



Maximum : 16°C Today 07:05 PM
Minimum : 08°C SUNRISE
Humidity : 72% TOMMOROW 05:55 AM

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STUDY LINKS GENETICS TO CHILDHOOD EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL AND PSYCHIATRIC PROBLEMS

In recent research, scientists have linked the emotional, social and psychiatric problems in children and adolescents with higher levels of genetic vulnerability for adult depression.

.....LIFE & TIMES P5

News Digest

Nursing Home Owner Booked

Srinagar: Police on Saturday filed a case against a private hospital owner for misusing letter pads of a doctor in north Kashmir's Kupwara district.

75-Year-Old Shepherd Slips To Death

Rajouri: A 75-year-old shepherd died on Saturday after he fell into a deep gorge in Darhal area of Rajouri district in Jammu and Kashmir.

Two Mortar Shells Defused In Anantnag

Srinagar: Police on Saturday recovered and defused two mortar shells in Nowgam area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

4 Gamblers Held In Handwara: Police

Srinagar: Police on Saturday claimed to have arrested four gamblers from a village in Handwara Tehsil of north Kashmir's Kupwara district.

Covid Hike and A Hashtag: Inside Bandipora's Viral Campaign

Auqib Javed BANDIPORA: As a strong community Covid-19 combat response, a borough known for its 3As—Alim, Adab, Aab (Knowledge, Culture, Water)—is currently spearheading an intense online campaign to press administration's attention towards the health crisis on the ground.

already claiming five lives in Jammu and Kashmir, the residents of North Kashmir's Bandipora took to social networking sites demanding ventilators.

and 80 Covid-19 positive cases, the Bandipora district has recorded highest number of cases after Srinagar.

attention towards the district. "While whole world is looking for a vaccine for Covid-19, Bandipora residents are still waiting for a ventilators and the hospital," said Mehran Sofi, a young social activist who's leading the campaign.



Pic Manzoor Mir

WE'RE CURRENTLY FOCUSING ON 3 THINGS: TRACING, ISOLATING and Treating," said Dr Nabeel, nodal health officer in Hajin.

Cleric, 7 Others Test Covid-19 Positive In Kashmir; J&K Tally At 341

SRINAGAR: A prayer leader, a father-daughter duo were among eight persons who tested positive for the novel coronavirus on Saturday in Kashmir valley, raising the number of infected people across Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory to 341, officials said.

Division, 13 from Kashmir; Total positive cases now 341 (54 Jammu and 287 Kashmir). Further details in daily media bulletin," government spokesperson Rohit Kansal Tweeted today.

leading district in Covid-19 cases across the Valley. A 38-year-old cleric in the worst affected Gund Jehangir village of the district is among those infected by the dreaded disease.



No new cases from Jammu

HC Directs J&K, Ladakh Courts To Treat Domestic Abuse Cases As Urgent

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir High Court Saturday ordered that all the courts in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh shall treat cases of domestic abuse as urgent and proceed with the matters in accordance with the circulars issued regarding the procedure to be followed to ensure social distancing.

of Chief Justice, Justice Geeta Mittal and Justice Rajesh Oswal today heard the case from their respective residences through video conferencing.

THE COURT DIRECTED THAT a report of the measures in place, steps underway and those contemplated be placed before it before the next date.

CMOs Told To Ensure Analysis Of Covid-19 Patients

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Saturday asked the health department to ensure proper analysis of patients who have tested positive for coronavirus.

Health Worker Injured In Mob Attack

BANDIPORA: A team of Rapid Response Force (medical staff) was attacked by a huge mob on Saturday late evening when they went to take away some suspected cases of the novel coronavirus in Gund-Dechina village of north Kashmir's Bandipora district, an area worst-affected by the deadly virus.

Mushtaq Chaya, Family Put Under Quarantine

SRINAGAR: A day after he was booked for violating lockdown norms, Kashmir's business tycoon and prominent hotelier Mushtaq Chaya and his family on Saturday were placed under home quarantine by the officials here.

17 Lockdown Violators Held In City: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Saturday claimed to have arrested 17 people from city for violating prohibitory orders imposed by the administration to contain spread of coronavirus pandemic.

NC Demands STF To Reach Out To Stranded J&K Residents

JAMMU: The National Conference on Saturday appealed to the administration to evolve a mechanism by forming a special task force.

3 Jammu BJP Leaders Booked For Violation

JAMMU: Three BJP leaders including Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) Deputy Mayor Purnima Sharma and a former MLA were booked on Saturday for allegedly violating

3 CRPF Personnel Killed In Sopore Ambush

SRINAGAR: Three CRPF troopers were killed and two others suffered injuries on Saturday in a surprise militant attack in Sopore town of Baramulla district. Unknown militants opened indiscriminate fire upon a joint patrolling team of CRPF and police near a crossing in Noorbagh area of the Sopore town around 5:25 this evening, police sources said.

Sopore for treatment. However, the doctors declared two of the troopers dead on arrival. Another succumbed to injuries before the doctors could operate him, sources said.

HOWEVER, THE DOCTORS DECLARED two of the troopers dead on arrival. Another succumbed to injuries before the doctors could operate him, sources said

Soldier Slips To Death In Uri

SRINAGAR: An army man died on Saturday after slipping from a mountain the border town of Uri in Baramulla district, reports said.

India, Pak Troops Trade Fire In Poonch

JAMMU: India and Pakistan troops Saturday exchanged heavy gunfire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Parents of Iran Evacuated Students Detained At City Centre



File Photo Of Kashmiri Students at Jaisal Mer

SRINAGAR: Police on Saturday took several parents into 'preventive custody' in Srinagar after they tried to start journey towards Rajasthan where their kids have been stuck in

No Decision On Starting Domestic, Int'l Flights Yet: Govt

NEW DELHI: Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday said airlines are advised to open bookings only after the government takes a decision on starting domestic and international commercial passenger flight services.



Earlier in the day, Air India said it has opened bookings on select domestic flights from May 4 and on select international flights from June 1.

Fake Application Form: Police Seeks Google Help To Identify Miscreants

SRINAGAR: A fake online application form seeking personal details from stranded Kashmiris has prompted the cyber wing of Jammu and Kashmir police to file a criminal case and seek help from Google India to identify the miscreants.

that the form had not been uploaded by the government. "An FIR in this fake online application form was registered yesterday and we have approached Google India to find out the details of those behind such a mischief which has added to the worries and concerns of the public which is already battling the pandemic," wire agency IANS quoted a senior police officer as saying

9 Covid-19 Patients Recovered, Discharged From Srinagar Hospitals

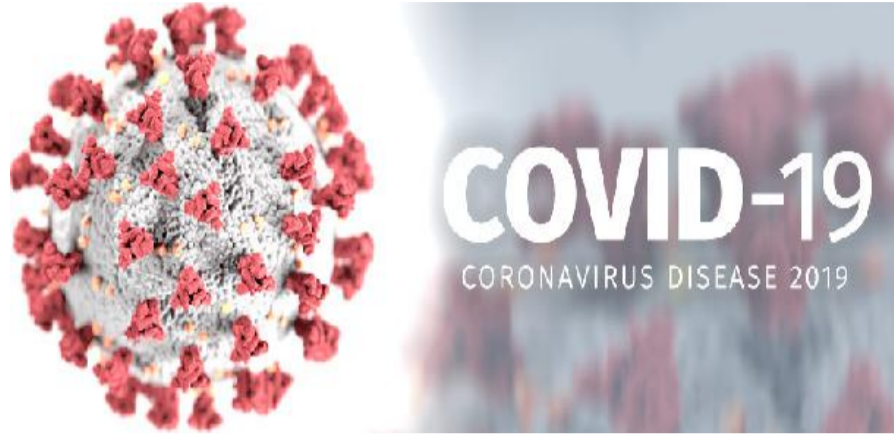
SRINAGAR: Nine persons, who were hospitalized, after testing positive for Coronavirus last month, were discharged from the 2 Srinagar hospitals today, after repeatedly testing negative for the infection, they had contracted.

Nodal Officer for Coronavirus at SKIMS Soura, Dr Ghulam Hasan Itoo told KNT that 4 patients were discharged from the hospital after their recovery from lethal Covid-19 infection. He added that three patients hail from Srinagar while one is residing in Central Kashmir's Budgam district.

Head of Department Chest Disease Hospital Srinagar, Dr Naveed Nazir said that five patients were also discharged from the hospital. "Five more patients recovered from Covid-19 and were discharged," he said.

Dr Naveed added that among the five patients who were discharged from the hospital, 3 are from Budgam and 2 are from Srinagar.

The total number of positive Covid-19 cases in Jammu and Kashmir stand at 324, with 54 reported from the Jammu region while 282 are from Kashmir.



CROSS BORDER SHELLING: Army Chief provides Rs 1 lakh each to three Kupwara victim families

KUPWARA: Army provided monetary help to those families who lost their members in recent cross border shelling at Tamuna area of North Kashmir's Kupwara district.

Defence sources said that Indian Army Chief General MM Naravane who visited Kupwara yesterday distributed cash among the families of the victims.

Three civilians including a child and woman were killed while residential houses were damaged in massive cross border shelling in Kupwara area along Line of Control.

Sources added that at Zangli Army Camp, Chief Of Army Staff General M M Naravane and General Officer Commanding 28 Mountain Division Major General ADS Aujala provided financial assistance of Rs one lakh each to families of those who lost their lives at Tumina and Reddi Chowkibal during cross border shelling on April 12.

The families received cash through Commanding Officer 14 Sikhli Regiment.

HCOVID-19 PANDEMIC JKEDA handover sanitizers, masks to Div Com for quarantine patients

SRINAGAR: A delegation of Jammu & Kashmir Chemists & Druggists Association and FMCG & Cellular Association handover 15 cases of 500ml high concentration sanitizer, one thousand 3 layer face masks, set-top sanitizer 960 units and set-top hand wash 10 cases to the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir Pandurang K Pole for free distribution among needy quarantine patients.

Delegation appreciated serious efforts of Divisional Commissioner for tackling the Corona virus across the valley and pledged their full support to the Divisional Administration in current situation.

The delegation apprised the certain issues to the Divisional Commissioner. The Divisional Commissioner assured the representatives of the delegation that their grievances and demands will be looked into and resolved soon.

Representatives of Jammu Kashmir Chemists & Druggists Association, FMCG & Cellular Association, All traders & Transporters Joint Coordination Committee (ATTJCC), Genuine Kashmir Cottage Handicrafts Protection Forum (related to Pashmina & Handicrafts), Batamalloo Traders Association, Abrar Ahmad Khan, Co-Convenor Jammu Kashmir Economic Confederation (J&K), and Rehabilitation Alliance Kashmir were present on the occasion.



Dy Mayor monitors sanitization works at Rainawari

SRINAGAR: Deputy Mayor, Parvaiz Ahmad Qadri, today visited Rainawari and its adjacent area to monitor the sanitization works carried by Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) to contain the transmission of Corona virus.

He was accompanied by Health Officer, SMC, Dr Qazi Javaid, Corporator, Kathi Darwaza, Syed Mohammad Hussaini and other officers of SMC. On the occasion, a team of field functionaries of Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) equipped with protective gear and special-



ized machines sanitized various institutes in Rainawari including Psychiatric hospital, Central Jail, Police Station, Banks and ATMs. Besides, mixture of chemicals was sprayed in lanes and bye lanes of Hassanabad, Saida Kadal, Makhdoom Sa-

Doctor accuses Nursing Home owner of 'fraud'

Agencies

HANDWARA: Police registered a formal case after a doctor in North Kashmir's Handwara town filed a police complaint against the owner of a Nursing Home for allegedly using his name and prescriptions to mint money from the naïve patients while he was outside Jammu and Kashmir.

Dr Shafiq was doing private practice at a Nursing Home in Handwara till 2018 and after that he left for Mumbai. "The patients who don't know me used to come in the Nursing Home and ironically the owner of the Nursing Home was masquerading as Dr Shafiq, prescribing medicines to



them on my behalf and thus was befooling them," he told KNT.

He said all these months the owner of the Nursing Home befooled people and minted money from them. "When I came to know about this shoddy practice, I returned to Valley and interacted with those patients who have been looted by the Nursing Home owner," he said adding that strict action needs to be taken against the culprit.

"I have proof to prove my claim and I won't spare people who play with the lives of people for sake of money," he said. Dr Shafiq said that he lodged a complaint at Police Station Handwara but so far no FIR has been lodged against the accused.

When contacted, SP Handwara said that an FIR vide number 124/2020 under section 420, 468 have been registered against the accused after the doctor filed a complaint.

Director Animal Husbandry launches Tele-medicine facilities for livestock

SRINAGAR: Director, Animal Husbandry Department, Purnima Mittal, today launched the Tele-medicine facilities for livestock farmers and animal owners of the valley so that animal health and productivity doesn't suffer as a result of lockdown and social distancing measures in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking on the occasion, she reiterated that while agriculture is the backbone of the rural economy of J&K, livestock sector contributes

over 35% to agricultural GDP, thus is the single largest contributor among all agricultural sectors.

She said that the livestock farming is the industry that works 24 hours a day and 365 days a year and hence it becomes imperative that in these extraordinary times of public-health & economic exigency unprecious livestock wealth is preserved and cared for. She expressed confidence that livestock sector would emerge more strongly as and-

when we win the battle against the ongoing pandemic. She urged the people to continue consumption of highly nutritive livestock products and assured that no incidence of transmission of COVID-19 from livestock has been reported from any place in the world.

She also implored upon people conducting sale and marketing of livestock goods to ensure they carry their operation while following social distancing norms.

PIL in High Court about lack of facilities in Kupwara to fight COVID-19

Agencies

HANDWARA: Jammu and Kashmir High Court has sought status report from the government of Jammu and Kashmir after a PIL was filed about the lack of facilities including non-availability of life saving drugs, ventilators and other facilities in Kupwara district to fight Covid-19 pandemic.

Division Bench of High Court comprising of Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice Rajnesh Oswal, while hearing an intervention application regarding COVID-19 control measures in district Kupwara sought status report from the government.

COVID-19

Multi-pronged strategy to Contain COVID-19 in Kupwara People across District hail efforts of Administration

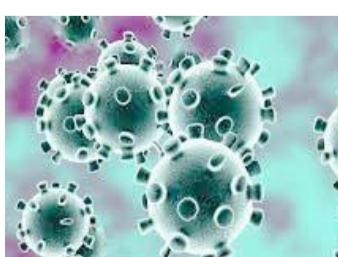
KUPWARA: District Administration, Kupwara headed by Deputy Commissioner, Anshul Garg, has adopted multi-pronged strategy to contain spread of COVID-19 in the district. The lockdown which was imposed on March 22, 2020, is strictly being implemented across the district and till date 85 FIRs have been lodged against those who violated prohibitory orders.

Besides, various shops were also sealed in different areas, for violating the prohibitory orders. The people were made aware about the advisories issued by Government from time to time regarding precautionary

measures and social distancing. The awareness was generated through different mediums of communication including announcement on loud speakers in rural as well as urban areas of the district by concerned departments in coordination with Information Department, Kupwara.

On the other hand, District Administration made all possible efforts to facilitate the people in general and the needy in particular.

PDS Ration has been distributed in advance to all households for April and May. Besides, 90,000 home deliveries of gro-



ceries, LPG and medicines have been completed in the district, till date.

As many as 1571 migrant labourers from other states stranded in the district are being facilitated at 31 locations with dry ration and other essential

commodities through the designated Nodal Officer. Besides, 75000 reusable cotton masks have been produced locally through Self Help Groups and Skill Development Centres and distributed among the people.

The population of 38870 souls, living in 7 Red Zones of the district are being provided ration and groceries, twice a week, on Saturday and Sunday while LPG on every Wednesday and Mobile ATM facility every day. The fumigation and sanitization is a continuous affair and is being carried on daily basis while masks have been provided to all

inhabitants in these red zones.

To facilitate the frontline warriors including doctors and nurses, District Administration has provided proper accommodation to medical staff for which 7 Guest Houses and 2 Hotels have been put at the disposal of Chief Medical Officer.

Social activist and Sarpanch, Haril Langate, Rayees Ahmad Mir, has appreciated the Deputy Commissioner for his gesture toward the frontline warriors and the residents of Mawer Block have also lauded the District Administration for ensuring essential supplies in the area, during these trying times.

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
- BUBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

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



This Day in History

- 607 - Comet IP/607 HI (Halley) approaches within 0.0898 AUs of Earth
- 1012 - Martyrdom of Alphege in Greenwich, London.
- 1451 - Alam Shah of Delhi resigns throne
- 1524 - Pope Clemens VII fires Neth Inquisitor-general French Van de Holly
- 1529 - 2nd Parliament of Spiers bans Lutheranism
- 1539 - Charles, protestant German monarch, signs Treaty of Frankfurt
- 1591 - Chartres surrenders to king Henry IV in France
- 1713 - Emperor Karel VI ends Pragmatic Sanctions
- 1770 - Amsterdam buys Van Aerssens family 1/3 part of Suriname
- 1770 - British explorer Captain James Cook first sights Australia
- 1775 - Minutemen Capt John Parker orders not to fire unless fired upon
- 1775 - American Revolution begins - Lexington Common, shot "heard round the world"
- 1775 - New England militiamen begin the siege of Boston, hemming in the British army garrison
- 1775 - Paul Revere, William Dawes and Samuel Prescott are captured by British troops riding from Lexington to Concord, Prescott escapes to warn Concord
- 1782 - John Adams secures Dutch Republic's recognition of the United States as an independent government and house he purchased in The Hague, Netherlands became first American embassy.
- 1810 - Venezuela achieves home rule: Vicente Emparan, Governor of the Captaincy General is removed by the people of Caracas and a Junta is installed.
- 1836 Nikolai Gogol's "Revisor" premieres in St Petersburg
- 1837 Cheyney University forms as the Institute for Colored Youth
- 1839 - Treaty of London constitutes Belgium an independent kingdom & Luxembourg a Grand Duchy
- 1861 - Lincoln orders blockade of Confederate ports (Civil War)
- 1863 - Union troops/fleet occupy For Huger, Virginia
- 1901 - In the Philippines, recently captured insurgent leader Emilio Aguinaldo issues a proclamation advising his countrymen to end their rebellion and use of peaceful means to work with the US toward independence.
- 1909 - A convention with Turkey recognizes Bulgarian independence
- 1910 - Halley's comet seen by naked eye 1st time this trip (Curacao)
- 1911 - George Bernard Shaw's "Fanny's First Play" premieres in London
- 1916 - Italians troops conquer Col di Lana at Merano
- 1923 - New Egyptian law allows suffrage for men, except soldiers
- 1936 - First day of the Great Uprising in Palestine.
- 1941 - Bulgarian troops invade Macedonia
- 1944 - Allied fleet attack Sabang Sumatra
- 1945 - The diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Guatemala are established.
- 1947 - French ship explodes in Texas City harbor, kills about 522
- 1948 - Chiang Kai-shek elected President of Nationalist China
- 1962 - NASA civilian pilot Joseph A Walker takes X-15 to 46,900m
- 1971 - Sierra Leone becomes a republic (National Day)
- 1971 - USSR Salyut 1 launched; 1st manned lab in orbit

PRAYERS

- FAJR 4:27
- ZUHR 12:32
- ASR 5:12
- MAGRIB 7:08
- ISHA 8:34

From KO Archives

3 LeT men Among 7 Killed In JK

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Seven persons, including six militants – three of them from the Lashkar-e-Taiba – were killed in separate incidents of violence in Jammu and Kashmir since Monday evening.

Unidentified gunmen sprayed bullets on a released militant of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) Abdul Ahad Chak at Tangmarg Bazar. 45 kms from here in Baramulla district today. Chak, a resident of Qazpora and now working as a contractor, was shifted to hospital where he was declared dead. Three militants of the LeT outfit identified as. Abu Abdullah Umar alias Delta-2, Abu Katlal alias Ronico-2 and Abu Jabran alias Juliet-1 were killed in an encounter with security forces and police at Naliyan-Shiudhara top in Poonch sector last evening. Three AK rifles, 9 magazines, 78 rounds, 3 hand grenades, a wireless set, a recovered from the slain militants. .

Another militant, yet to be identified, was shot dead by security forces in a gunfight at Hari Wala in Gool area of Duhampur, reports said.

Two Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militants identified as Waqqas Ahmad of Pakistan and Javaid Ahmad Peer of Kandi area of Kupwara were killed in a gunbattle with security forces at village Dardpora Khas in Kupwara district.

A defence spokesman said that Javaid Ahmad Peer was a divisional commander of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and was long wanted by the security forces.

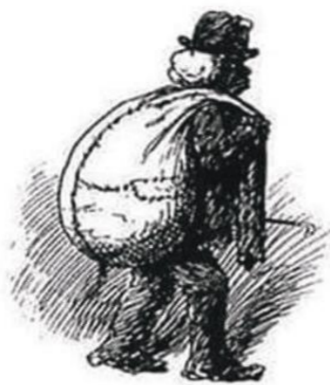
Militants fired on a patrol part of security forces at Preng-Ganderbal. 27 kms from here in Srinagar last night. The security forces returned fire but no loss of life was reported.

(Kashmir Observer, 19 April, 2005)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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NO HOLDS BARRED



POOR



RICH

“We know at the back of our minds that there is a solution for us. All we have to do is empty our bookshelves in one shot, donate everything to a nearby library — and then draw on it when we feel we must go over The Collected Works of Somerset Maugham or Oscar Wilde or Jane Austen at sometime in the future.”

Why continued detention shores up Mehbooba's political standing relative to Abdullahs

RIYAZ WANI

“But as of now, it is unclear if the Centre will at all release Mehbooba in the near future. More so, when she remains committed to take on New Delhi on Article 370, as the tweets of her daughter imply. So far, the leaders who have been released are understood to have signed a bond of silence with the government. Though no one has officially confirmed the existence of such a bond, the behaviour of the freed leaders has lent credence to such reports.”

On April 4, J&K administration shifted the detained former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti to her official residence on Gupkar road, Srinagar's VVIP enclave. However, unlike Abdullahs, the administration stayed short of releasing her, converting instead her residence into a subsidiary jail. And the apparent reason for it, according to the daughter Iltija Mufti was the Centre's fear that “she'll articulate her views on illegal abrogation of Article 370”.

But Iltija made it clear that her mother would not shy away from opposing the revocation of Article 370 as and when she was freed. She also tweeted that Mehbooba after her release would “approach all stakeholders for a joint strategy to move forward”.

But as of now, it is unclear if the Centre will at all release Mehbooba in the near future. More so, when she remains committed to take on New Delhi on Article 370, as the tweets of her daughter imply. So far, the leaders who have been released are understood to have signed a bond of silence with the government. Though no one has officially confirmed the existence of such a bond, the behaviour of the freed leaders has lent credence to such reports. None of them has publicly spoken against the withdrawal of J&K autonomy including even Abdullahs, who have cited continuing detention of other senior leaders as also the Covid-19 outbreak for choosing to defer airing their opinion.

But in Kashmir the rationale for Abdullahs' silence has increasingly lost its resonance. More so, after the Centre issued a new domicile law for the union territory that has virtually thrown the region open for settlement by non-Kashmiris. The reaction from Omar is seen as mild compared to the enormity of the onslaught.

It is here that people have started looking towards Mehbooba as someone who can stand up to centre. And Iltija's tweets on her behalf that reflect the resolve to confront New Delhi have raised Mehbooba's political stock, even when she continues to be under detention. And this is such a redeeming turnaround for her considering that for several years before nullification of Article 370 on August 5, she had become arguably the most hated politician in Kashmir. The reason for this is the 2016 unrest that led to killing of around 100 youth and blinding of several hundred, most of them in South Kashmir, a stronghold of Mehbooba's party, the PDP. Subsequently, her unpopular government with the BJP further eroded her support base. So much so, when the BJP withdrew its support to her government in June 2018 forcing her to resign, Kashmir was ecstatic with joy. Across the social media, Mehbooba losing power turned out to be a venting session for the accumulated mass contempt for her. Scores of memes, that started doing the rounds captured the catharsis in the Valley.



One such meme went like this: “Mehbooba detergent: pehle Istimal karein, phir vishwas naa karein (first use and then don't even trust,” a variation on a famous jingle about a detergent.

This was one of the lowest points in her career. More so, when until her alliance with the BJP, Mehbooba had incarnated a leader who could command a degree of credibility hardly enjoyed by any other establishment leader in Kashmir, including Abdullahs.

Despite being the daughter of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, a former J&K Chief Minister and India's Home Minister, Mehbooba didn't receive power on a platter. She had to work her way from the ground up. And she did this by refusing to stay at an antiseptic distance from the people, a cardinal safety principle followed by the mainstream politicians since the outbreak of separatist insurgency in 1989. She got down and dirty on the ground, leading rallies and protests. She mourned the death of militants, for which sometimes she travelled deep into the treacherous interiors to visit the families. She would lead impassioned protests against human rights abuse, deliver hysterical speeches in which she lashed out at the state and the centre for the human rights abuse in Kashmir. And then it all unravelled in 2016 unrest.

But eight months of imprisonment seem to have helped Mehbooba get back into public favour. But, as of now, public rethink about her remains incipient and tentative. It is largely driven by an imagined ex-

pectation that once freed she will not only articulate the grievances in Kashmir but also take on Centre over the August 5 decision. Reinforcing this expectation is that Mehbooba has done this in the past. In the run up to revocation of Article 370, she had often warned the Centre against the move. One of her tweets during that time went like this: “We want to tell the central government that tinkering with Article 35-A will be akin to setting a powder keg on fire. If any hand tries to touch Article 35-A, not only that hand, but that whole body will burn to ashes.”

This tweet was cited as one of the grounds of Mehbooba's detention under Public Safety Act in the six page dossier prepared by Home Ministry. The PSA was slapped against her along with Omar but in latter's case, it has now been withdrawn. For now, Mehbooba's detention has shored up her political standing. But if she does make scrapping of Article 370 an issue following her release, and offers people a plan to resist it, it will once again give her a distinct edge over Abdullahs.

Doing so, however, won't be without its risks. She could end up going back to jail considering the Centre over the past eight months has shown itself averse to expression of even a peaceful democratic dissent in Kashmir. There is thus a severely restricted space for any political activity in the union territory, as Abdullahs' silence has underlined. Will Mehbooba, as and when she is released, unseal her lips? Well, the future of her politics will depend on what choice she makes.

Do We Actually Re-Read Books?

We are still here with our overflowing bookshelves, still debating with ourselves

CHERYL RAO

Have you noticed how you find something different to think about each time you re-read a book? You think that you know the plot well enough but suddenly, out of the blue, something else will strike you, depending on what is happening in your own life at the time.

Keeping this in mind, it has become a difficult task to divest our home of the books we have collected over the decades.

Now libraries, book clubs and everywhere we could go for our “reading fix” are shut to us and we are actually re-reading our books

Most of them have found their way onto our shelves from pavement sellers and friends, or friends of friends who sought to streamline their possessions while we could not resist their offers despite having read most of their books already.

Pass-it-on policy

We assured ourselves — and them — that we would follow a “Pass-it-on” policy to spread the joy of books once we had re-read them but we did not get down to that because fortunately for us and unfortunately for our good intentions, we are members of a well-stocked and frequently updated library from which we can bring home eight books at a time.

Our cup runs over — and so do our book cupboards — and we sigh helplessly as we push at the doors of those cupboards and fix locks to prevent the contents from spilling out.

“Will we ever re-read these books?” we ask ourselves. “Or are we just being greedy/acquisitive/clingy?”



We know at the back of our minds that there is a solution for us. All we have to do is empty our bookshelves in one shot, donate everything to a nearby library — and then draw on it when we feel we must go over The Collected Works of Somerset Maugham or Oscar Wilde or Jane Austen at sometime in the future.

Or we could go about reducing the clutter in our

home book by book, visiting book clubs and reading centres where we can walk in with a book that has been read and enjoyed by us and walk out with a completely different book, read and enjoyed by someone else!

Picking and choosing books

These book exchange centres have sprung up

in various cities, including ours, and we note down numbers and addresses and timings but although we make several false starts, picking and choosing books that we don't mind not seeing or reading again, we do not take that final step and actually go to those centres to take our chances.

We make excuses to ourselves: “We would like our grandchildren to one day have the wealth of choice that we never did when we were young.”

“Imagine being able to open these cupboards and help themselves — we didn't have that option when we were youngsters, did we? We had to steal into Dad's library and pilfer books and hope he didn't notice, or read them under his table or behind the curtain!”

But those grandchildren we are saving our books for are nonexistent at present, so why do we continue to guard those bookshelves in anticipation of their imagined interest?

Call it greed or avarice, call it foolishness or inertia, call it sheer selfishness and an inability to let go — and you will be right with every one of those descriptions.

Because we are still here with our overflowing bookshelves, still debating with ourselves, still reluctant to part with our books.

Then, while we delayed in the hope (or was it dread?) that someone else would heartlessly sweep everything away while we are asleep because we could not get ourselves to do it, the lockdown happened.

Now libraries, book clubs and everywhere we could go for our “reading fix” are shut to us and we are actually re-reading our books, lingering over them, appreciating once again why we liked them in the first place, discovering new facets to delight in, enjoying them anew.

Gulf News

Coronavirus Could Erode Global Fight Against Other Diseases

Lavina D'Souza hasn't been able to collect her government supplied anti-HIV medication since the abrupt lockdown of India's 1.3 billion people last month during the coronavirus outbreak.

Marooned in a small city away from her home in Mumbai, the medicine she needs to manage her disease has run out. The 43-year-old is afraid that her immune system will crash: "Any disease, the coronavirus or something else, I'll fall sick faster."

D'Souza said others also must be "suffering because of the coronavirus without getting infected by it".

As the world focuses on the coronavirus pandemic, experts fear losing ground in the long fight against other infectious diseases like AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and cholera

pleted, said Dr John Nkengasong, head of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

That is compounded in countries with already overburdened health care systems, like Sudan. Doctors at Al-Ribat National Hospital in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, shared a document detailing nationwide measures: fewer patients admitted to emergency rooms, elective surgeries indefinitely postponed, primary care eliminated for non-critical cases, and skilled doctors transferred to Covid-19 patients.

Similar scenes are unfolding worldwide. Even in countries with highly developed health care systems, such as South Korea, patients seeking treatment for diseases like TB had to be turned away, said Hojoon Sohn, of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of



Worldwide Death Toll From Coronavirus Pandemic Rises To 154,188

Agencies

Paris: The worldwide death toll from the novel coronavirus pandemic rose to 154,188 on Saturday, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

More than 2,251,690 declared cases have been registered in 193 countries and territories since the epidemic first emerged in China in December.

Of these cases, at least 497,600 are now considered recovered. The tallies, using data collected by AFP from national authorities and information from the World Health

Organisation (WHO), probably reflect only a fraction of the actual number of infections.

Many countries are testing only the most serious cases.

In the United States, now the epicentre of the pandemic, the death toll stood at 37,079 with 706,779 infections. At least 59,672 patients have recovered.

Italy is the next most-affected country with 22,745 deaths and 172,434 confirmed infections.

It is followed by Spain with 20,043 fatalities and 191,726 confirmed infections, France with 18,681 deaths and 147,969 infections and

Britain with 14,576 deaths and 108,692 cases.

China—excluding Hong Kong and Macau—has to date declared 4,632 deaths and 82,719 cases.

Europe has listed 1,115,555 cases and 97,985 deaths to date, the US and Canada together have 738,706 cases with 38,445 deaths, Asia 158,764 cases with 6,837 deaths, the Middle East 119,462 cases with 5,452 deaths, Latin America and the Caribbean 91,699 cases with 4,367 deaths, Africa 19,674 cases with 1,016 deaths and Oceania 7,835 cases with 86 deaths. — AFP

Looking Into Reports That Coronavirus 'Escaped' From China's Wuhan Lab: Trump

Agencies

Washington: The US is looking into reports that the novel coronavirus, which has killed more than 150,000 people globally, "escaped" from a virology laboratory in China's Wuhan city, President Donald Trump has said.

The US has been conducting a full-scale investigation into whether the deadly virus "escaped" from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, Fox News said in an exclusive report, adding that intelligence operatives were reportedly gathering information about the laboratory and the initial outbreak of the pathogen.

"We're looking at it; a lot of people are looking at it. It seems to make sense," Trump told reporters at a White House news conference on Friday when asked if there was an investigation into whether the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) escaped from a lab in Wuhan, China.

"They talk about a certain kind of bat, but that bat wasn't in that area if you can believe this," he claimed. "That bat wasn't sold at that wet zone.... That bat is 40 miles away."

Intelligence analysts are piecing together a timeline of what the government knew and "creating an accurate picture of what happened", the news channel quoted sources as saying.

"A lot of strange things are happening, but there is a lot of investigation going on and we are going to find out," Trump said. "All I can say is wherever it came from, came from China in whatever form, 184 countries now are suffering because of it."

Trump added that the US would end its grant to a level-IV lab in Wuhan. "(The) Obama administration gave them a grant of USD 3.7 million," the president said. "We will end that grant very quickly." A group of more than half-a-dozen lawmakers sent a letter to House and Senate leadership, requesting them to ensure that no future coronavirus relief funds be appropriated to the Wuhan Institute of Virology.



that kill millions every year. Also at risk are decades long efforts that allowed the World Health Organisation to set target dates for eradicating malaria, polio and other illnesses.

With the coronavirus overwhelming hospitals, redirecting medical staff, causing supply shortages and suspending health services, "our greatest fear" is resources for other diseases being diverted and de-

Public Health, who is based in South Korea.

About 30 per cent of global TB cases — out of 10 million each year — are never diagnosed, and the gaps in care are concentrated in 10 countries with the most infections, Sohn said.

"These are people likely not seeking care even in normal circumstances," he said.

40,000 could die in UK as govt was too slow to act, says expert

Agencies

LONDON: The British government was too slow to react on a number of fronts to the novel coronavirus outbreak that could cause the deaths of 40,000 people in the United Kingdom, a leading public health professor told lawmakers on Friday.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson initially refrained from approving the stringent controls that other European leaders imposed but then closed down the country when projections showed a quarter of a million people could die in the United Kingdom.

So far, more than 14,576 people with Covid-19 have died in British hospitals, though new official data indicates the true death toll could be much larger. "Where were the system errors that led us to have probably the highest death rates in Europe?" Anthony Costello, professor of International Child Health and Director of the UCL Institute for Global Health, told the Health and Social Care Committee.

"We have to face the reality of that: We were too slow with a number of things," Costello told the committee. "We could see 40,000 deaths by

the time it's over." Costello, a paediatrician who is an expert in epidemiology, said the government should make sure its response to the second and additional waves of infection was not too slow.

The United Kingdom has the fifth highest official death toll from Covid-19 in the world, after the United States, Italy, Spain and France, though the figure only covers hospital fatalities and the real number is probably much higher.

ministers have defended their response to the outbreak, saying they fol-

lowed scientific advice and have responded with urgency in what amounts to a war-like situation.

Costello said the United Kingdom needed widespread testing and the right systems in place to deal with further flare-ups of the outbreak.

"The recent estimates, even from the chief scientific officer, is that after this wave - we could see 40,000 deaths by the time it's over - we could only have maybe 10 percent, 15pc of the population infected or covered," he said.

"So the idea of herd immunity would mean another five, six waves maybe in order to get to 60pc," he said. "We have got to pray the vaccinologists come up."

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said mass community testing was part of the British strategy, though the government has yet to find an antibody test that is accurate enough to be used. "It is part of the strategy, we will be introducing it when we can," Hancock told the committee.

Dubai extends 24-hour curfew by one week

Agencies

DUBAI: Dubai, the United Arab Emirates' business hub, has extended by one week a 24-hour curfew imposed as part of a sterilisation drive to control the spread of the new coronavirus, the government's media office said in a Twitter post on Friday.

The UAE has imposed a nationwide nightly curfew since March 26 for the disinfection campaign, but Dubai on April 4 expanded it within the emirate to a 24-hour lockdown for two weeks.

The UAE on Thursday reported 460 new cases and two more deaths from the virus, taking its tally to 5,825 with 35 deaths. It does not give a breakdown for each of the seven emirates.

It has the second-highest infection count after its much larger neighbour Saudi Arabia among the six Gulf Arab states, where the total infection count has surpassed 22,000 with more than 140 deaths.



NEWS MAKERS

Astronauts land back on Earth transformed by pandemic

ALMATY: Two Nasa astronauts and a Russian cosmonaut on Friday made a safe return from the International Space Station to find the planet transformed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Andrew Morgan, Jessica Meir and Oleg Skripochka touched down in central Kazakhstan in the first returning mission since the World Health Organisation declared Covid-19 a global pandemic in March.

Morgan had been on the ISS since July last year, while Meir and Skripochka arrived in September.

"TOUCHDOWN! Welcome home, Oleg Skripochka, Andrew Morgan and Jessica Meir!" Russia's Roscosmos space agency wrote on Twitter.

Unusually, Nasa and Roscosmos did not show live footage of the trio parachuting down in their



Soyuz landing capsule.

This was scrapped "due to technical limitations associated with the epidemiological situation," Roscosmos said.

Subsequent footage from the landing site showed recovery crews wearing face masks and rubber gloves as they hauled the crew members out of the Soyuz MS-15 capsule, which was lying on its side.

"Please keep your distance,"

one ground crew member could be heard telling another.

While the trio's landing site southeast of the Kazakh town of Dzhezkazgan is the same as for previous crews, the pandemic has forced changes to mission-end protocol.

The crew will not be flying back home via Kazakhstan's Karaganda airport as usual because it has been shut down, like so many other airports across the world.

Google To Waive Ad Fees As Part Of Journalism Relief Effort

Agencies

WASHINGTON: Google said on Friday it would waive fees for publishers using its Ad Manager platform for the next five months as part of its efforts to support news organisations reeling from the coro-

navirus pandemic. alongside news coverage help fund the journalists who write breaking news stories, and keep news sites and apps running." Washing said ad serving fees for qualifying news publishers globally would be waived for the next five months.

Google's Ad Manager is an



navirus pandemic.

The move comes in addition to Google's "journalism relief fund" announced this week, which will include emergency grants to news outlets.

Jason Washing, head of global news partnerships at Google, said details would be announced in the coming days and disclosed to news outlets that meet certain requirements.

"During times of global crisis, people rely on quality journalism to stay informed and safe," Washing said in a blog post.

"And the ads that appear

automated platform which may be used by news outlets for marketing messages on websites.

The move by Google comes with news organisations getting hammered by a weak economy and downturn in advertising even as they ramp up coverage of the global health crisis.

Google said this week it would offer grants as part of its relief efforts ranging from the "low thousands of dollars" for the smallest operations to "low tens of thousands for larger newsrooms."

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER I&FC DIVISION SUMBAL e-TENDER NOTICE No01of2020

For and on-behalf of the Lt. Governor, Union Territory of J&K State, e-tenders on item rate basis are invited from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K State Government for following work

S.No	Name of work	Adv.Amt (in lacs)	Amt.of C.D.R	Class of Contract	Time of compl.	e-challan	Head of accounts	Tender receiving / Opening authority
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
01	Dumping of sand filled bags at various spots on RP bund of River Jehlum to be required during floods in future from Asham to Banyari Bakshibal Hajin	2.33	4660.00	DEE	10 Days	230.00	Capex	Ex-Engr.I&FC Divn.Sumbal
02	Dumping of sand filled bags at various spots on LP bund of River Jehlum to be required during floods in future from Asham to Banyari Bakshibal Hajin	2.33	4660.00	DEE	10 Days	230.00	Capex	
03	Dumping of sand filled bags at various spots on RP bund of River Jehlum to be required during floods in future from Panzinaro to Asham	2.35	2350.00	S.H.G	10 Days	230.00	Capex	
04	Dumping of sand filled bags at various spots on LP bund of River Jehlum to be required during floods in future from Dangerpora to Asham	2.35	4700.00	DEE	10 Days	230.00	Capex	

Position of Funds :- Assured

Position of AAA :- Accorded

I	Publishing date of tender notice	17/04/2020
ii	Bid downloading date	17/04/2020
lii	Bid submission start date	17/04/2020
lv	Bid submission End date	27/04/2020 (4.00PM)
v	Date of opening of Tenders	28/04/2020 (2:00PM)

01. The NIT consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specification, Bill of Quantities (B.O.Q) set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the Department website www.jktenders.gov.in

02. The tenders shall be deposited in electronic format on the developmental website www.jktenders.gov.in

03. The complete bidding process will be online.

Sd/-

NO:/FCDS/CC/87-90
Dated : 16/04/2020

DIPK-210/20

Executive Engineer
I&FC Division Sumbal



Study Links Genetics To Childhood Emotional, Social And Psychiatric Problems

Agencies

Washington DC- In recent research, scientists have linked the emotional, social and psychiatric problems in children and adolescents with higher levels of genetic vulnerability for adult depression. The study implies that the genetics passed from parents may be linked with psychiatric problems in children and adolescents and may also leading to depression in adults.

University of Queensland scientists made the finding while analysing the genetic data of more than 42,000 children and adolescents from seven cohorts across Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK.

Professor Christel Middeldorp said that researchers have also found a link with a higher genetic vulner-

ability for insomnia, neuroticism and body mass index.

"By contrast, study participants with higher genetic scores for educational attainment and emotional well-being were found to have reduced childhood problems," Professor Middeldorp said.

"We calculated a person's level of genetic vulnerability by adding up the number of risk genes they had for a specific disorder or trait and then made adjustments based on the level of importance of each gene. We found the relationship was mostly similar across ages," Middeldorp added.

The results indicate there are shared genetic factors that affect a range of psychiatric and related traits across a person's lifespan.

Middeldorp said that around 50 per cent of children and adolescents with psychiatric problems, such as attention defi-

cit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), continue to experience mental disorders as adults, and are at risk of disengaging with their school community among other social and emotional problems.

"Our findings are important as they suggest this continuity between childhood and adult traits is partly explained by genetic risk," the Professor said.

"Individuals at risk of being affected should be the focus of attention and targeted treatment," Middeldorp continued.

"Although the genetic vulnerability is not accurate enough at this stage to make individual predictions about how a person's symptoms will develop over time, it may become so in the future, in combination with other risk factors. And, this may support precision medicine by providing targeted treatments to children at the highest risk of persistent emotional and social problems," Middeldorp added.

SCHOLARSHIPS THIS WEEK

Kashmir Observer in association with Buddy4Study.com presents scholarships available for the meritorious students of Jammu and Kashmir

Scholarship Name 1: NIT Warangal Junior Research Fellowship 2020

Description:
National Institute of Technology (NIT) Warangal in collaboration with Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), Government of India has offered this scholarship for the BE/BTech and ME/MTech students. The fellowship is applicable for a sponsored research project titled - 'Non-destructive damage detection and damage quantification on composite (HAP) panels'.

Eligibility:
Indian BE/BTech and ME/MTech students with 60% aggregate or 6.5 CGPA on a 10 point scale can apply for this scholarship. ME/MTech degree holders in specializations of Structural Engineering or Applied Mechanics or allied specializations from a recognised university/institution are also eligible. Applicants should be under the age of 32 years.

Prizes & Rewards:
Selected students will get a monthly allowance of INR 31,000 for the first 2 years and other benefits.

Last Date to Apply: 23-04-2020
Application mode: Apply online
Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/NWJ3

Scholarship Name 2: SwarnaJayanti Fellowships Scheme 2019-20

Description:
The Department of Science & Technology, Government of India has announced this fellowship for the Indian scientists with a PhD degree in Science/Engineering/Medicine. The duration of the fellowship along with the project will be for a period of five years.

Eligibility:
Indian national having a regular position in a recognized Indian academic/research organization between the ages of 30 to 40 years who possess a PhD in Science/Engineering/Medicine can apply for this fellowship.

Prizes & Rewards:
Selected fellows will get INR 25,000 per month for 5 years and a research grant of INR 5 lakhs per annum.

Last Date to Apply: 30-04-2020
Application mode: Apply online
Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/SFJ4

Scholarship Name 3: Sardar Patel Scholarship for Students Pursuing Graduation 2020

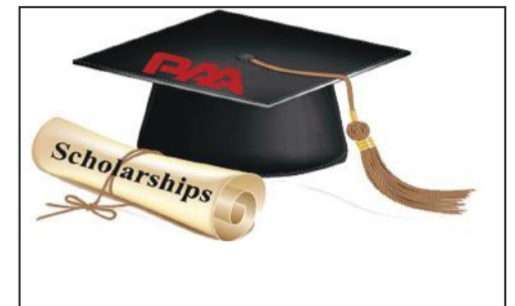
Description:
Buddy4Study India Foundation invites scholarship applications from students study-

ing in the 1st/2nd year of graduation. The scholarship programme is meant to support the higher education of deserving underprivileged students.

Eligibility:
The scholarship is open for students studying in the 1st/2nd year of a 3-year graduation programme (in any stream) from a recognised university/institution. The annual income of the family should be less than INR 6 lakhs per annum.

Prizes & Rewards:
Selected students will get scholarship of INR 15,000

Last Date to Apply: 31-05-2020
Application mode: Apply online
Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/SPS1



Scholarship Name 4: Keep India Smiling Foundational Scholarship Programme

Description:
Colgate-Palmolive (India) Ltd. is giving young students an opportunity to pursue their academic/career aspirations by providing them with scholarships for education. This scholarship program provides financial aid to students pursuing studies at various post-matric and undergraduate levels to continue their education and proceed towards a career of their choice.

Eligibility:
Students who have passed Class 10 with at least 75% marks or Class 12 with at least 60% marks in 2019 board exams are eligible to apply for the scholarship program for pursuing their higher secondary, 3-year graduation, 4-year engineering, Diploma programme and 1-year vocational course studies respectively. Annual Family income of all applicants must be less than INR 5 Lakhs per annum.

Prizes & Rewards:
Selected scholars can avail scholarship award of up to INR 30,000 per year for up to 3 years of studies depending on their current level of education

Last Date to Apply: 30-04-2020
Application mode: Apply online
Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/KISSP01

Time To Pause And Enrich The Business

Agencies

New Delhi- The fashion industry worldwide is going through a rough time, and India is no exception. From the fashion capitals of Italy and France to the small and midsize businesses in Bangladesh and India, the fashion retail industry is reeling under the pressure of the global pandemic COVID-19.

After the World Bank group allocated 1 billion dollars in health aid to India, it is also mulling a social sector and economic sector package, the latter mostly aimed at uplifting the small and medium scale industries.

While difficult times call for tough measures, the current scenario is also a perfect time to take a backseat and invest in the foundation of the business to make it sustainable for the future. Sujata and Taniya, founders of Mumbai-based clothing brand Suta share some tips on how to survive the trying times, customise products and continue to boost creativity.

Focus on the unfocused

Bracing ourselves to focus on the unfocused becomes a primary goal at such times. "We are channelizing our energies on repairs, maintenance and innovations now. Our operations and customer support team is focusing on improving and fine-tuning minute aspects of the website. We are spending more time on planning and executing new offerings, collection launches and marketing strategies. We want our customers to have a more enriched shopping experience every-time they come to our website," says Sujata, who believes the present scenario gives most

brands the perfect opportunity to focus on the minute details they have been procrastinating.

Exploring the creative side

During this time, a lot of employees and employers are exploring their creative side. Sujata and Taniya made a painting that they say is their dream jungle of childhood. Spending a lot of time in their kitchen garden, cooking skills, sharing DIY videos and even learning a new instrument can surely enhance creativity. This will ensure productivity once the employees are back from the sabbatical.

Enriching content

Content and communication are two major aspects of any brand. This is the right time to let your customers know more about your business. Having engaging content and also letting your customers know about the current situation and how you are dealing with it is very essential.

"Now, more than ever, content is what is connecting us. During the lockdown we have focused on a lot of engaging content like saree draping styles, DIY videos, wash and care of fabrics, making sustainable products like bio-enzyme. We aspire to motivate people to look at the better side in this silent chaos. The content we are sharing now, celebrates our silver linings, sustainability and our entrepreneurial journey," says Biswas.

Focus on health

While staying indoors and staying safe is essential. It is also important to eat mindfully, unhealthy snacking and no exercise can affect your work. When the cravings increase, switch from eating packaged food to a fruit. Remove time for yoga, quip the designers.

Facebook To Warn Users Who 'Liked' Coronavirus Hoaxes

AGENCIES

Facebook will soon let you know if you saw or interacted with dangerous coronavirus misinformation on the site.

The new notice will be sent to users who have liked, reacted to, or commented on posts featuring harmful or false claims about COVID-19 after they have been removed by moderators. The alert, which will start appearing on Facebook in the coming weeks, will direct users to a site where the World Health Organization lists and debunks virus myths and rumours.

The latest move is part of an unprecedented effort by Facebook, Google and Twitter that includes stricter rules, altered algorithms and thousands of fact checks to contain an outbreak of bad information online that's spreading as quickly as the virus itself.

Challenges remain. Tech platforms have sent home human moderators who police the platforms, forcing them to rely on automated systems to take down harmful content. They are also up against people's mistrust of authoritative sources for information, such as the WHO.

"Through this crisis, one of my top priorities is making sure that you see accurate and authoritative information across all of our apps," Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote on his Facebook page Thursday.

The company disclosed Thursday that it put more than 40 million warning labels in March



over videos, posts or articles about the coronavirus that fact-checking organizations have determined are false or misleading. The number includes duplicate claims — the labels were based on 4,000 fact checks.

Facebook says those warning labels have stopped 95% of users from clicking on the false information.

"It's a big indicator that people are trusting the fact checkers," said Baybars Orsek, the director of the International Fact-Checking Network. "The label has an impact on people's information consumption."

But Orsek cautioned that the data Facebook provided should be reviewed by outside editors or experts, and called on the historically secretive company to release regular updates about the impact of its fact-checking initiative.

Orsek's organization is a non-profit that certifies news organizations as fact checkers, a requirement to produce fact-checking

articles for Facebook. Facebook has recruited dozens of news organizations around the globe to fact check bad information on its site. The Associated Press is part of that program.

Facebook will also begin promoting the articles that debunk COVID-19 misinformation, of which there are thousands, on a new information center called "Get The Facts." Putting trustworthy information in front of people can be just as useful, if not more, than simply debunking falsehoods.

Still, conspiracy theories, claims about unverified treatments, and misinformation about coronavirus vaccines continue to pop up on the site daily — sometimes circumventing the safeguards Facebook has implemented. The new feature also only applies to posts on users' main news feed — not in groups, where misinformation often spreads unchecked, and not on WhatsApp

or Instagram, though Facebook has put some other protections in place on those platforms.

Facebook users, for example, viewed a false claim that the virus is destroyed by chlorine dioxide nearly 200,000 times, estimates a new study out today from Avaaz, a left-leaning advocacy group that tracks and researches online misinformation.

The group found more than 100 pieces of misinformation about the coronavirus on Facebook, viewed millions of times even after the claims had been marked as false or misleading by fact checkers. Other false claims were not labeled as misinformation, despite being declared by fact-checkers as false.

"Coronavirus misinformation content mutates and spreads faster than Facebook's current system can track it," Avaaz said in its report.

This is especially problematic for Italian and Spanish misinformation, the report said, because Facebook has been slower to issue warning labels on posts that aren't in English. Avaaz also noted that it can take as long as 22 days for Facebook to label misinformation as such — giving it plenty of time to spread.

False claims about coronavirus treatments have had deadly consequences.

Last month, Iranian media reported more than 300 people had died and 1,000 were sickened in the country after ingesting methanol, a toxic alcohol rumored to be a remedy through private social media messages.

Facebook will also begin promoting the articles that debunk COVID-19 misinformation, of which there are thousands, on a new information center called "Get The Facts." Putting trustworthy information in front of people can be just as useful, if not more, than simply debunking falsehoods.

COVID-19: Target China? Centre moves to block opportunistic takeovers of Indian firms

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Government of India has swiftly moved to block deep-pocketed Chinese entities from mounting opportunistic takeovers of vulnerable, pandemic-hit Indian firms. On Friday, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry moved a notification amending its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy, making government approval manda-

threats.

The earlier policy had allowed FDI through the automatic route in over 1,000 categories, except for 16 sectors including defence and telecom.

The newly amended policy now says that "an entity of a country which shares a land border with India, or where the beneficial owner of an investment into India is situated in... can invest only under the government route".



tory for any investment from countries sharing a "land border" with India.

The notification comes soon after several sections of the industry warned the Centre that heavily capitalised Chinese entities and funds were shopping for vulnerable Indian companies laid low by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Centre's amendment seems clearly aimed at preventing such takeovers by Chinese entities, since out of the seven countries India shares a land border with, investments from Pakistan and Bangladesh already required government approval. Excluding China, the rest -- Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar -- are insignificant sources of FDI into India and aren't generally perceived as financial national security

This condition shall also apply to the transfer of ownership of FDI, which "directly or indirectly" results in beneficial ownership falling to entities in one of these countries, said the notification.

The move comes after a series of developments and warnings from industry bodies to the Centre. For instance, March shareholding disclosures had revealed that the Chinese central bank now held a 1.01 per cent stake in one of India's biggest blue-chip financial firms: HDFC.

Other countries like Australia and Germany have also recently tightened FDI rules to prevent Chinese companies from indulging in predatory behaviour and buying out firms left vulnerable by the Covid-19 pandemic.

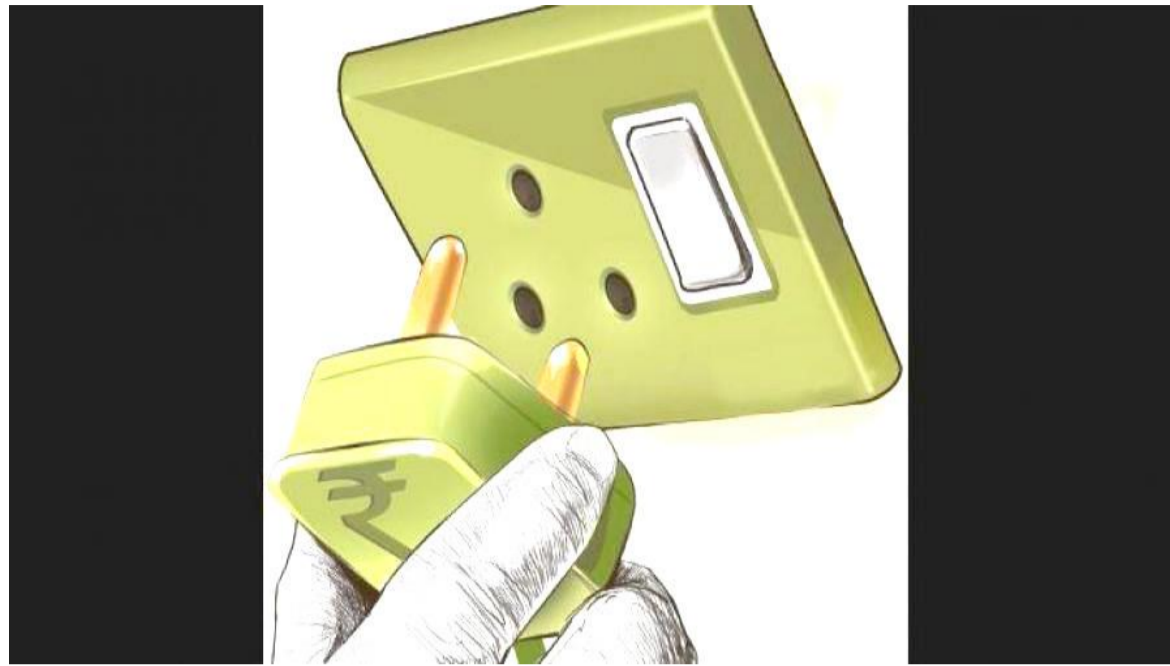
Hyundai Motor India ready to restart operations amid extend COVID-19 lockdown



CHENNAI: India's second largest car maker Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) is ready to restart its production operations at its plants and is waiting for the state government's decision, said a senior official.

"The HMIL qualifies the guidelines issued by the central government for restart of production operations like the plant should be in rural area or inside an industrial estate and others," Vice-President (Corporate Affairs) BC Dutta told IANS. He said that the company has to fulfil its domestic and ex-

port market obligations. Dutta said that the issue is to bring people to the plant as some may be living in the coronavirus containment zone. "We have the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for social distancing, sanitisation and other hygiene aspects," he said. The Tamil Nadu government has set up a committee to study and come out with recommendations as to the industries that may be allowed to restart operations. Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami has said the committee will submit its report on Monday.



Power Ministry Brings New Draft Of Electricity Amendment Bill

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Union power ministry has come out with fourth draft of the Electricity (Amendment) Bill since 2014, which seeks to set up an Electricity Contract Enforcement Authority (ECEA) having power of a civil court to settle disputes related to power purchase agreement between discoms and gencos.

The draft provides that the ECEA will have sole authority to adjudicate matters related to specific performance of contracts related to purchase or sale of power, between power generation companies (gencos) and distribution companies (discoms).

The decision of the ECEA can be challenged at the Appellate Tribunal For Electricity (APTEL) and, subsequently, at the Supreme Court. The ministry has sought the comments of the stakeholders on the Bill with three weeks from April 17.

Commenting on the Bill, All India Power Engineers' Federation (AIPEF) VK Gupta told PTL, "The setting up of ECEA would dilute the power of the state and central regulatory commissions to settle matters related to PPAs (power purchase agreements) between discoms and gencos." Currently, state electricity regu-

latory commissions and Central Electricity Regulatory Commission settle state-level and inter-state PPA disputes, respectively. He also said, "AIPEF strongly condemned the timings of the power ministry's move to bring back the Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 when the whole country is fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic."

He was of the view that the bad experience from the COVID-19 crisis should have led to nationalise all sectors, including power, across India. "At this juncture, the Government of India's step of privatization of the power sector through the proposed amendments in the Electricity Act 2003 is 'ill-timed and ill-intentioned', he added.

The ministry had brought first draft in 2014 that was introduced in the Lok Sabha seeking separate carriage and contend electricity distribution business. The Bill could have given option to consumers to change their service providers like they do for their mobile phone service.

But, unfortunately, that Bill lapsed after dissolution of the Lok Sabha. The second and third drafts were circulated in 2018 and 2019.

The AIPEF has demanded to put the bill on hold saying, "While the economy of the whole nation is

paralysed and administration is in doldrums, the timing is not suitable for introducing the enactment of amendments to any law under such conditions and thus Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 be put on hold."

The body has also shot off a letter to Power Minister RK Singh demanding that the proposed date of receipt of comments should be extended to September 30 as no discussion can take place due to the lockdown.

It also urged all state governments to seek extension in time for giving their proper reply. At first glance, Gupta said, "The purpose of the Bill seems to be to privatise discoms and ensure payment to private generators. The introduction of distribution sub-licensee and franchisee without separate licenses for them and no schedule or dispatch of electricity without the security of payment clearly points towards the intentions of the power ministry."

The body is of the view that the central government is out to destroy state sector despite the fact that during the COVID-19 crisis, only the state sector companies stood by the government, while private entities were nowhere visible in this bad time on the country.

L'Oreal donates 60,000 litres of hand sanitizers to aid coronavirus fight

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Personal care firm L'Oreal on Friday announced that it will donate over 60,000 litres of alcohol-based hand sanitiser to contribute towards the nation's fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

A statement said that L'Oreal India's operations team will donate hand sanitisers to public health institutions, police forces and NGOs, who are at the forefront of the fight against the virus.

In addition, the company is also planning to collaborate with primary healthcare centres around its manufacturing facilities in Baddi in Himachal Pradesh and Chakan in Maharashtra to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to their medical personnel, it added.

Commenting on the development, L'Oreal India MD Amit Jain said, "We consider it our responsibility to use the resources available to us in supplementing and contributing to the collective efforts made across the country. Our initiatives are in recognition of those who are at the frontline,



working to contain the pandemic and those most afflicted by it."

L'Oreal India will also provide food and essentials to migrants and their families in Baddi, Chakan, Mumbai, Gurugram and Bengaluru, through its partnership with NGOs ActionAid and Nirmala Niketan. This is in addition to L'Oreal's global Solidarity Program which includes a donation to non-profit organizations.

"L'Oreal India will also channelise the support of its employees through a donation drive towards the PM CARES Fund, and will be matching all contributions with a corporate contribution," it added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday announced the extension of lockdown till May 3. India is presently going through an unprecedented complete lockdown from March 25, to prevent the spread of the virus.

According to the latest updates from the Health Ministry, the number of cases from Covid-19 has climbed to 12,380 and death toll rises to 414 in the country.

COVID-19: Air India opens bookings on select domestic routes from May 4, international from June 1



NEW DELHI: Air India on Saturday announced it has opened bookings on select domestic and international routes from May 4 and June 1, respectively. "In the light of the ongoing global health concerns, we have currently stopped accepting bookings on all domestic flights for travel till May 3, 2020, and on all international flights for travel till May 31, 2020," a notification on Air India's website said on Saturday.

"Bookings for select domestic flights for travel from May 4, 2020, and for international flights for travel

from June 1, 2020 onwards are open," it stated. India has been under lockdown since March 25 to curb the spread of novel coronavirus.

The first phase of the lockdown was from March 25 to April 14. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 14 extended the lockdown till May 3. All domestic and international commercial passenger flights have been suspended during this period.

On April 3, Air India had said it has stopped bookings, both domestic and international, till the end of the month.

HDFC Bank Reports 18% Jump In Q4 Profit; Asset Quality Improves



MUMBAI: HDFC Bank reported a 17.72 percent year-on-year increase in net profit on Saturday at Rs 6,927.69 crore for the March 2020 ended quarter on higher other income, operating income, NII and lower tax cost.

Its net profit for the whole financial year 2019-20 rose by 24.6 percent from the previous year to Rs 26,257.3 crore. Its NII (net interest income), that is the difference between interest earned and interest paid, grew by 16.15 percent to Rs 15,204.06 crore for the quarter under review from Rs 13,089.5 crore in the same period of the previous year. The increase in NII was driven by 21.3 percent rise in advances and 24.3 percent growth in deposits it said with a net interest margin of 4.3 percent.

Other non-interest income was at Rs 6,032.6 crore which is 28.4 percent of the net revenues for the March quarter compared to Rs 4,871.2 crore a year ago.

HDFC Bank said that the four components of the other income were Rs 4,200.8 crore in fees & commission, Rs 500.8 crore in foreign exchange & derivatives revenue, Rs 565.3 crore in gain on sale/valuation of investments and Rs 765.7 crore in miscellaneous income. Its operating income for the January-March period rose by 16.3 percent YoY to Rs 8,277.8 crore compared to Rs 7,117.1 crore a year ago.

HDFC Bank reported gross non-performing assets at 1.26 percent of gross advances as on 31 March 2020, which excluded 1.1 percent of those in the agriculture

segment. The result is an improvement on 1.42 percent gross NPAs reported for the previous quarter and 1.36 percent in March 2019. Net non-performing assets were 0.36 percent of the net advances.

As per RBI's latest announcements on relief measures for COVID-19, HDFC Bank said that on accounts where a moratorium will be granted the asset account classification will remain standstill. These include payments towards installments or interest due between 1 March and 31.

May, even if overdue as on 29 February. "The Bank holds provisions as on March 31, 2020 against the potential impact of COVID-19 based on the information available at this point in time and the same are in excess of the RBI prescribed norms. As a result, GNPA and NNPA ratios were lower by 10 bps and 6 bps respectively," HDFC Bank said in its filing.

The country's largest private bank also said that its board has decided not to issue a final dividend for the fiscal year ended 31 March 2020 on account of recent instructions from the RBI. "The Reserve Bank of India, vide its circular dated April 17, 2020, has decided that banks shall not make any further dividend payouts from profits pertaining to the financial year ended March 31, 2020 until further instructions, with a view that banks must conserve capital in an environment of heightened uncertainty caused by COVID-19," it said in a stock exchange filing on Saturday.

COVID-19 lockdown: Centre asks states to coordinate with control rooms to resolve workers' issues

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar has asked states/UTs to designate nodal officers to coordinate with the 20 control rooms set up by the ministry to mitigate workers' problems amid the coronavirus lockdown.

Gangwar shot off a letter to states after it emerged that more than two-thirds of the complaints received by the control rooms pertained to states/union territories. The labour ministry has set up 20 control rooms pan-India to address wage-related grievances and to mitigate problems faced by migrant workers amid the lockdown.

These workers grievance redressal centres were set up after

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced extension of the nationwide lockdown till May 3, with conditional relaxations from April 20 in some areas. "Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar has requested various State/UT Governments to designate a nodal officer from Labour Department to coordinate with Control Rooms set up by Union Government for addressing issues of the labour/workers in the country in view of the lockdown announced to combat COVID-19 pandemic," a ministry statement said.

In the letter shot off by Gangwar on Friday to the labour ministers of states/UTs, he said, "The coordinated efforts of Central and State Governments are required in order to resolve the grievances of the workers."

Zomato introduces 'contactless dining' for restaurants amid COVID-19 pandemic

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: After contactless delivery to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, foodtech unicorn Zomato on Friday announced "contactless dining" features to help restaurants increase trust and confidence of customers in their safety and hygiene measures in a post-lockdown world.

Zomato said that contactless dining will have three main components, contactless menu, contactless ordering and contactless payment. With a contactless menu, diners will be able to scan a QR code on the table to explore the restaurant menu with dish and pairing recommendations.

The Zomato app will also enable contactless ordering and payment. "This eliminates

the need for menu cards and bill books, two articles that are often touched by guests, and are typically unsanitized and could potentially be a source of concern," Gaurav Gupta, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer at Zomato wrote in a blog post.

"So far, the waiting staff will still need to bring you your food from the kitchen, but as long as the waiting staff is wearing a mask, and following the highest hand hygiene standards, we should all be okay," he said. Zomato said it is building additional features on the app -- such as the ability to order multiple courses, and the option to pay for self or the entire table -- to ensure a hassle-free dining experience.

"Contactless dining also en-



sure that consumers don't have to wait to place their order or pay the bill. Thus, making the entire experience far more seamless and convenient for the users," Gupta noted.

Zomato believes that contactless dining will provide for a better and hassle free dining

experience for customers, and also improve the economics of the restaurant industry -- by helping bring down manpower costs, as well as reducing the table turnover time.

The foodtech company is adding safety features on the app wherein restaurants will

be able to self report safety and hygiene measures that they undertake, such as how frequently they sanitise high touch points such as tables/door handles etc., and whether they arrange tables at least one metre apart from each other.

"Prompts on the Zomato app will reveal the restaurant's hygiene records to assist in informed decision making, and also allow consumers to report any deviations from what has been self-reported by the restaurant," Gupta said.

"We believe a proactive approach towards safety and hygiene will go a long way in building confidence back in dining out," he added. A food delivery boy this week was found corona positive - leading to 72 families in South Delhi being put under quarantine.

Air travel aggregators start refund to passengers for suspended flights

NEW DELHI: With the government direction coming in, the online air travel aggregators have started giving cash refund to passengers who booked tickets between March 25 and April 14 for their travel plan between April 15 and May 3.

Taking the first move in this direction travel aggregator Easy Trip Planners ("EaseMyTrip") has started refunding the money in cash to the customers from the company's own account during

tors will be adjusted with fresh bookings," he said.

Amid the lockdown, several airlines had suspended flights and offered credit shell to the customers which they could use later. Presently, as per DG-CA's advisory, airlines have to refund money to customers who had booked tickets between March 25 to April 14, for travel between April 15 and May 3, instead of credit shell.

A statement from the EaseMyTrip claimed



the time of nation-wide lockdown due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

As per the prevailing practice, in India, online travel aggregators had to deposit advance amounts with the airlines including Indigo, Spicejet, Go Air, Air Asia against which they issue air tickets to aggregators for further booking by end users.

The airlines have now been providing money in the virtual wallet of travel aggregators, which does not reflect directly on their bank accounts, said an official adding that aviation sector is a cash flow business and the airlines are not able to refund directly to customers. "This virtual money with aggrega-

that it is the only company who has been refunding money to the customers' bank account even if airlines are providing amounts in EMT's virtual wallet only.

Speaking on the current situation, Nishant Pitti, Co-founder and CEO, EaseMyTrip, said, "As a responsible corporate we are very much concerned to take this necessary step to provide refund in the form of cash to the customers in the hour of need. We have been receiving money on our virtual wallet from airlines which is of no use for the time being. But still we are paying money to customers' bank account from our own expense."

Days after recovery, 85-year-old Covid patient dies in Kerala

KERALA: Kerala Health Minister KK Shailaja on Saturday stated that the death of a 85-year-old man, who was a former Covid-19 patient from Malappuram, is not due to the coronavirus, but due to a renal complication he developed.

"He tested negative for Covid-19 thrice. Then he had underlying ailments. He was a cardiac patient for three decades, had breathing issues (COPD) and had kidney problems. He recovered from Covid-19 and thanked the medical staff, which took care of him. Then he had a kidney problem and infection. He died today morning, but not due to Covid," said Shailaja.

She added that the funeral will take place based on the present national guidelines, when a person dies a normal death.

In the state the total number presently under treatment is 138 and in the past week, the number of new cases was in single digits and there were around 78,000 people under observation in the state.



Renewed Focus By Armed Forces To Insulate 15 Lakh Personnel From Coronavirus

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The outbreak of coronavirus at a key naval facility in Mumbai where 26 sailors have been infected is a wake-up call for stricter implementation of all laid down norms to insulate around 15 lakh armed forces personnel from the pandemic, military officials said on Saturday.

All the three forces have already enforced a "no movement" policy under which almost all their bases have been put under total lockdown barring the wings handling key operational matters and strategic surveillance, they said. Official sources said the top brass in the defence ministry is reviewing the overall preparedness of the armed forces to deal with the pandemic.

The Navy has strictly ordered all its bases to not allow any movement of

its personnel and assets besides suspending all training activities after the first case of the infection was detected on April 7, a Navy official said.

The Navy has suspended all transfers and fresh postings besides ordering people on leave to stay back home. Those onboard various ships and other platforms were told to extend their stay, he said. "We are now restricting movement of people from one building to another building inside the bases and commands. We are restricting any movement to and from the bases," said another official.

An Indian Air Force official said the Air Headquarters have issued specific guidelines to all the bases and establishments to insulate the personnel as well as platforms from the virus. The IAF has not reported any case of the infection so far.

He said the aircraft sent on various

evacuation missions to coronavirus-infected countries were too "quarantined" for 14 days besides being "disinfected" thoroughly. An Army official said a "rigorous protocol" is being followed at all the bases and establishments of the force to protect the 15 lakh army men from the virus. Listing the measures, he said all the establishments are operating with skeleton staff and people coming back from leave or emergency outstation assignments are being made to stay "separately" for at least couple of weeks. "We are even extending distance between the beds in barracks. It is an invisible war we are fighting," the official said. About frontline bases along borders with Pakistan and China, the official said stricter norms are being followed to insulate them and that chances of the virus travelling to the areas were minimum.

26 Navy Personnel In Western Naval Command Test Positive For Coronavirus

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: At least 26 Indian Navy personnel have tested positive for coronavirus at the Western Naval Command in Mumbai, in first case of a major outbreak of the deadly disease in the Indian armed forces.

All the infected sailors were serving at the INS Angre, a shore-based logistics and support establishment, and they are undergoing treatment at a Navy hospital, official sources said. "The number of infected sailors is 26," said a source.

The Navy has launched a large-scale contact tracing operation to track the people who may have come in contact with the sailors.

The outbreak of the infection in the Indian Navy comes at a time when a number of navies globally are grappling with the pandemic. A sailor on board the USS Theodore Roosevelt, an aircraft carrier, reported as many as 500 cases of the virus. The French Navy has also been hit hard by the pandemic.

The sources said 25 of the infected sailors were staying at a building

having single-room accommodations and barracks within the INS Angre complex, while one sailor was living with his mother in his own house.

The sailor's mother has also tested positive, the sources said.

The Navy is carrying out virus test-



ing of all people staying in the residential accommodation and it has been declared as a "containment zone", while INS Angre was put under total lockdown as per the prescribed protocol of apex medical research body ICMR, they said.

In a statement, the Navy said 21 serving personnel have been tested positive for COVID-19 at the facility.

"Most of these are asymptomatic and have been traced to a single sailor or who was tested positive on April 7. They all reside in the same accommodation block at INS Angre," it said.

Sources said the top defence ministry officials as well as the Naval headquarters are keeping an eye on the incident.

They said the Navy has ordered all its establishments to maintain highest precaution to protect the personnel from the virus.

It is the first case of a sizeable number of military personnel being treated for COVID-19. The Indian Army has reported eight cases of the deadly virus so far.

Last week, Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh, in a video message, told his personnel that vital operational assets such as ships and submarines must remain free from the virus.

"The coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented and it has never been seen before. Its impact has been extraordinary across the globe, including India," he said.

COVID-19 striking more children than expected: Study

NEW DELHI: Contrary to what governments and a school of scientists claim (including Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk), the number of children infected with the coronavirus is far more extensive than what is currently reported -- a hidden detail that could vastly underestimate the demand on health care systems and pediatric intensive care units (PICUs).

A new study, published in the Journal of Public Health Management and Practice from the University of South Florida (USF) and the Women's Institute for Independent Social Enquiry (WISE), estimated that for each child who requires intensive care for COVID-19, there are 2,381 children infected with the virus.

this timeframe. Children younger than 2 accounted for 30 per cent of the cases, 24 per cent were ages 2 to 11 and 46 per cent of the PICU cases were children between ages 12 and 17.

Researchers say that if as many as 25 per cent of the US population becomes infected with the coronavirus before the end of 2020, 50,000 children with severe illness will need to be hospitalized, with 5,400 of them critically ill and requiring mechanical ventilation.

Clinical reports indicate the average length of stay for pediatric COVID-19 is 14 days. According to a national survey, there are approximately 5,100 PICU beds in the US.

"Government officials and



This calculation followed a report from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention regarding its clinical study of over 2,100 children in China with COVID-19.

"Although the risk of severe illness from COVID-19 is lower in pediatric cases than adults, hospitals should be prepared and have the proper equipment and staffing levels to deal with a potential influx of younger patients," said author Jason Salemi, associate professor of epidemiology in the USF College of Public Health.

According to the North American registry, Virtual PICU Systems, 74 children in the US were admitted to PICUs between March 18 and April 6, signaling an additional 176,190 children were likely infected during

policy makers should understand the likelihood of capacity challenges, which underscores the importance of effective mitigation strategies such as frequent and thorough handwashing and persisted social distancing measures," stressed Salemi.

Pediatric coronavirus is highly complex, as many hospitals are prohibiting visitors in order to implement social distancing and quarantine protocols.

A caretaker may also be infected, which would require logistical and infection control accommodations that place an additional strain on hospital resources.

Upon hospital discharge, young children may be unable to independently comply with home infection control and self-isolation recommendations.

Three lakh more Rapid Antibody Test kits sent to India from China: Envoy

BEIJING: Three lakh more Rapid Antibody Test kits being used for quick detection of the COVID-19 have been dispatched to India from Chinese city of Guangzhou, the Indian envoy said on Saturday.

About three lakh Rapid Antibody Test kits were airlifted to Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu from the Chinese city of Guangzhou, Indian Ambassador to China Vikram Misri said.

"Nearly 3 Lakh Rapid An-

tibody Tests have just been airlifted by @airindiain from #Guangzhou | Supplies are headed to Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. Great work on ground by our team at @cg-guangzhou" Misri tweeted.

This is in addition to 6.5 lakh Antibody Tests and RNA Extraction Kits sent from here.

India is procuring the medical supplies from China in recent weeks to ensure availability of adequate supplies. — PTI

BOTTOM LINE

Congress against e-commerce firms delivering non-essential items

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Saturday voiced concern over the government's decision to allow e-commerce companies to deliver non-essential items during the lockdown period, saying that it will break the backbone of the retail sector in the country. It demanded that there be a level playing field.

Addressing a press conference through video conferencing, senior Congress leader and former Union Minister Ajay Maken said, "As per the sixth economic census, retail trade is the most dominant economic activity outside agriculture.

He said that it factors more than 35.41 per cent of total economic activities outside agriculture, which is the largest.

He said that as far as employment is concerned it gives "one fifth" of the total employment in India as it generates employment for 2.72 crore people in India, second after manufacturing.

Highlighting the plight of the retail traders across the country, the former union minister said,

"The traders have locked down their shops in last one month, even as the GST, demonetisation and e-commerce are breaking their backbone."

Maken said that they have to pay fixed electricity charges, property tax, commercial tax and several other charges.

"And on top of this clause 14 of the MHA order has allowed to ply the vehicles of e-commerce companies. And surprisingly this order does not stop the e-commerce company from trading non-essential items," he said.

"There is no level field for non trading items. And if the traders are not given level field then after the lockdown period they would not be able to stand on their feet," he said.

The Congress leader added that on top of that they have to pay the salaries and electricity charges. "So I request the government that it should clarify the order and come forward for the rescue of these traders," Maken said.

To a question on the leaders of other countries holding press



conferences, he said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi is making people aware through his ad-

dress but many people are not getting answers to their questions and issues like shortage of

PPE and others still remain unanswered."

He said monotonous talk is be-

ing carried by the Prime Minister.

When asked about the FIR registered against the doctors of Hindu Rao hospital for accepting personal protective equipment from a NGO, Maken said, "Today even doctors from LNJP have approached me and said that PPEs provided to doctors and medical teams are sub-standard."

"And if the NGO gives the PPE then a FIR is registered against the doctors. It is saddening," he said.

To a question on the wheat flour scam in Madhya Pradesh where the people were given less flour in the packet, Maken slamming the BJP government in the state said, "This is Shivraj (Singh Chouhan) style of governance as only 7-8 kg wheat flour is coming out of 10 kg packet. And this is the biggest sin and soon the people will give a befitting reply to the BJP."

On Saturday, the total number of Covid-19 patients in India rose to 14,378 with 480 people losing their lives to the pandemic across the country.