

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

Jyotsna Bharti

Srinagar: On the evening of April 15, as a government review comhopeful in his hospital chamber. The 2G internet had played a big

spoiler in his efforts to get online guidelines on the Covid-19 crisis.

looked promising for this PPE-don- health crisis', the young doctor had ning Covid-19 warrior in Kashmir. And given how Supreme Court tus quo, once again. mittee sat to decide the fate of the of India had recently served a nohigh-speed internet in Jammu tice to the union territory govern- awaited high-speed internet, came continued, "the internet remains and Kashmir, Dr. Murtaza became ment about the high-speed inter- another date of the review: April 27. net in the region further assured him of its full restoration.

interactions with overseas experts the people of Jammu and Kash- tion in Kashmir, when it's a basic and download research matter and mir, many of whom took to social human right for all of us."

to make uneasy peace with the sta-

That evening, instead of long-"Problem is," Dr. Murtaza said,

"they've made 4G internet a re-But to his chagrin, and that of peated casualty of security situa-

However, the evening of April 15 ing 'insensitive during the global the Indian apex court's recent ruling wherein it termed the internet as the "fundamental right" for every citizen.

"But in Kashmir," the doctor 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 The doctor unwittingly invoked inherent problems won't **PAGE 02**



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

media to accuse New Delhi of be-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."

200 Professors Promoted Jammu: Department of Higher

News Digest

28 Lockdown

Kupwara district.

'Violators' Held

Srinagar: Police on Thursday

arrested 28 people for allegedly

violating prohibitory orders in

Handwara tehsil of the frontier

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 announce-

ments urging people to comply with the lockdown orders.

Police urged people to follow the government orders so that the deadly disease could be

controlled

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.

UNITED NATIONS- A COVID-19 be the only tool that can return the velopment and accessibility to all, vaccine may be the only thing world to a sense of 'normalcy,' sav- adding it must have a "universal that can bring back "normalcy," **UN Secretary-General Antonio** Guterres said Wednesday, hoping for just that before the end of the year.

ing millions of lives and countless trillions of dollars," he added dur-50 or so African countries that are members of the United Nations.

Only A COVID-19 Vaccine

global benefit" and "allow us to control the pandemic." "We need 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 **PAGE 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**



"A safe and effective vaccine may

Will Allow Return To

'Normalcy': UN Chief

ing a video conference with the an ambitious effort to ensure that He called for its accelerated de-

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 Waterhal 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.

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

António Guterres, the secretary general of the United Nations

Observer News Service

tory to 314, officials said.

and 54 from Jammu.

"14 new cases- all from Kash-

mir Division. Total cases

now 314. Jammu Divi-

sion-54 and Kashmir

Division-260. Fur-

ther details in daily

bulletin," Govern-

are active as 38 have recovered and 4 have died SRINAGAR: Coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir show Among the fresh cases re-

no sign of decline as 14 more ported today, ten are from north people, including a minor girl Kashmir's Bandipora, two from and her father tested positive Srinagar and one each from Ganfor Covid-19 in Kashmir valley, derbal and Budgam districts of taking the number of infected the Valley, reports said. people across the Union Terri-

Out of 314 positive cases, 272

Budgam Cop **Tests Positive** SRINAGAR: A policeman from central Kashmir's Budgam district tested positive for coronavirus on Thursday.

ment spokesperson The cop hailing from Rath-Rohit Kansal tweeted. suna village of Budgam tested With these 14, the total number of conpositive for coronavirus • P-02 firmed coronavirus cases in Iammu and Kashmir has gone

Srinagar's two new cases came from SafaKadal locality of the up to 314 – 260 from Kashmir Old City, where a **PAGE 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 **PAGE 02**

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

herence to the guidelines issued by preventive measures for spreading the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs and provide >> PAGE 02 of Corona Virus in the area of lodg-

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

ment is taken." the court said

"They shall also ensure strict ad

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

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

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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

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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.

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 Several passengers have been 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.

briefed by the Chinar Corps Commander at Badami Bagh Cantonment on the overall situation per-



taining to the Line of Control and the hinterland," he said jawans for their morale **PAGE 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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'The Chief of Army staff was



Gen Naravane applauded the

Waqf Boards Told To Implement Strict Social Distancing During Ramzan

NEW DELHI: Minority Affairs on Thursday directed state waqf das, dargahs and other religious boards to ensure strict imple- and social institutions come unmentation of lockdown and so- der state waqf boards across the cial distancing guidelines during country. The Central Waqf Counthe holy month of Ramzan starting next week amid the coronavirus pandemic.

ferencing, Naqvi asked the state administrative officers, sanitation waqf boards' officials to create workers. They are working for our awareness among people to offer safety and well-being even putting prayers and perform other religious rituals like "iftar (breaking navirus pandemic," Naqvi said. of fast)" during Ramzan, which inside their homes.

Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi tered mosques, eidgahs, imamba- among people that such centres cil is the regulatory body of state waqf boards in India.

"We should cooperate with At a meeting via video con- health workers, security forces, their own lives at risk in this coro-

"We should also demolish rubegins on April 24 or 25, staying mours and misinformation being cies are a nefarious design to and social activities and mass spread about quarantine and isola- weaken the fight against corona- gatherings in all the temples, gurd-

More than seven lakh regis- tion centres by creating awareness virus," he said. are only meant to protect people, their families and the society from the pandemic," the minister said. Naqvi told all the state waqf boards and religious and social organisations that everyone should remain cautious of any type of fake news and conspiracies aimed

at creating misinformation. "Authorities have been working for safety and well-being of all citizens of the country without any discrimination. Such type of rumours and conspira-

"We should work united to win this fight against corona by defeating any type of rumour,

misinformation and conspiracy," the minister said. Naqvi asked officials of all the state waqf boards to play an active and effective role in ensuring that people follow the guidelines of the Union Home Ministry, state governments and the Central Waqf Council while fulfilling religious responsibilities during Ramzan.

In view of the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, all religious

waras, churches and other religious gatherings at mosques and other ments strictly," he asserted. and social places of the country religious places during the holy have been stopped, he said. Similarly, any mass gatherings

in mosques and other Muslim re- in cooperation with all the state igious places of the country has also been stopped, Naqvi said. He said that due to the CO-VID-19 threat, religious leaders as well as religious and social organisations from all regions of the country, have appealed to people to offer prayers and perform all other religious rituals staying inside their homes during Ramzan.

the world have also banned mass of the central and state govern- tarakhand also participated.

Kashmir Observer Friday | 17-04-2020

Chairman and senior officials from state waqf boards such as Uttar Pradesh (Shia & Sunni), Andhra Pradesh, Bihar (Shia & Sunni), Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar, Assam, Manipur, among others participated in the meeting.

State waqf boards from Rajasthan, Telangana, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, Puduch-Most of the Muslim nations of by following all the guidelines erry, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and Ut-

Putin postpones World War II victory parade due to virus

poned next month's Victory Day celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, citing the worsening coronavirus pan- that hasn't yet reached its peak are demic for putting off the lavish festivities that have dominated the Kremlin's political agenda.

public gatherings such as the huge parade through Red Square on May 9 too dangerous.

extremely high, and that doesn't office until 2036, if he desired. give me the right to start preparations for the parade and other fes- Day celebrations had topped Rus-

The postponement followed an earlier decision by Putin to put off a vote originally scheduled for The risks linked to the epidemic April 22 on constitutional changes that would allow him to stay in

The plebiscite and the Victory

MOSCOW: Russian President In televised remarks, a grim-Vladimir Putin on Thursday post-faced Putin said the virus makes is believed and the decision to delay both include gatherings of veterans and the decision to delay both include gatherings of veterans and the decision to delay both include gatherings of veterans and the decision to delay both include gatherings of veterans and the decision to delay both include gatherings of veterans and the decision to delay both include gatherings of veterans and include gatherings of veterans and was clearly a painful and difficult massive demonstrations dubbed one that followed weeks of prothe Immortal Regiment in which crastination by the Kremlin. relatives of those who fought in

The May 9 date is sacred for us, but every life is priceless too, Putin said.

All Victory Day celebrations across Russia will also be post-

the war carry their photos. Putin himself took part in those marches, carrying a picture of his father.

the country.

month, he pointed out.

Prime Minister NarendraModi,

governments, has been work-

ng effectively for the safety and

well-being of the people, he said.

has brought great relief to In-

dia in the war against COVID-19

Naqvi said, adding that several

challenges are still there before

"We can defeat these challeng-

es of the coronavirus pandemic

The cooperation of the people

testing kits from China: Health Ministry **NEW DELHI:** India has received ment said on Thursday.

India received 5 lakh rapid COVID-19

the much-awaited five lakh Addressing a daily briefing rapid COVID-19 testing kits from on COVID-19 situation in the China and these are not meant country, chief of Epidemiology for an early diagnosis of the and Communicable Diseases at disease rather for monitoring ICMR Dr Raman R Gangakhedwhether coronavirus hotspots in kar said the serologic rapid test-India are increasing or showing ing kits have been provided by a declining trend, the govern- two Chinese companies.

Is 4G Ban Failing ...

help.

While extending the 4G ban in J&K till April 27. Principal Secretary to the government, ShaleenKabra cited the recent Sopore militant funeral and the Keran gunfight as some of the grounds for maintaining the blockade in his fresh review order.

"The ban justification is totally insensitive," Dr. Murtaza continued.

"We're in the middle of a pernicious pandemic, for God's sake! And to tackle it, we need the 4G internet facility. The doctors leading the pandemic fight back have to regularly update themselves with the global breakthroughs in the Covid-19 crisis. Thing is, we're facing a humanitarian crisis today, and this government is only escalating it by denying us the muchneeded high-speed internet.'

The anger is prevalent, so is the anxiety.

However, at a time when government has debarred medics from talking to media, not many are 'minding the mess', as they believe they've a bigger task at hand.

"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.

This was the time, the lady doctor said, when the medical body could've actually started the intensive online interactions for creating more awareness in the locked down community.

"A strong 4G-driven doctor campaign could've also spared the administration from creating those concrete barriers in red zones. We need to change minds, and not our main roads. While bureaucratic hurdles can't be the answer to this crisis, the full-scale internet-driven awareness can surely create a difference during this crisis hour."

Perhaps sensing the same surging crisis, Prime Minister NarendraModi recently announced the extension of national lockdown till May 3.

But while people across India are fighting pure pandemic lockdown. Kashmiris are

Perhaps now, as some enraged netizens responded to the latest extended 4G ban, Raj Bhavan should rise above its "TareekhpeTareekh" style of administration, and restore the 'fundamental right' in Kashmir and create some confidence in Covid-19 forefront fighters.

to restore the high-speed internet in J&K, the

challenges for these healthcare workers in the

landlocked region have only increased manifold.

Only a COVID-19... governments to mitigate the consequences of

the pandemic.

He cited Uganda, which has given businesses more time to file their tax returns; Namibia, which provides emergency income for workers who have lost their jobs; Cape Verde, which provides food aid; and Egypt, which has reduced taxation on industries. (AFP)

Coronavirus Tally... six-year-old girl tested positive to coronavirus on

Wednesday. The two are sister and father of the already Covid-19 positive minor. The family is said to be originally from Vilgam area of Handwara.

In Bandipora, six members of a family from Naidkhai tested positive for Covid-19. They are all said to have contracted the infection from a member of their family who is already under treatment for coronavirus.

Four other cases came from the worst-hit Gund Jehangir area. While one is a contact of a deceased Covid-19 patient, three others have contracted infection from other positive patients

Regarding patient from Ganderbal, they said, she is a 20-year-old girl with travel history to New Delhi

The last case reported today is a policeman from Budgam.

Meanwhile, the media bulletin issued by the government today said that 58076 travellers and persons in contact with suspected cases have been put under surveillance which include 7463 persons in home quarantine, 265 in hospital quarantine, 272 in hospital isolation and 29366 under home surveillance.

has been sentenced or the severity of the offence with which he/she is charged with and is facing trial or any other relevant factor, which the Committee may consider appropriate.

"Taking into consideration the possibility of outside transmission, we direct that the physical presence of all the undertrial prisoners before the Courts must be stopped forthwith and recourse to video conferencing must be taken for all purposes," the court had ordered. Also, the court said, the transfer of prisoners from one prison to another for routine reasons must not be resorted except for decongestion to ensure social distancing and medical assistance to an ill prisoner.

"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."

It said that significant measures have been taken by Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Jharkhand, Goa, Kerala, Telangana and UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Chandigarh who have advised the prison authorities that visitors may be allowed to interact with prisoners only through video calling or telephonic call. (GNS)

Rapid Anti-Body... Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole said J&K UT will be

among the few states across the country to initiate Rapid Anti-Body testing in Red Zones, soon, an official spokesperson said.

He further informed that Health institutions of Kashmir Division will start 1000 COVID-19 testing per day, shortly.

The meeting was informed that till date, 80 Red Zones were identified in Kashmir Division and that such areas will remain red zones up to 42 days, unless no new positive case of COVID-19 is detected, the spokesperson said. If any new case is detected in these areas, then from that date, the area will again remains a red zone for another 42 days.

Pole directed officers to adhere to the prescribed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of Red Zones in letter and Spirit.

orders and 64 shops and 447 vehicles were seized for defying the orders.

"To restrict the unnecessary movement Police arrested 1691 persons out of which 1683 persons were bailed out after detailed counseling were given regarding the Covid-19," the spokesperson said

Similarly, in Jammu 444 FIRs were lodged for violating government orders and 193 shops, 591 vehicles have been seized for defying government orders.

"612 persons were arrested for not adhering government orders out of which 608 persons were later bailed out," the spokesperson added.

GMC Denies Test...

next day it was received in Srinagar, an official spokesperson said. She said there was no interruption in testing process because of any short-

"We have two testing centres in the valley, one at GMC Srinagar and another at SKIMS. The third testing centre is being established at Jhelum Valley Medical College, Bemina, shortly," Principal GMC said.

According to the official spokesperson, the doctors at SKIMS have also confirmed that they werenot facing any shortage of test kits and have ramped up number the to 1000 tests per day.

The statement also clarified that it was because of the persuasion of Divisional Officer, NHM, DrJitender Mehta that an engineer from Delhi for COVID testing Labs stayed in Valley for five days instead of two.

"The engineer and calibrated 10 PCR machines with which the testing capacity has increased from around 200 to more than 800 tests per day. Dr. Jitender Mehta had no role in the procurement process," the statement said.

ATMs, Banks Shut.

Kupwara, Dr Anshul Garg today ordered closure of the branches of J&K Bank, Grameen BankCo-

Ex-Deputy Mayor.. company, Kehwa Square Pvt Ltd for setting up of

a Controlled Atmosphere (CA) store.

Imran, was arrested along with hundreds of mainstream and pro-freedom leaders and activists after the government of India abrogated special status of Jammu and Kashmir and split the state into two Union Territories.

Army Chief ...

The Army chief reiterated the need to be prepared to meet the emerging security challenges effectively at all times, he said.

General Naravane lauded the close coordination among all government agencies towards maintaining vigil and peace in the Valley and reaching out to the people to combat the spread of COVID-19 together, the official said

Later in the day, he visited the 92 Base Hospital, where he appreciated the excellent work and vital critical care being provided by the doctors and the support staff there.

The Army Chief commended them for being the lifeline of the Valley. He also met members of the civil society later in the evening, Kalia added.

Indo, Pak Troops Trade Fire Along LoC

Meanwhile reports said on Thursday that Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged heavy gunfire along the Line of Control (LoC) in twin districts of Rajouri and Poonch in Jammu province.

"At about 0945 hours today, Pakistan army initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation along the LoC in Qasba and Kirni sectors of Poonch by firing with small arms," defence spokesman Lt Col Devender Anand said.

He said Pakistani troops also violated the ceasefire along the LoC in Nowshera sector in Rajouri district at around 11.45 am by firing small arms and mortars The Indian Army was retaliating befittingly to the Pakistani aggression in all these sectors, Lt Col Anand added. Pakistan army's targetting of hamlets in Nowshera, Qasba and Kirni sectors has triggered fear among the people. The residents living in villages near the Indo-Pak border in Rajouri, Poonch, and Kupwara are reeling under fear ever since the three civilians were killed in cross-LoC shelling last week.

age of testing kits.

grappling with pandemic as well as partial internet.

Besides being an eye to the emergency medical force, a fast internet connection is need of the hour for accessing the crucial guidelines on Covid-19 from the global healthcare bodies, like WHO.

"One can't download those WHO health guidelines with the slow-internet," said Dr SuhailNaik, president of Doctor's Association Kashmir.

"Leave WHO, we can't even fight Covid-19, without downloading the guidelines of Indian Council of Medical Research. The persistent 4G ban is coming in the way of Covid-19 fight back in Kashmir."

It's been eight months since the high-speed internet was snapped in J&K.

New Delhi imposed the communication gag last August after Kashmir was stripped of its semiautonomous status.

While the low-speed 2G mobile internet was restored early this year, the limits on faster services remain the same.

The authorities are regularly ordering a continuation of the ban "in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India," after a review of the situation in Kashmir.

To express their disapproval of the repeated 4G ban, many doctors took to social media and raised their concern over its impact on the health crisis tackling efforts in the region.

The medics are raising these concerns, when mental illness triggered by lockdown has created an additional healthcare challenge for them in Kashmir.

"You need a 4G-internet connection in your smartphone to counsel people through a basic video call," said a clinical psychiatrist at IMHANS, the mental care body that lately prescribed the community window talks 'for keeping sanity intact' amid lockdown in Kashmir.

"The telephonic consultations [started initially when OPDs were closed to dedicate some major healthcare centres for exclusive Covid-19 treatment] don't always help. You need to see and read the body language of patients suffering from mental issues to diagnose them properly. But alas, it's not happening amid highspeed internet gag in Kashmir.'

Otherwise schooled in the conflict-hardened healthcare system, these Kashmiri medics term the Covid-19 a different crisis, with a clear existential threat.

"And therefore," the mental specialist at IMHANS said, "we cannot afford Covid-19 complacency."

But as the government looks in no mood

"Besides, 20706 persons have completed their surveillance period. Moreover 02 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and discharged today from SKIMS, Soura," the bulletin said.

The Bulletin further said that 5366 samples have tested as negative till April 16, 2020.

8 J&K Districts... have been found in Jammu while 76 are from

Kashmir region.

As many as 314 persons have tested positive for COVID-19 in Jammu and Kashmir over the past one month. Of them, 260 are in Kashmir and 54 in Jammu division. This also includes four persons – three from Kashmir and one from Jammu- who died due to coronavirus

Ensure Measures..

the detenues all the required material for ensuring their safety," the court added.

Many people include those detained under PSA have been released recently to decongest jails across Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 30, the government had constituted a high-powered committee, in consonance with the directions by the Supreme Court, to decide about the temporary release of convicts and under-trails to decongest jails across J&K.

A bench of Chief Justice of India S A Bobde and Justices LN Rao and Surya Kant had directed each State or Union Territory shall constitute a High Powered Committee comprising of Chairman of the State Legal Services Committee, the Principal Secretary (Home/Prison) and Director General of Prison(s), to determine which class of prisoners can be released on parole or an interim bail for such period as may be thought appropriate.

"For instance, the State/Union Territory could consider the release of prisoners who have been convicted or are undertrial for offences for which prescribed punishment is up to 7 years or less, with or without fine and the prisoner has been convicted for a lesser number of years than the maximum," the apex court had said.

The court made it clear that it was leaving it open for the High Powered Committee to determine the category of prisoners who should be released, depending upon the nature of offence, the number of years to which he or she

"He directed concerned to do proper sanitation and fumigation in these areas on regular basis. The charger officers have been already nominated for Red Zones. For surveillance, he directed to involve health officials, Asha&Anganwadi workers, PRIs, VLWs, ICDS and Volunteers," Pole, as per the official spokesperson said.

He directed that the Charge Officer will make teams which will conduct door to door surveys in red zone areas as per prescribed format and also maintain Social Distancing norms and the data thus compiled will be submitted to the charge officers.

During survey masks will also be distributed to the local population.

"After submitting the data, Rapid Anti-Body testing should be conducted on spot in Red Zone areas as per information. The test will give results instantly whether the person is exposed to the Corona virus or not besides antibodies developed in their body. Officials of Health Department, Volunteers of Red Cross, civil Defence and employees of concerned departments will conduct Rapid Anti-Body testing in red zone areas," the official spokesperson said.

He said that the Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR) will create mass awareness regarding SOPs of Red Zone areas besides inform people to download Arogya-setu applications in their mobiles for Information, Education and Communication purposes. Loud Speaker mounted vehicles will also provide information to the habitants of red zones.

The Divisional Commissioner stressed the officers to implement the directions religiously and to work in close coordination against COVID-19 Pandemic.

LAWDA, VikasKundal, Additional VC. Commissioner Kashmir Bilal Ahmad Bhat, Directors of Rural Development & Urban Local Bodies, Joint Director Information, Harris Ahmad Handoo, Deputy Director Health Services, Assistant Commissioner (central) Aziz Ahmad Rather and other concerned officials were present in the meeting.

2300 Lockdown ...

(FIRs) have been registered across the police station in J&K, a police spokesperson said today. Besides, 1295 vehicles and shops have also been seized in the UT.

Giving a break-up, the police spokesperson said that in Kashmir, 568 FIRs have been lodged against the persons for violating government operative Bank and State Bank of India in Trehgam, Drugmulla, Bagbella and Mangiah areas declared 'red zones' by the administration to prevent spread of coronavirus, news agency GNS reported.

The District Magistrate also ordered closure all the ATMs falling under red zones with immediate effect.

However, for the convenience of people in red zones, mobile ATMs will be available from 10:00am to 5:00pm daily.

The officials have been told to ensure mobile ATMs in the red zones are daily fumigated and PPE kits are provided to the officials to be deployed with mobile ATM vans.

14 Head Home ...

"We thank the governments of Punjab and J&K for best possible arrangements and accommodations in Amritsar. We are happy that we are going back to our homes," Mustag Ahmed of Srinagar, who had arrived in Amritsar from Lahore in Pakistan last month, said.

As many as 14 Kashmiris including nine medical students arrived in Amritsar via Wagah border from Pakistan on March 19 and sent to quarantine by the state authorities to contain the spread of COVID-19.

This group was sent in a vehicle from Amritsar by the Punjab government and were recieved by the Jammu and Kashmir officials at Lakhanpur inter-state plaza in Kathua district and were subjected medical checkup, they said.

They were sent to Kashmir valley in a bus escorted by a security vehicle, they said.

The travellers expressed happiness upon arriving in Jammu and Kashmir and began their journey back to their homes in Kashmir after undergoing the nearly month-long quarantine

BudgamCopTests after contracting the infection from members

of Tabligi Jamat, news agency KNT Chief Medical Officer Dr Nazir Ahmed as saying. The cop is posted with India Reserve Police (IRP) 3rd Battalion at Bemina, here.

"Though he didn't attend any religious event organized by Tabligi Jamat but came into contact with them in Srinagar," CMO added.

He said that the seniors of the policeman have been apprised about the development. He added that contacts of the cop will be quarantined.

Cyber Police Files...

"On the identification of such posts, action under relevant sections of law was initiated and FIRs were registered. So far, eight FIRs have been registered against such users," he said.

The official said there have been a lot of reports of misusing social media sites particularly Facebook, Twitter and Instagram by the miscreants.

"The cyber police is monitoring all the profiles and the content being uploaded by the users," the official added.

He said the cyber police is also exploring the possibilities of invoking all the relevant provisions of law against such users.

"The anonymity of the profiles of users is of no defense and we can track them and bring them to face the law. Awareness programmes for the general public regarding use of social media have also been started by the cyber police," he said.

The official said whenever any information with regard to the misuse of social media is received, a prompt action is being taken by the cyber police.

"One of the examples is that on April 14, a fake news was uploaded on Facebook wherein a morphed picture of the clock tower at Lalchowk Srinagar was shown with a flag of Pakistanadministered Kashmir. Immediately, an FIR was registered, the accused were identified and arrested under the provisions of law," he said.

200 Professors... statement added.

Secretary Higher Education TalatParvezRohella while congratulating the promotees, said that even during the lockdown to contain COVID-19, the Department is trying to reach out to the students through e-classes, the official statement added.

period.

News

Comprehensive Plan For Flood Management Works On Jhelum, Tributaries Underway: Div Com

SRINAGAR: During recent winter, the and Automatic Rain Gauges at differ- agement measures for Jhelum basin sources and equipment on IRDA webvalley received 25 percent more snow- ent locations. Besides, 12.6 lacs sand through consultancy services under site regularly. fall than last year which will increase and 80,000 Geo bags have been kept World Bank Project. This will help for during summer season and situation may become dangerous.

In this context, the Divisional Com- information to the public. missioner, Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole, today chaired a meeting to review flood management measures and preparedness across Kashmir division.

Through a power-point presentation, the meeting was informed that a comprehensive plan for flood management works on Jhelum, phase-I, costing Rs.399.29 Crore is presently under execution. While to mitigate a flood threat of 60,000 Cusecs at Sangam, the DPR costing Rs. 1623.43 crore has also been approved under PMDP.

After implementation of comprehensive flood management plan, water carrying capacity of river Jhelum from Sangam to Padshaibagh will increase to 60,000 cusecs from present 31800 cusecs. Water carrying capacity of Flood Spill Channel at off-take Padshahibagh will also increase to 17000 cusecs from existing 4000 cusecs. Simi-larly, at Ningli in Wular it will increase to 30931 cusecs from current 20,000 and at Sopore, Jhelum river's capacity will increase to 61110 cusecs from existing 31,000.

It was further informed that Irrigation and Flood Control department (I&FC) had installed nine Automatic Water Level Recorders (WLRs) on River Jhelum at Sangam, Pampore, Ram Munshi Bagh & Asham and at its major tributaries including Sind, Lidder, Doodganga, Vaishaw & Rambiar gation and comprehensive river man- update the inventory of disaster re-

has also been developed for real time sures.

water level in rivers and tributaries at different locations of river Ihelum scientific flood management plan, have been directed to update and list and other water bodies. Mobile Apps early warning systems and other mea-The Divisional Commissioner asked The Divisional Commissioner direct- concerned officer to expedite the ed the concerned for instant mapping whole process and complete it in a



of all automatic Rain Guages, water time bound manner.

send the copies to the Div Com for

level in rivers and tributaries besides, He directed all Deputy Commissioncollecting rainfall data from May 1, on ers to hold meetings with Zonal Flood each day and the data thus collected Committees immediately and notify sent to Central Water Commission necessary orders at an earliest. DCs have been asked to ensure regular re-(CWC) for flood forecasting well in advance vision of Disaster Management plans, It was informed that ERA under Jheup-date the same on regular basis and

lum and Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JTFRP) are preparing feasibility and further action. They were also asked detailed project report for flood miti- to designate nodal officer who will

all its available tools and plants and upload it on IDRM network besides prepare a list of boats available with

> Shikara owners along with their locations. I&FC will start the de-sliting process in canals and finish it before the commencement of agriculture season. Department has been directed to expedite the restoration works on Malshai Bagh water canal on priority basis. The concerned were asked to deploy additional laborers on the job, to ensure its timely completion.

The I&FC authorities department

government agencies and private

To set up Emergency Operation Cen-tre, Div Com directed DC Budgam and concerned officers to inspect the land bank at Ichigaam and submit the report to him.

Chief Engineer R&B was asked to ensure that the waste material of bridges is cleared from rivers and tributaries, within a fortnight.

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Additional Commissioner Kashmir, Bilal Ahmad Bhat, Chief Engineers of Irrigation & Flood Control, PHE, R&B, Director Fire & Emergency, DIG (North), VC LAWDA, Assistant Commissioner (central) Aziz Ahmad Rather, Assistant Director MET and other concerned officials were present in the meeting where as CEO, ERA, Dr Syed Abid, Rashid Shah and nine Deputy Commissioners participated the meeting through video conferencing.

COVID-19 **Bandipora administration** launches E-pass service for patients, employees



BANDIPORA: If your are living in Bandipora and need a curfew pass for patients or any exigency, you need not to visit District Magistrate's Office, log into district website and apply for curfew pass, you will get E-Pass within shortest possible time after due verification of documents submitted. District administration launched the E-pass service to mitigate the suffering of patients and stranded persons of the district during the lockdown. Deputy Commissioner, Bandipora, Shahbaz Ahmad Mirza, said any patient, stranded person or employees who is in need of restriction pass can apply online on www.bandipore.nic.in where the link for E-pass is available on Homepage that will redirect to https://serviceonline.gov.in/login.do. He said the citizens have to enter personal details along with relevant documents including uploading the Photo ID proof, other valid documents and copy of the Doctor's prescription. The confirmation message will be sent on registered mobile numbers and Email Ids.

divisional admin

coronavirus control efforts

Sanitization in all areas our priority, will personally monitor no area is left out: Commissioner SMC

SRINAGAR: Commissioner Srinagar Municipality (SMC), Gazanfar Ali today said that SMC is carrying out sanitization works at massive level and is ensuring that all the areas are disinfected to contain the spread of coronavirus. "Sanitization of all the areas, equally, is SMC's priority and I will personally monitor and ensure no area is left-out," the Commissioner said.

The Commissioner made these remarks after receiving a representation from some Corporators. informing that certain areas were given less priority with regards to sanitization works.

In this regard, the Commissioner today visited Laway Poraalong with special team of field functionaries equipped with protective gears and specialized madrive. He was accompanied by the concerned Corporator. On the occasion, chemical mixture was spraved in various areas including Gulshan Colony, Astaan Mohalla, Ganie Mohalla, Khar Mohalla, Jamia Masjid Gund Hassi Bhat, Immam Bara, Usman Abad, Old LawayPora and Girls High School Laway Pora.





DIAL-EMMA

- TRAFFIC POLICE: 9419993745, 01998-266686 PCR: 0194-2452092.2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES :
- 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

AIRPORTS SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

RAILWAYS

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

CALENDAI SHABAN 1441

PRAYERS

FAJR

4:30

ZUHR

12: 32

ASR

5:11

MAGRIB

8:32

HIJRI

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

This Day in History

- 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki is signed ending the First Sino Japanese War (1894-95)
- 1930 Abkhazian ASSR forms in Georgian SSR
- 1932 Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia ends slaverv
- 1939 Stalin signs British-France-Russian anti-Nazi pact
- 1941 World War II: The Kingdom of Yugoslavia surrenders to Germany
- 1945 German occupiers flood Wieringermeer, Netherlands
- 1945 Benito Mussolini flees from Salò to Milan
 - 1945 US troops land in central Mindanao. 1946 Svria declares independence from French administration
 - 1967 Surveyor 3 launched; soft lands on Moon, April 20.
 - 1970 Apollo 13 limps back safely, Beech-built oxygen tank no help
- 1971 Egypt, Libya & Syria form federation (FAR)
- 1979 Four Royal Ulster Constabulary officers are killed by a Provisional Irish Republican Army van bomb in Bessbrook, County Armagh; the bomb is believed to be the largest PIRA bomb used up to that point.
- 1982 Proclamation of the Constitution Act by Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau
- 1986 IBM produces 1st megabit-chip
- 1986 Netherlands & Scilly Islands sign peace treaty (war of 1651)
- 1987 Julius Erving becomes 3rd NBA player to score 30,000 points
- 1987 USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/ Semipalitinsk USSR
- 1988 Ethiopian Belayneh Densimo runs world record marathon (2:06:50)
- 1989 93rd Boston Marathon: Abebe Mekonen of Ethiopia 1st man in 2:09:06 and Ingrid Kristiansen of Norway 1st womar in 2:24:33

- 1990 Gas explosion on passenger train in Kumrahar India 80 die
- 2001 A letter between Gale Norton and Jeb Bush is released stating that the Bush administration has decided to go ahead with plans to auction 6 million acres of potentially oil-andgas-rich seabed in the Gulf of Mexico

7:06 **ISHA**

- 1989 Polish labor union granted legal status
- 1989 Soviet-US agreement allows Soviets to fight US pros

Meanwhile, Medical Superin- nel in the hospital. tendent, Government Psychiatric chines to monitor the sanitization Diseases Hospital, Badamwari has decontamination tunnels at all

demic.

the MS has extended its gratitude were installed at SKIMS. Besides, to SMC for sanitizing the hospital sanitization of hospitals surlation of a decontamination tun- Coronavirus.

Pertinently, SMC has installed appreciated the works carried by major hospitals including Bone SMC in the ongoing COVID pan- and Joint hospital, JLNM hosemic. pital, CD hospital, LD hospital, As per the communication ad- GB Panth, JVC, Kashmir Nursing dressed to Commissioner SMC, Home, SMHS and two tunnels premises. He has also requested roundings by the corporation is a the Commissioner SMC for instal- regular affair to contain spread of

Higher Education Deptt orders promotion of 200 Associate, **Assistant Professors**



SRINAGAR: community of Kashmir here safety masks to divisional administration.

COVID-19:

In this regard, a delegation of business leaders led by Kashmir Chamber of Com- ed among those in need of the Shahi Bagh canal. merce and Industries, Presi- safety-gears including frontdent, Sheikh Ashiq called line warriors against Covid19, on Divisional Commissioner as also among the street ven-Kashmir Pandurang K Pole dors in particular as and when here and handed over the their activity resumes. donation from the business community to augment the ness delegation apprised the the efforts of the administragovernment's ongoing efforts Divisional to tackle spread of coronavirus about various issues including COVID-19.

The business (COVID-19). On the occasion, the Divion Thursday donated one lakh sional Commissioner hailed pecially in the national capital. the gesture of the business community in fight against the pandemic.

Kashmir Inc donates I lakh masks to

Hails role of Advisor Baseer Khan for his

return of stranded people in various parts of the county es-

The business delegation also raised the issue of water shortage in some areas of Srinagar The masks will be distribut- due to breakdown in the Mal

business delegation The also hailed the role of Advisor Baseer Khan, who is overall in-charge of coronavirus control efforts in Kashmir, for his On the occasion, the busi- untiring efforts in upscaling Commissioner tion to contain the spread of

motion of 200 Associate and Assistant Professors serving in Colleges across the Jammu and Kashmir.

"Department promoted 54 Associate Professors as In-Charge Principals while as 30 Assistant the Academic Grade pay of Rs. 7000 and 109 Assistant Professors were promoted in the Academic Grade Pay of Rs. 8000," a statement of the Department said. With the promotion of 54 Associate Professors (including in 50 new degree colleges), of education in J&K.

JAMMU: Department of Higher all the 148 Government Degree Education today ordered pro- Colleges of the J&K have now got independent Principals. Further with the release of various Government Degree higher grade, a long pending demand of Assistant Professors has been addressed, the statement added.

Secretary Higher Education Talat Parvez Rohella while Professors were promoted in congratulating the promotees, said that even during the lockdown to contain COVID-19, the Department is trying to reach out to the students through eclasses. He exhorted upon the teaching community to put in extra efforts to improve quality

2012 - The 8th century St. Cuthbert Gospel, Europe's oldest intact book, is purchased by the British Library for 9 million

From KO Archives

Next bus from Uri?

Govt says threat less if passengers travel on their own to 'safer' Uri

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The authorities are considering running the second bus to Muzaffarabad from border tow n of Uri instead of Srinagar in view of security considerations, official sources said here today.

The idea to run the bus from Uri was discussed during a meeting of the concerned authorities as the town is "much safer" being situated in a high-sanitised zone and having virtually zero militant presence, they said.

Passengers will have to reach Uri of their own raising fears about their safety.

Public circles say if the threat perception was the reason behind government's purported rethink then in that case passengers will become more vulnerable to attacks by groups opposed to the service than they were earlier.

Official sources said other major reason for restricting the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad service to Uri - Muzaffarabad is security costs which would come down drastically in the latter case.

Militant groups AI Nasireen, Al Arifeen. Save Kashmir Movement and Farzandan-e-Millat which claimed responsibility for the attack on the tourist reception centre, have reportedly issued a threat to passengers of the second bus loo.

List of passengers swapped

As the authorities mulled running the second ,Muzaffarbadbound bus from Uri instead of Srinagar India and Pakistan today exchanged list of prospective travelers for the bus

Which will roll out on April 21. "We have handed over the list of 47 passengers from

Pakistan-controlled Kashmir who have-been given clearance to travel (to Srinagar) on the bus." Regional Passport Officer John S Shilshi said.

Shilshi who returned here from Uri after exchanging the list, said the Pakistani side had cleared 32 passengers to travel on the second bus from the Indian side.

A maximum of 30 passengers from each side would board the bus as agreed between Indian and Pakistani authorities, he said.

(Kashmir Observer, 17 April, 2005)



Send your write ups and feedback at editpage.ko@gmail.com

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Virus Of Communalism

fter 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.

Paddy Nursery Management Amid Covid-19 Pandemic

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 furies 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 laver 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



OPINION

teria, Pseudomonos etc. @10g/kg seed. However the seed procured from the agriculture departmental stores stands chemically treated and need not be treated again.

fluctuations Temperature 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 Carbendazim 50 WP @ 1 g/liter 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 Chlorpyriphos 10 G @ 1kg/kanal. For army worm use Dimethoate 30 EC @ 1 ml/litre of water or Phosolone 35 EC @1.4 ml/litre of water

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 nonagricultural 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.

OTHER OPINON

The dilemma with migrants

n 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

seed of previous crop needs seed treatment (Organic or Inorganic) before sowing. Among the inorganic treatments, use Tricyclozole or Carbendazim 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-

Author is an Agronomist and works as Junior Agriculture Extension Officer, Department of Agriculture, Govt. of J&K. He can be reached at: rajaabrar321@ gmail.com

Effective Delivery System Imperative For Effective Lockdown

Dr Ishfaq Jamal

ammu 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.

down post August 2019. This was agwhich now directly controls Jammu and Kashmir. That 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

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 lock-

The onus thus lies on the government of India 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

> 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

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 Kissan, 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.

NEWS

Bangladesh rescues hundreds of Rohingya adrift at sea; 24 dead

Agencies

Dhaka: At least 24 Rohingya died at sea after their boat failed to reach Malavsia, the coastguard in Bangladesh said on Thursday after rescuing 396 Rohingya people from the vessel which had been adrift for weeks after failing to reach Malaysia.

"They were at sea for about two months and were starving,' an official from the coastguard told Reuters news agency.

The official said a "final decision" had been made to send those rescued to neighbouring Myanmar. The coastguard initially said 382 had been rescued but later revised the number higher.

Video images showed a crowd of mostly women and children, some stick-thin and barely able to stand, being helped to shore. One refugee told a reporter that the group

had been turned back from

Malaysia three times and at

one point there was a fight on

board between the passengers

nise Rohingya as citizens, and

they face severe curbs on their movement as well as access to

jobs, healthcare and education.

Sohail Rana, incharge of

Teknaf station of Bangladesh

Lieutenant Commander

Myanmar does not recog-

coastguard, told Al Jazeera they handed a total of 396 rescued Rohingya refugees to the UNHCR.

"The UNHCR will keep them in quarantine for the next 14 days in a camp inside Bangladesh," he said, "After that, they will be sent back to their respective homes in Rohingya camps inside Bangladesh.

Louise Donovon, UNHCR spokesperson, told Al Jazeera the organisation has received the rescued refugees from the coastguard authorities.

"They will be kept inside medical facilities established in the Rohingya camps. If none of them show COVID-19 symptoms in the next two weeks, they will be sent to the transfer centre and subsequently to their homes inside the camps in Bangladesh."

The designated Bangla-

Europe Remains 'In The Eye' Of Coronavirus Storm: WHO

Geneva: The World Health Organization's European office said Thursday that despite "optimistic signs" in some some of the countries worst hit by the new coronavirus. the number of cases was rising and approaching one million in the continent alone.

Agencies

'We remain in the eye of the storm," WHO regional director for Europe, Hans Kluge, told a news conference, noting that about half of worldwide confirmed cases were in Europe.

Kluge noted they had seen positive signs in terms of "declining numbers" in Spain, Italy, Germany, France and

Switzerland However, he said the "positive signals" in some countries were overshadowed by sustained or increased levels in other countries, such as Britain, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

As some European countries have started to ease some of the restrictions put in place to curb the spread, Kluge urged countries to make sure that control mechanisms were in place.

"It is imperative that we do not let down our guard,' Kluge said.

Before easing restrictions, Kluge said countries needed to make sure evidence showed that transmission was under control.

Countries also needed to ensure that healthcare had the capacity "to identify, isolate, test, trace contacts and

quarantine."

Kluge also stressed that risks needed to be minimised in high-vulnerability settings, such as retirement homes and areas were people live in crowded places.

Workplaces also needed to take preventative measures, and countries needed to manage importation risks, Kluge added. If countries could not ensure these criteria, Kluge urged them to "please re-think."

On Wednesday, Denmark became the first country in Europe to start reopening schools, while Finland lifted a travel blockade on the Helsinki region.

Austria, Italy and Spain have also allowed some businesses to reopen.

'Come clean': US presses China on coronavirus after lab reports

Kashmir Observer

Friday| 17-04-2020

Agencies

Washington: The United States stepped up its pressure on China over the coronavirus pandemic with President Donald Trump saying his administration was trying to determine where the deadly disease originated from.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also called on Beijing "to come clean" on what it knows. At a White House news conference on Wednesday, Trump was asked about reports of the virus escaping from a laboratory in Wuhan, where the coronavirus first appeared.

'We are doing a very thorough examination of this horrible situation that happened," he said. Asked if he had raised the

subject in his conversations with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Trump said: "I don't want to discuss what I talked to him about the laboratory, I just don't want to discuss, it's inappropriate right now."

At least 136,000 people around the world have now died from the disease, with almost 31,000 in the US alone. More than two million people have been diagnosed with the virus, while at least half a million have recovered. Trump's top diplomat, Pom-

peo, meanwhile told Fox News Channel after Trump's news conference, "we know

this virus originated in Wuhan, China," and noted that the Institute of Virology was only a handful of miles from the market, where people first came down with the disease. "We really need the Chinese government to open up" and help explain "exactly how this virus spread", Pompeo added.

ministry China's foreign noted on Thursday the World Health Organization has said there is no evidence coronavirus was made in a lab.

Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters in Beijing that WHO officials "have said multiple times there is no evidence the new coronavirus was created in a laboratory".

Deadly consequences for delay

Trump and Pompeo's comments follow an Associated Press news agency report. which blamed Chinese authorities for failing to immediately disclose information about the human-to-human transmission of the virus, also known as COVID-19, which allowed the virus to spread beyond Wuhan

Covid-19: New York to require face coverings in busy public places

Agencies

New York: Even as politicians talk about "reopening" the country, New York is still intensifying restrictions intended to stop the coronavirus from spreading.

Face coverings will be now be required in any place where people can't stay at least six feet away from other people. While other isolation measures seem to have worked in keeping new infections down, New Yorkers continue to die by the hundreds every day. Meanwhile, New York City officials said they would create an emergency food reserve and take other steps to fight hunger in a city where huge numbers of people have been thrown out

Here are the latest coro-

himself eschewed masks during his daily news briefings, though he comes within six feet of his staff, said there will initially be no civil penalties for noncompliance, but he's urging merchants to enforce it among customers.

from the outbreak have leveled off, New York officials are still trying to reduce the rising death toll. New York recorded 752 deaths Tuesday, for a total of nearly 11,600 since the outbreak began.

Those figures don't include roughly 4,000 more deaths in New York City that city officials say were probably caused by the virus, but haven't been confirmed by a lab test.

Cuomo's announcement came hours after New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio called

desh government's official of Teknaf region told Al Jazeera the refugees could not reach Malaysia because of the ramped up security following the coronavirus pandemic. "Because of the COVID-19

pandemic, the border and coastguards of all of the countries have ramped up their vigilance. Hence, the refugees on the boat couldn't get down on the Malaysian shore.'

Greenland's Ice Sheet Shrinking Faster Than Ever: Study

Agencies

and the crew.

EW YORK: Last year Greenland's ice sheet shrank by more than at any time since record-taking began, according to a study published on Wednesday that showed climate change could cause sharp rises in global sea levels

The huge melt was due not only to warm temperatures, but also atmospheric circulation patterns that have become more frequent due to climate change, suggesting scientists may be underestimating the threat to the ice, the authors found

Asia doing better than other regions, may recover faster says IMF

Press Trust of India

Washington: Asia is doing better than other regions in the world in their fight against the deadly coronavirus and may recover faster, a top official from the International Monetary Fund has said.

Chang Yong Rhee, Director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department also said that the impact of the deadly coronavirus on Asia will be severe, across the board, and unprec-



nual average growth rate

cent, Rhee said.

can be made up quickly and the impact of the global economic contraction on Asia means that the level of output can be expected to remain below the pre-pandemic level

Responding to a question, Rhee noted that the IMF's forecasts are quite uncertain. "One of the difficulties in

ecasting growth in Asia is

"But not all lost growth throughout 2021," he said.

breaks. There is potential for

surprises on both the upside

ed to the downside, given the

uncertainty surrounding the

pandemic, he said.

The balance of risks is tilt-

and the downside," he said.

navirus developments in New York

you not do that?"

The governor, who has

Though hospitalizations

"The Chinese government needs to come clean," he said. The state-backed Wuhan Institute of Virology dismissed reports the virus may have been artificially synthesised at one of its laboratories or escaped from its facility as far back as February.

"We're destroying ice in decades that was built over thousands of years," Marco Tedesco, research professor at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, who led the study, said.

"What we do here has huge implications for everywhere else in the world.'

Greenland's ice sheet, the world's second largest, recorded its biggest outright drop in what scientists call "surface mass" since record-keeping began in 1948, according to the study.

Greenland lost around 600 billion tonnes of water last year, an amount that would contribute about 1.5 millimetres of sea level rise, according to the study from Columbia and Belgium's Liege universities, published in The Cryosphere.

Greenland's ice sheet covers 80 per cent of the island and could raise global sea levels by up to 23 feet if it melted entirely.

Greenland contributed 20-25pc of global sea level rise over the last few decades, Tedesco said. If carbon emissions continues to grow, this share could rise to around 40pc by 2100, he said, although there is considerable uncertainty about how ice melt will develop in Antarctica — the largest ice sheet on Earth.

edented.

"Asia is still doing better than other regions and may recover faster. Average growth in Asia is still higher than other regions," Ree told PTI in an interview. "We expect growth in Asia

to stall at zero per cent in 2020. This is a remarkable downgrade since Asia has not experienced zero growth in the last 60 years!" he said.

This is lower than the an-

meters) beneath the sea, but

it wasn't until it had started

resurfacing that they saw the

siphonophore, at approxi-

mately 2,070 feet (630 meters).

siphonophore is twice as long

as most blue whales and three

At 154 feet, this particular

throughout the Global Financial Crisis (4.7 per cent) or the Asian Financial Crisis (1.3 per cent). The downward revisions are substantial and across the board, with the largest revisions for Australia and New Zealand (-9ppt), Japan (-5.9ppt) China(-4.8ppt), he said.

But, since Asia was exposed to the virus before other countries, a recovery may begin earlier, and growth in 2021 is expected to rise to 7.6 per-

But not all lost growth can be made up quickly and the impact of the global economic contraction on Asia means that the level of output can be expected to remain below the pre-pandemic level throughout 2021

the fact that Asian economies FACE COVERINGS

of work

are at different stages of the New York residents will pandemic. The final outcome be required to wear face coverwill also depend on the effecings anytime they come into close contact with other people tiveness of the containment measures and whether or not outside their homes. Gov. Anthere is a second wave of outdrew Cuomo said Wednesday.

> The mandate will require a mask or face covering, like a bandanna, on busy streets, public transit, or any situation where people cannot maintain 6 feet of social distancing, even if it is passing a person briefly on a wooded trail. The order takes effect Friday.

> "Stopping the spread is everything. How can you not wear a mask when you're going to come close to a person?" Cuomo said at his daily briefing. "On what theory would

for stores to make customers wear face coverings in order to protect workers against exposure. De Blasio had previously recommended face coverings in public in the city.

coronavirus The new causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. FOOD PLAN

In a city where 1.2 million residents — including one in five children — struggle at times to feed themselves, the number is expected to grow as an estimated half-million New Yorkers have lost or are likely to lose their jobs soon.

NEWS MAKERS

Scientists Discover 'UFO-Like' Creature In Australian Waters, Potentially World's Longest Animal

cientists have discovered what could be the longest animal ever seen off the coast of Australia, reports The Guardian. The animal is a siphonophore, measured at an estimated 154 feet.

"Siphonophores are deepsea predators made up of many small clones that act together as one and spread out like a single long string in the water," says the article.

The Schmidt Ocean Institute noticed the siphonophore while on an expedition led by Nerida Wilson. According to Wilson, when it was first spotted, many of the researchers weren't in the control room, but after word spread that a "huge organism spread out like a spiral UFO,"



people assembled in the room to "share the excitement."

"We couldn't believe what we were seeing. One reason the discovery

was so startling is that it occurred when the research team was least expecting it. The deep-sea vessel dived

times as long as the average humpback whale, which can grow up to 50 feet long.

The Guardian compares siphonophores to jellyfish in that they hunt their prey similarily. Both creatures use stinging tentacles to paralyze fish and other small sea animals. The colony then feeds on its catch.

the siphono-Finding phore wasn't an easy task. Wilson pointed out that the expedition took place in a protected bioregion called the Gascoyne Coast. According to Wilson, there is a "disconnect" between knowledge and ocean conservatism.

While it's a protected area, we actually have no idea what lives there. We really wanted to reveal the in-

COVID-19: Dubai converts World Trade Centre into field hospital

o fully prepare itself for any surge in coronavirus cases. Dubai has converted the Dubai World Trade centre into a field hospital. According to Dubai public health officials, the facility will be able to handle up to 3,000 patients.

In a Gulf News report, Humaid Al Qutami, the directorgeneral of the Dubai Health Authority was quoted as saying, 'We will have more than two field hospitals ready in Dubai to be ready for any situation."

The field hospital is expected to be operational in phases, as and when the need arises. Dubai already has 4.000-5.000 hospital beds available for coronavirus patients. The emirate is in the pro-

cess of constructing two more hospitals, to be made available in case more patients need hospitalisation.

Despite containment efforts, including halting commercial flight services, imposing curfews and closing public venues, UAE has reported 2.659 cases with 12 deaths.

Al Qutami said authorities were "prepared to help 5,000, 10,000 or, God forbid, more."

As per a Reuters report, five-star hospitals are being used by Dubai and Abu Dhabi to monitor people with minor cases of COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the new coronavirus.



LIFE & TIME



ne precators put

Press Trust Of India

nited 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 parents 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

Scientists Find Structural Protein That

Press Trust Of India

ltraviolet 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 deepultraviolet (UV-C) LEDs.

According to the study, this involves depositing a film of the semiconductor alloy aluminum gallium nitride (AlGaN) 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 costeffective 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 productionfriendly

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 lowcost, chemical-free and convenient way to sanitize public, retail, personal and medical spaces," he said.

May Be New Marker Of Depression

Press Trust Of India

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

ed that consuming the traditional 'three-veggies' before pregnancy lowers the risk of premature birth.

University 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

study has suggest-

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.

of

Business

Sensex gains 223 points; Nifty ends at 8,993

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI: Equity benchmark Sensex rose over 222 points on Thursday, buoyed by gains in finance, energy and power stocks despite weak cues from global markets.

After swinging 784 points intra-day, the 30-share index settled 222.80 points or 0.73 per cent higher at 30,602.61.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty ended 67.50 points, or 0.76 per cent, up at 8,992.80.

NTPC was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying nearly 6 per cent, followed by ICICI Bank, Titan, L&T, SBI, Sun Pharma and Nestle India.

On the other hand, HCL Tech, Kotak Bank, Tech Mahindra, Hero MotoCorp and Infosys were among the laggards.

Domestic market opened on a softer note tracking mixed global cues as virus concerns continued to weigh on sentiment, said Narendra Solanki, Head- Equity Research (Fundamental), Anand Rathi

During the afternoon session, market gained positive traction as traders and investors were seen accumulating some large cap stocks, he noted.

Further, with the start of earnings season, the IT sector remained lacklustre during the day as commentary from Wipro failed to provide future clarity on Covid-19 impact while participants eyed TCS results later in the day, Solanki added.

On the currency front, the rupee tanked 43 paise to settle at a fresh all-time low of 76.87 (provisional) against the US dollar.

The death toll due to Covid-19 rose to 414, while the number of cases in the country climbed to 12,380

Global tally of the infections has crossed 20 lakh, with over 1.37 lakh deaths.

Asia's economy to suffer zero growth in 2020: IMF



TOKYO: Asia's economic growth this year will grind to a halt for the first time in 60 years, as the coronavirus crisis takes an "unprecedented" toll on the region's service sector and major export destinations, the International Monetary Fund said on Thursday.

Policymakers must offer targeted support to households and firms hardest-hit by travel bans, social distancing policies and other measures aimed at containing the pandemic, said Changyong Rhee, director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department.

"These are highly uncertain and challenging times for the global economy. The Asia-Pacific region is no exception. The impact of the coronavirus on the region will be severe, across the board, and unprecedented," he said.

"This is not a time for business as usual. Asian countries need to use all policy instruments in their toolkits." Asia's economy is likely to suffer zero growth this year for the first time in 60 years, the IMF said in a report on the Asia-Pacific region released on Thursday. While Asia is set to fare better than other regions suffering economic contractions, the projection is worse than the 4.7% average growth rates throughout the global financial crisis, and the 1.3% increase during the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, the IMF said. Chang Yong Rhee, Director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department, said IMF also supports the Reserve Bank of India's policy responses to support financial stability and help the Indian economy cope with the fallout from this pandemic. We strongly support India's policy response to the pandemic, including the fiscal stimulus package and the proactive decision to pursue a nationwide lockdown to stem the spread of the virus and to save lives, Â Rhee said. Â The policy rate actions along with the regulatory measures to boost liquidity would provide some relief to borrowers and financial institutions, he said. The Finance Ministry unveiled a Rs 1.70 lakh crore economic package on March 26 involving free foodgrain and cooking gas for the poor for the next three months.



India Mulls Another Stimulus Package For Industries Hit By Pandemic

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday reviewed the impact of COVID-19 on the Indian economy and a possible second stimulus to boost sectors hit hard by the pandemic.

Modi held discussions with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as the pandemic hit sectors from small industries to the aviation sector hard with millions of jobs at stake.

reduction in GDP growth forecast by various multi-lateral funding agencies for the current fiscal due to the impact of COVID-19 and consequent lockdown.

State of the economy was discussed in details during the meeting, sources taken care of while making the new said, adding resource mobilisation for taking on the future challenges was also highlighted.

As per the World Bank's latest assessment, India is expected to grow 1.5 per cent to 2.8 per cent. Similarly, the IMF on Tuesday projected a GDP growth of 1.9 per cent for India in 2020, as the global economy hits the worst recession since the Great Depression in 1930s.

The pandemic and consequent lockdown have hit various sectors, in-

tion, agriculture and allied sector. empowered group - headed by Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu Chakraborty - which is entrusted with the task of suggesting measures that can bring back economy back on

track quickly post the lockdown. Besides, it was also asked to work on relief and welfare measures for various sectors of the economy as well as for the poor and needy.

In his address to the nation, the The meeting comes amid drastic Prime Minister had expressed concern over problems being faced by poor and daily wagers and farmers.

"The government has made every possible effort to help them through Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana. Their interests have also been guidelines," he had said.

To ease the pain and misery, the Finance Minister last month announced a Rs 1.7 lakh crore stimulus that included free foodgrains and cooking gas to poor for three months, and cash doles to women and poor senior citizens as it looked to ease the economic impact of the nationwide lockdown

As per the announcement, 80 crore poor ration card holders will each get 5 kg of wheat or rice and one kg of Local Area Development Scheme cluding MSME, hospitality, civil avia- preferred pulses free of cost every

month for the next three months, The government constituted an while, 20.4 crore women having Jan Dhan bank accounts would get cash help of Rs 1,500 spread over three months.

> Over 8.3 crore poor women, who were handed out free cooking gas connections since 2016, will get free LPG refills for the next three months, while poor senior citizens, widows and disabled will get an ex-gratia cash of Rs 1,000.

Sitharaman had hinted at more announcements if need arises.

In a bid to save resources, the government has already put restrictions on expenditure and funds are being diverted towards the fight against COVID-19. Besides, the Union Cabinet approved a 30 per cent reduction in salary and allowances of Members of Parliament for one year.

President, Vice President and Governors voluntarily decided to take a pay cut as a gesture towards concerted effort to contain the spread of the deadly virus.

At the same time, the government has decided to suspend MPLADS and funds would be directed towards improving medical infrastructure.

An MP gets Rs 5 crore every year as part of the Members of Parliament (MPLADS).

Airlines must give full refund for flights during lockdown period



Will bring back 15-20 per cent staff to office premises initially amid COVID-19 lockdown: NASSCOM



strength. "We are looking at

industry keeping in mind the MHA directive," NASSCOM

Nasscom President Deb-

Work SOP' to members and

Under the first phase of lockdown between March

said in a tweet.

in phase I.

NEW DELHI: Industry body erate with up to 50 per cent NASSCOM on Wednesday said it will bring back em- a phased approach starting ployees on work premises with 15-20 per cent workin a phased manner, start-ing with 15-20 per cent of premises" - @Debjani_Ghosh workforce, to comply with on the way forward for the IT the guidelines issued by the Home Ministry amid the nationwide lockdown.

The government on Tuesday extended the lockdown jani Ghosh also tweeted that till May 3 to contain the Nasscom has issued a 'Back to spread of the coronavirus infection. The Home Min- recommended 15-20 per cent istry on Wednesday issued detailed guidelines for states, Union Territories and general public to follow during the

24-April 14, the government had allowed only skeletal extended lockdown till May staff to be on-premises to run According to the guide- critical operations at IT and lines, IT and IT-enabled ser- IT-enabled services organisa-

vices will be allowed to op- tions.

Jeff Bezos gets richer by USD 6.5 billion in a day as investors flock to Amazon



SEATTLE: Despite gloom all over, Amazon saw its stock Bezos, who owns about 4 per zooming over 5 per cent to cent of Amazon, saw her net an all-time high of over USD 2,283 per share - leaving the ecommerce giant with USD 1.1 trillion worth and adding second-largest company af-USD 6.5 billion to its Founder and CEO Jeff Bezos fortune. Amazon has been a favou-

worth rise by USD 2.2 billion, to reach USD 44.8 billion. Amazon is now world's ter Microsoft which is worth USD 1.32 trillion.

His ex-wife Mackenzie

The e-tailer is set to allow rite among 'sheltered-at- third-party sellers to start home' investors because of shipping nonessential items an unprecedented surge in to its warehouses this week online orders and the com- as it ramps up efforts to suppany keeping its workflow ply the essential items in the going despite health fears challenging COVID-19 times. among its warehouse work- After filling 100,000 new ers.According to a Forbes jobs announced in March, report on Tuesday, Amazon e-commerce giant Amazon stock surged 5.3 per cent on is planning to add 75,000 Tuesday, hitting a new re- more, to help meet surge cord close of USD 2,283 per in demand due to the CO-As more and more people year, outpacing the bench- rely on home deliveries to source the supplies of their daily needs, Amazon said it jor company to rebound is "looking for talent in evfrom the coronavirus market ery community where we selloff, which started in late operate". To help its employ-February: It's one out of only ees during the crisis, Ama-28 stocks in the S&P 500 to zon also increased pay for do so," said the report. Bezos hourly employees by USD 2 per hour in the US, Canadian cent stake in Amazon, with dollar 2 per hour in Canada, and 2 euros per hour in many EU countries.

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: 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.

Senior officials of Ministry of Civil Aviation and CEOs of Indian airlines companies met on Wednesday afternoon on the issue of cancellation down period.

The US had earlier this month di-

refunds during the coronavirus lock- done amid the coronavirus pandem- second phase of lockdown is from April 15 to May 3. Consequently, all India imposed the first phase of domestic and international commer-

rected its airlines to issue refunds to lockdown from March 25 to April 14 cial passenger flights are suspended passengers for ticket cancellations to curb the spread of coronavirus. The for this time period.

share. The stock is now up VID-19 crisis. over 20 per cent so far this mark index.

"Amazon is the first macurrently owns an 11.2 per a net worth at USD 138 billion now.

Indian economy will bounce back from lows inflicted by coronavirus: Gautam Adani

Press Trust Of India

tam Adani on Wednesday ex- shut factories and businesses, uded confidence that the Indian suspended rail and air travel and the COVID-19 outbreak, saying it disruption in the economy. might take time but it is possible. economic history is full of major verely disrupts the economy. ups and downs. India's domestic time but there is ample optimism to show that it is possible," he wrote in a blog on Linkedin.

The outbreak of pandemic has led to the government imposing **NEW DELHI:** Billionaire Gau- a nationwide lockdown that has economy would bounce back restricted movement of people from the downturn caused by and goods. The result is a severe

While the International Mon-International agencies from the etary Fund (IMF) has projected World Bank to IMF have project- economic growth of 1.9 per cent ed that the Indian economy will in 2020-21, the World Bank sees grow at its slowest pace since the India's growth at 1.5-2.8 per cent 1991 economic reforms. "Global as the coronavirus outbreak se-

The Asian Development Bank economy has always stood as sees India's GDP growth slipping a great shield in protecting the to 4 per cent in the current fiscountry from global economic cal, while S&P Global Ratings headwinds. I have no doubts that has further slashed its economic the nation will be able to rise growth forecast for the country above this crisis. It might take to 3.5 per cent from a previous downgrade of 5.2 per cent.



in FY21, while Moody's Investors cent, from an earlier estimate of pull me down. Instead, by look-Service has slashed its estimate 5.3 per cent. "However alarm- ing around I get great hope and Fitch Ratings puts its estimate of India's GDP growth during ing the post-Coronavirus world confidence to bounce back," Adfor India's growth at 2 per cent 2020 calendar year to 2.5 per might seem to appear, it does not ani wrote in the blog titled 'How becoming the first Indian firm to narratives," he said.

COVID-19 helped rediscover hope and goodness'.

The coronavirus, he said, can restrict movement but it cannot contain the urge to fight and help each other. "It cannot stop future. Together, let us stay resilient and hopeful," he said.

Adani, who heads the portto-energy conglomerate Adani Group, said rising global concern on the vast implications of the COVID-19 outbreak on future is obvious with anxieties mounting on economies, jobs and the very existence of mankind. "However, amidst the gloom, there are sevworth cherishing," he said as he went on to cite new discoveries that have brought a ray of hope. He cited MyLab Discovery So-

produce indigenous coronovirus testing kits. "What is even more inspiring is the story of Minal Dakhave Bhonsale, the virologist who headed this project," he said adding she managed to deliver us from being positive about the the project amid an advanced stage of pregnancy.

The project was completed a day before she delivered a baby girl. "Hundreds of such incredible stories that demonstrate resilience, hope, and power of the human spirit are unfolding around us every day," he said.

Continuing to cite examples of innovation, he said a team of engineers at Adani Port in Vizag eral small discoveries that are created a sanitized water shower in just about 4 hours. "Difficult times bring us closer and make us stronger to face any eventuality. We must be able to look lutions, a small startup in Pune, around ourselves and find these





Woman travels 2,700 km across six states to meet ailing son in hospital



passes for the travel

Volunteers of Hindu

help line, a VHP organ-

isation, helped in ar-

ranging a cab and two

taxi drivers free of cost

to take them to Jodhpur.

sary passes arranged

by Kottayam District

Collector P K Sudheer

Babu,Sheelaamma ac-

relative set off on the

journey from Panack-

achira village in Ko-

ruthodu panchayat in Kottayam on April

on 14th, "Vishu" (Ma-

The jawan, who had

come to his village in

pressed desire to meet

This mother's jour-

who rode 1400 km on

Telangana to bring back

The Burqa-clad mom,

Razia Sultana, a school

teacher from Bodhan

Pradesh.

laylam new year).

daughter-in-law

vathyand

her

Par-

another

After getting neces-

across the states.

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: A 50-yearold woman travelled 2700 km in a car crisscrossing 6 states to meet her critically ill son, a BSF jawan in Jodhpur, despite strict lockdown restrictions due to Covid-19. The woman was ac-

companied by her daughter-in-law and companied by another relative during the journey, which they covered in 3 days time.

Speaking to PTI from Jodĥpur in Rajasthan, Sheelamma Vasan said the health condition of her son, Arun Kumar 11and reached Jodhpur (29), who was suffering from myositis, (inflammation of muscles), was

improving. "Due to god's grace February end on leave we have reached here and days after his return without any problems had fallen ill, had exanywhere", she said.

The family was in- his mother and wife. formed by a doctor at AIIMS in Jodhpur about ney comes close on the Arun Kumar's condition heels of another woman following which they decided to undertake her two wheeler from the journey from Kerala through Tamil Nadu, her son stuck in Andhra Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat to reach Ra-

jasthan. Thanks to the intervention of Union Min- town in Telangana unister V Muraleedharan, dertook the journey office of Chief Minister on her scooter and Pinarayi Vijayan and broughther son, a stu-Congress leader, Oom- dent from Rehmatabamen Chandy, the fam- din Andhra Pradesh. ily could get necessary -PTI

Maharashtra govt orders action against 2 TV scribes for 'false' news

MUMBAI: Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh has said action has been ordered against a reporter and an anchor of a news channel for allegedly running a "false" story that state minister Jitendra Awhad's daughter tested coronavirus positive at the time of return from Spain.



India's Covid Tally Modest Considering Its Huge Population: Experts

and 10,73,689 tests respectively.

Dr Ravi Shekhar Jha, Senior Consul-

"Given the massive size of our pop-

ulation, the number of tests needs

do effective contact tracing and test

The number of samples tested till

otherwise it will be a difficult af-

Healthcare, said it has been decided

not infect others," he told PTI.

population.

Press Trust Of India

done across the country to trace CO-VID-19 infection if the virus is to be contained in time, experts said.

rose to 414 and the number of cases to 12,380 in the country on Thursday, direction but it is not enough. according to the Union Health Ministry.

While the number of active CO- to be ramped up and should be con-VID-19 cases is 10,477, as many as 1,488 people have been cured and discharged and one had migrated, it them so that those people in turn do said.

Data obtained from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said, till April 14, the number of samples tested stood at 2,44,893, an increase of 27,339 from the corresponding figure till the previous day (2.17.554).

Experts feel the figures are modest for a count of the size of 1.3 billion and "much more number of tests" are needed to combat COVID-19 outbreak in the country.

which maintains a global database on coronavirus cases and tests conducted, the US, where over 26,000 to conduct coronavirus tests on "all COVID-19 deaths have occurred, has our workforce and patients across the done 31,00,387 tests averaging about country". "Priority will be to test our 9,367 per million of population.

The figures for India is 2,44,893 being brought in. And, the front-line tests averaging 177 per million of healthcare workers," he said.

China dispatches 6.5 lakh COVID-19 medical kits to India

NEW DELHI: On Tuesday, Misri told eiiing that India has

India is doing lot of tests, but it is Spain and Italy, two countries not enough compared to what the US NEW DELHI: India needs to "signifi- which have also seen several thou- and Singapore and other countries cantly ramp up" the number of tests sands of fatalities, have done 6,00,000 are doing, he said, adding, "much more testing needs to be done"

Another expert from a leading pritant and Head of the Department of vate hospital here, who did not wish The death toll due to coronavirus Pulmonology at Fortis Escorts, Farid- to be named, said, "The volume of abad, said India is going in the right tests conducted need to be ramped up significantly to capitalise on the gains from the lockdown"

Two kinds of diagnostic tests are being currently used in India -- RTducted more rigorously. We need to PCR test and rapid antibodies test, ac-

A reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test is a laboratory technique combining reverse March 28 stood at 27,688, a rise of transcription of RNA into DNA that 7,038 from the corresponding figure detects the virus while the antibody tests, which use blood, detect the

Dr Arvind Kumar, noted lung surgeon at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, said the key to fighting the COVID-19 people were traced and tested. This battle is "testing, testing and testing" has to be increased manifold if we and then "quarantining and treating". have to contain coronavirus in time,

"The more number of people we screen, the greater our chance of win-According to worldometers.info fair," Jha said. Dr Sandeep Budhi- ning this fight against COVID-19. The raja, Group Medical Director at Max number of tests have to be significantly increased." he said.

In Delhi, which has seen 1561 cases and 30 deaths till April 14, over 16,000 samples been tested till that admitted patients and new patients period.

"Number of cases were rising and they will increase even more now, as



function with skeletal staff. In Northern and Eastern

branch will also function as

quarters, command head-

quarters and formation

functioning with 50 per cent

manpower from April 19 to

It said all training activi-

will remain suspended till

actions to be taken post the

lockdown period will be is-

sued on receipt of fresh orders from the government.

In its directive, the Army

All social, sports, enter-

well as religious congrega-

tions and regimental events

denotified. Exceptions to be

given will depend on the lo-

falling

in

May 3.

The order also mentioned that offices in Army head-

Coronavirus pandemic: Army to strictly observe "no movement" till April 19

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Indian commands, the intelligence Army on Thursday directed

all its military establish- usual. ments, cantonments, formation headquarters and field units to totally restrict movement of forces till April 19 in view of the govern-headquarters would start ment"s fresh lockdown related guidelines.

India went under a total shutdown of 21 days from March 25 to April 14 to fight ties and temporary duties the coronavirus pandemic. On Tuesday, Prime Minister May 3, adding directions on Narendra Modi announced extending the lockdown till May 3, adding the drastic measures would be relaxed in some areas from April 20. The Army issued a fresh

said personnel connected set of directives to all its with providing essential units following the extenservices will be allowed to sion of the lockdown. move and that the restric-"In view of the extension tions will not hinder any operational tasks of any forma-

of lockdown, all military establishments, cantonments, tion or units. formation headquarters and units will observe strict "No tainment, academic, cultural Movement" till April 19," the and religious gatherings as order from the Army headquarters said.

In the Army headquarters, will have to be suspended the wings handling military till May 3, according to the operations, military intelliorder. gence, operational logistics and strategic movement "hotspots or containment will carry out their functions zones" will observe strict with bare minimum staff "no movement" till they are strength till April 19, according to the order.

Within the command cal military authority," the headquarters, wings han- order said. dling manpower, logistics

It said Directorate General and operations will only Medical Services (Army) will

"Offices

Lockdown Like A Pause Button. **Not A Solution To Coronavirus Crisis: Rahul Gandhi**



Congress NEW DELHI:

Addressing a press conferleader Rahul Gandhi on ence via video conference, Thursday strongly pitched Gandhi also said the entire for aggressively expanding country has to fight the cricoronavirus testing across sis "unitedly" and there is the country and adopting it need to grant adequate reas a "strategic" instrument sources to the states to help them deal with it in a "nu-Instead of conducting started and "declaring vic- tests on the basis of suspecttory now" will be wrong. ed cases, India must adopt He added that the COVID-19 a strategy and bring out an cannot be controlled, it has architecture under which testing should be expanded He said the lockdown is exponentially and find out where the country stands, demic and the time must the Congress leader said. "India should start random testing of virus; withinfrastructure as well as take out it, you will keep following virus and it will keep getting ahead of you," Gan-The lockdown is in no dhi said.Gandhi insisted that them effectively deal with needed is a "nuanced" and

cording to global health norms.

till March 27, according to ICMR data. "The rise in number of cases hapbody's response to the virus. pening is also because in the last few weeks during the lockdown, people who came in contact with affected

In a series of tweets, Deshmukh said the code of conduct of not revealing the name of any coronavirus-infected patient was violated in the process.

On his part, state Housing Minister Awhad on Thursday said Deshmukh asked him to register a case, but he has decided against it as he does not want to act out of vengeance.

Deshmukh said there are rules in the law regarding not revealing the names of girls, and what the channel did "deliberately and irresponsibly was quite serious"

It is wrong to broadcast "false and terrorising" news at a time when an atmosphere of fear is prevailing in the country due to the spread of coronavirus, he said.

"Hence, order has been issued to take action against the reporter and anchor of the news as per rules," Deshmukh tweeted late Wednesday night.

Awhad thanked Deshmukh for expressing concern over the news report and asking him to register a case.

"I think instead of vengeance I have decided to not register case against anybody. The channels do their job. Let people decide #ForgiveAndForget, Awhad tweeted.

placed orders to procure 15 million personal protection gear from China for medical personnel treating Covid-19 patients besides three million testing kits. The orders are being placed with bonafide firms with the

help of the Chinese government. I think facilitation of our needs

and our requirements in a timely manner, in a smooth manner, on a

the best signal possible to send for the India-China relationship," Misri said.

Around 20 lakh more COVID-19 kits will be delivered over 15 days. orders for the import of these prod-These include Rapid Antibody Test ucts. kits - a blood-based test that is more

accurate and allows for quicker detection of the novel coronavirus.

PPE kits to Assam, which arrived on Wednesday. Factories in China resumed op-

erations after over a two-month those involved in counterfeit behavgrim battle against the coronavirus. iour. China is busy tapping into the vast

As per a News18 report, as many an Economic Times report.

predictable timeline at prices that business opportunities of export as 50,000 PPE kits from China failed are stable and orderly, would be of key medical goods, especially the Indian quality and safety test. These were from the 170,000 PPE ventilators and personal protection equipment across the world, kits that arrived in India on April 5. including India, where both private Two small consignments with and government bodies are placing 30,000 and 10,000 PPE kits, too, failed tests. Even as local production of PPE kits that help in keeping med-As demand for Chinese medical ical professionals from contracting supplies scaled up due to the spread the disease is picking up, India faces of the virus in several parts of the a shortage of personal protection China has already supplied 50,000 world, China asked all the countries equipment. The kits were tested at to import these items through re- the Defence Research and Developputed Chinese firms cleared by the ment Organisation lab in Gwalior government and vowed to punish and were necessitated as these consignments were donated, an anony-

mous source was quoted as saying in

to "defeat" the pandemic.

He said that the war anced" manner. against COVID-19 has only to be dynamically managed. not a solution to the pan-

be utilised to significantly bolster the existing medical steps to deal with the worrying economic fallout.

way a solution to COVID-19. there is need for devolution It is like a pause button. We of powers to states to help need to ramp up our medical infrastructure, testing facili- the situation. He added that ties...We need to develop an a "blunt instrument" should architecture to deal with the not be used and what is crisis," he said.

'Gandhi Virus going to strategic approach. start its work again once lockdown lifted," Gandhi added.

He also said there is need to use the available resources carefully.

BOTTOM LINE

Waqf boards told to implement strict social distancing during Ramzan

Press Trust Of India

Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on body of state waqf boards in India. Thursday directed state waqf boards to ensure strict implementation health workers, security forces, of lockdown and social distancing administrative officers, sanitation guidelines during the holy month of workers. They are working for our Ramzan starting next week amid the safety and well-being even putting coronavirus pandemic.

At a meeting via video confer- navirus pandemic," Naqvi said. encing, Naqvi asked the state waqf staving inside their homes.

More than seven lakh registered pandemic," the minister said. mosques, eidgahs, imambadas, dar-

institutions come under state waqf boards across the country. The Cen-NEW DELHI: Minority Affairs tral Waqf Council is the regulatory

"We should cooperate with their own lives at risk in this coro-

"We should also demolish ruboards' officials to create awareness mours and misinformation being among people to offer prayers and spread about quarantine and isolaperform other religious rituals like tion centres by creating awareness families and the society from the

Naqvi told all the state waqf gahs and other religious and social boards and religious and social or- for safety and well-being of all citi-



"iftar (breaking of fast)" during Ram- among people that such centres are ganisations that everyone should zens of the country without any diszan, which begins on April 24 or 25, only meant to protect people, their remain cautious of any type of fake crimination. Such type of rumours news and conspiracies aimed at creand conspiracies are a nefarious ating misinformation. design to weaken the fight against

"Authorities have been working coronavirus," he said. ing any type of rumour, misinformation and conspiracy," the minister said.

Naqvi asked officials of all the state waqf boards to play an active people follow the guidelines of the Union Home Ministry, state governments and the Central Waqf Council while fulfilling religious responsibilities during Ramzan.

In view of the challenges of the and social activities and mass gatherings in all the temples, gurdwaras, churches and other religious and social places of the country have been stopped, he said.

Similarly, any mass gatherings in "We should work united to win mosques and other Muslim religious the people, he said

this fight against corona by defeat- places of the country has also been stopped, Naqvi said.

He said that due to the COVID-19 threat, religious leaders as well as religious and social organisations and effective role in ensuring that from all regions of the country, have appealed to people to offer prayers and perform all other religious rituals staying inside their homes during Ramzan.

Most of the Muslim nations of the world have also banned mass gather-COVID-19 pandemic, all religious ings at mosques and other religious places during the holy month, he pointed out.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in cooperation with all the state governments, has been working effectively for the safety and well-being of