amid lockdown has to be ensured. We have some very serious economic woes of working class. Economy was shattered by government imposed political lockdown post August 2019. This was ag-

cines and other emergency assistances. Amid restrictions on movement, delivery of essentials to people at doorsteps, especially in rural areas should be ensured. Farming season has already begun in Kashmir and it is important to have a proper strategy in place allowing agricultural activities with minimum people to people contact. Now that the lockdown has been extended, financial woes of people will exacerbate. Immediate financial assistance to people especially BPL families should be provided. Already government possesses data of PM Kisan, MGNREGA and other social assistance schemes which will make it a bit easier to identify the beneficiaries at an earliest.

The onus thus lies on the government of India which now directly controls Jammu and Kashmir. That everyone around during the lockdown should be provided with basic minimum facilities. Groceries, food and vegetable supply and other important items should be ensured to reach each and every street so that we don't find a rush of people in Mandi's, towns and other markets. Only then the basic purpose of lockdown of keeping people indoors in order to stop the spread of coronavirus can be achieved.

The onus thus lies on the government of India which now directly controls Jammu and Kashmir. That everyone around during the lockdown should be provided with basic minimum facilities. Groceries, food and vegetable supply and other important items should be ensured to reach each and every street so that we don't find a rush of people in Mandi's, towns and other markets. Only then the basic purpose of lockdown of keeping people indoors in order to stop the spread of coronavirus can be achieved.

The other important area where focus needs to be shifted is providing basic amenities of life to a population of 13 million. Yes we may argue that situation in Kashmir Valley is little different from rest of India. Here we do not have many complaints about hunger, migrant workers, disease

gravated by the early snowfall and a harsh winter that caused a huge loss to horticulture sector. With the result our working class, laborers, and farmers are facing serious economic crunch.

Thus a more bigger challenge is reliable access to food, water, medi-



Online Predators Put Millions Of Children At Risk During Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown

Press Trust Of India

United Nations- Millions of children around the world are at increased risk of online sexual exploitation, violence and cyberbullying as they spend more time on virtual platforms due to the closing of schools amid COVID-19 lockdown, the UN has said.

More than 1.5 billion children and young people have been affected by the closing of schools worldwide and many are online now taking classes and socialising, the UN's children's agency UNICEF said.

"Spending more time on virtual platforms can leave children vulnerable to online sexual exploitation and grooming, as predators look to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic. A lack of face-to-face contact with friends and partners may lead to heightened risk-taking such as sending sexualised images, while increased and un-

structured time online may expose children to potentially harmful and violent content as well as greater risk of cyberbullying, the UNICEF said.

Global Partnership to End Violence Executive Director Howard Taylor said the coronavirus pandemic has led to an unprecedented rise in screen time.

"School closures and strict containment measures mean more and more families are relying on technology and digital solutions to keep children learning, entertained and connected to the outside world, but not all children have the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to keep themselves safe online."

The UNICEF together with its partners, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, International Telecommunication Union, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and World Health Organisation among others is releasing a new technical note aimed at urging governments, educators and par-

ents to be alert and ensure children's online experiences are safe and positive during COVID-19.

"Under the shadow of COVID-19, the lives of millions of children have temporarily shrunk to just their homes and their screens. We must help them navigate this new reality," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore.

We call on governments and industry to join forces to keep children and young people safe online through enhanced safety features and new tools to help parents and educators teach their children how to use the internet safely."

The agencies are asking governments to keep child protection services open and active during the pandemic and to train health, education and social service workers on the impacts that COVID-19 may have on their well-being, including increased online risks.

Moreover, they are requested to step up awareness raising and educational initiatives on cyber safety and to provide local helplines and hotlines.

Meanwhile, the information technology industry, including social networking platforms, are requested to enhance online platforms with more safety measures, especially while using virtual learning tools.

They are also invited to promote and facilitate child safety referral services and helplines as well as help connect disadvantaged children in low-income households, the UNICEF said.

Schools are asked to update current safeguarding policies to reflect the new realities for children learning from home and ensure that they have continued access to school-based counselling services.

Parents are charged with making sure that their children's devices have the latest software updates and antivirus programmes. They are also encouraged to speak to their children on how and with whom they are communicating online and to set new internet rules, the UN agency and its partners said.

UV LEDs to disinfect surfaces against coronavirus: Study

Press Trust Of India

Ultraviolet LEDs can decontaminate surfaces that have come in contact with the novel coronavirus, according to a study that explains how the light can lead to better ways of reducing transmission of the virus.

According to the study, published in the journal ACS Photonics, ultraviolet light disinfection is used widely for disinfection, however, its large-scale efficacy against the spread of the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, is yet to be shown.

"One major application is in medical situations -- the disinfection of personal protective equipment, surfaces, floors, within the HVAC systems, et cetera," said study co-author Christian Zollner from the University of California Santa Barbara in the US.

Zollner, whose work centers on advancing deep ultraviolet light LED technology for sanitation and purification purposes, added that a small market already exists for UV-C disinfection products in medical contexts.

Pointing out the different types of ultraviolet light, Zollner said, UV-A and UV-B are light the Earth gets courtesy of the Sun with important uses, and the rare UV-C is the light of choice for purifying air and water and for inactivating microbes.

"UV-C light in the 260 - 285 nanometre wavelength range most relevant for current disinfection technologies is also harmful to human skin, so for now it is mostly used in applications where no one is present at the time of disinfection,"



Zollner said.

According to Zollner, "many technological advances are needed for the UV LED to reach its potential in terms of efficiency, cost, reliability and lifetime."

In the research, the scientists reported a more easy method for fabricating high-quality deep-ultraviolet (UV-C) LEDs.

According to the study, this involves depositing a film of the semiconductor alloy aluminum gallium nitride (AlGaIn) on a base made of silicon carbide (SiC) -- a departure from the more widely used sapphire substrate.

According to Zollner, using silicon carbide as a substrate allows for more efficient and cost-effective growth of high-quality UV-C semiconductor material than using sapphire.

He explained that this is due to how closely the materials' atomic structures match up.

"As a general rule of thumb, the more structurally similar (in terms of atomic crystal structure) the substrate and the film

are to each other, the easier it is to achieve high material quality," he added.

The better the quality, the better the LED's efficiency and performance, Zollner said.

Silicon carbide, he added, is far less expensive than the "ideal" aluminum nitride substrate, making it more mass production-friendly.

As the world races to find vaccines, therapies and cures for COVID-19, Zollner believes disinfection, decontamination and isolation are the few weapons to defend people, and the solutions will need to be deployed worldwide.

He said in addition to UV-C for water sanitation purposes, the light could be integrated into systems that turn on when no one is present.

"This would provide a low-cost, chemical-free and convenient way to sanitize public, retail, personal and medical spaces," he said.

Scientists Find Structural Protein That May Be New Marker Of Depression

Press Trust Of India

A structural protein has been zeroed on by scientists as a new target for the diagnosis and treatment of depression, suggests a recent study.

The research was published in the Journal of Neuroscience.

The protein tubulin pro-

vides structure to cells and assists in many cellular processes, but it also plays a role in depression. A modified form of tubulin anchors the protein Gas to lipid rafts, fatty structures floating in the cell membrane. In depressed people, Gas gets stuck in lipid rafts and cannot trigger the production of cAMP, a molecule necessary for quick messaging in the brain. Imaging

studies have shown that people with depression have less cAMP in their brains, which is remedied after successful treatment.

Other studies examined the amount of modified tubulin in the brains from people who were not depressed as well as those from people with depression who died by suicide and by other causes. All brains contained the

same amount of modified tubulin, but the brains of people with depression had less modified tubulin in the lipid rafts. This could allow more tubulin to trap Gas in the lipid rafts, preventing cAMP production. Tubulin could provide a diagnostic marker of depression and a target of antidepressant treatment.

Traditional vegetable diet lowers risk of premature babies, says study

Agencies

A study has suggested that consuming the traditional 'three-veggies' before pregnancy lowers the risk of premature birth.

University of Queensland PhD candidate Dereje Gete analysed the diets of nearly 3,500 women and found high consumption of carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, pumpkin, cabbage, green beans and potatoes before conception helped women reach full-term pregnancy.

"Traditional vegetables are rich in antioxidants or anti-inflammatory nutrients, which have a significant role in reducing the risk of adverse birth outcomes," Gete said.

"Women depend on certain stored nutrients such as calcium and iron before



conception, which are critical for the placenta and foetus tissue development," he added.

"Starting a healthier diet after the baby has been conceived may be too late because babies are fully formed by the end of the first trimester," he said.

Professor Gita Mishra

said the study suggested dietary intervention and strategies change behaviour that may be helpful when women start thinking about having a baby.

"People born prematurely face a greater risk of metabolic and chronic diseases in adulthood, as well as poor cognitive develop-

ment and academic performance," Professor Mishra said.

Premature births, which are births before 37 weeks of gestation, are the leading cause of death in Australian children and affect 8.5 per cent of births each year, a figure which is trending upwards.

