



Maximum : 18°C  
Minum : 08°C  
Humidity : 65%

SUNSET  
Today 07:07 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 05:52 AM

# OBSERVER

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.....LIFE & TIMES

P5

## CONFUSION, SEIZURE, STROKES: HOW COVID-19 MAY AFFECT THE BRAIN AND NERVOUS SYSTEM

A pattern is emerging among COVID-19 patients arriving at hospitals in New York: Beyond fever, cough and shortness of breath, some are deeply disoriented to the point of not knowing where they are or what year it is. At times this is linked to low oxygen levels in their blood, but in certain patients the confusion appears disproportionate to how their lungs are faring. Jennifer Frontera, a neurologist at NYU Langone Brooklyn hospital seeing these patients, told AFP the findings were raising concerns about the impact of the coronavirus on the brain and nervous system.

## News Digest

### 93 Lockdown Violators Arrested: Police

Srinagar: Nearly a hundred people were arrested on Monday by police from north Kashmir's Handwara for allegedly violating prohibitory orders imposed to contain spread of coronavirus. 47 people were arrested while a vehicle was confiscated in Handwara town for defying orders issued under section 144 CrPC, a police spokesperson said today. "Accordingly, cases under relevant sections of law have been registered and investigation into the cases have been initiated," he said. In Qalamabad, nine people

### Heart Attack Kills Para Trooper In Uri

Srinagar: An Army man died of a heart attack on Monday in the border town of Uri in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. Havaldar Kapil Dev posted with 6 Para of 12 Infantry Brigade suffered a massive heart attack while he was attending his duty at his camp in Uri this morning, news agency KNO reported. A resident of north India's aranya state, Dev was rushed to a nearby hospital where doctors pronounced him dead on arrival. Hospital authorities also confirmed the para trooper died of heart attack. Meanwhile, police have registered a case and started further investigations.

## As Pandemic Persists, Stranded Kashmiris Scream For Homecoming

Jyotsna Bharti

SRINAGAR: On April 19, 2020, a former union minister received frantic calls from stranded Kashmiri labourers in Kagda and other areas of Himachal Pradesh for help to return to their homes in Kupwara and other districts of Kashmir.

The callers introduced themselves as labour leaders named Mohammad Shafi and Fayaz Ahmad Mir.

The duo sounded stressed and, in an anxious voice, explained their ordeal — that since lockdown got imposed, they got unemployed and were exposed to hardships of life.

Shafi and Mir informed that over 300 labourers could walk up to Pathankot, wherefrom they should be taken to their home districts of Kupwara and elsewhere.

Many more, they said, are stranded in other parts of the Himachal Pradesh.

Following this call, Prof. Saifuddin Soz urged the J&K union territory government to organize a sizeable effort to help stranded Kashmiri labourers in Himachal Pradesh.

"It's a matter that needs to be taken up with the Himachal Pradesh Govt. on war-footing," Prof stressed.



Kashmiri Students At Airport. File Pic

## 40,000 Labourers Stranded Outside J&K: LG

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor G C Murmu said over 350 students and nearly 40,000 labourers are stranded outside the Union Territory due to the nationwide lockdown imposed in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

He said all those returning to the Union Territory (UT) will be

tested and home quarantined.

Meanwhile, the first batch of 1,200 people were brought back from Punjab on Monday.

"We have decided that all those who will be brought back will have to undergo testing. They will be sent to home quarantine, Murmu told PTI on the strategy formulated by his administration to deal with the large number of people stranded

outside the UT.

"If they have not been screened and tested in those places, then they will come back here and affect the families and people around them. So testing is must, he added.

On the steps taken for the safe return of those belonging to the UT and stuck in various countries due to the pandemic, the Lieutenant Governor said,

## 700 Soldiers Reach Jammu Through Special Train



Representation Image

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Nearly 700 army personnel reached Jammu on Monday through a special train from Bengaluru to join their units in the union territory after completing their professional courses in southern India, officials said.

In the prevailing security scenario along the Line of Control in

Jammu and Kashmir, it has been a necessity to boost the strength of security personnel in units deployed in operational areas, a defence spokesperson said.

The train had left the Bengaluru railway station on April 17.

The army personnel had completed their professional courses in Bengaluru, Belgaun and Secunderabad training centres

## Use New Technology To Neutralize Militants: DGP tells Officers

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Three days after police claimed to have killed two militants responsible for killing a cop, the Director General of police (DGP) Dilbagh Singh on Monday asked forces to take strict security measures to root out the residual mili-

tancy from Kishtwar district.

On Friday, police had claimed to have shot dead two alleged militants Basharat Hussain and Ashiq Hussain, responsible for killing an SPO Pashid Iqbal and injuring another SPO Vishal Singh in Dachan area of Kishtwar.

Chairing a security

## IMPORTANT! PUBLIC NOTICE

BE A PART OF THE  
**SOLUTION**  
NOT PART OF THE  
**POLLUTION**



HELP US KEEP OUR CANALS & RIVERS CLEAN



DON'T THROW  
GARBAGE/LEFTOVER  
IN OUR CANALS & RIVERS.  
IT IS A PUNISHABLE OFFENCE

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ISSUED IN PUBLIC INTEREST BY:  
IRRIGATION AND FLOOD CONTROL DEPARTMENT

DIPK-214/20

## Female Photojournalist In Kashmir Booked For Social Media Posts

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir police on Monday booked a female freelance photojournalist under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for "uploading anti-national posts" on social media, evoking sharp criticism and condemnation from media fraternity, political parties and trade bodies.

26-year-old Zahra was booked by the cyber wing of police under section 13 UA (P) Act and 505-IPC for "uploading posts that tantamount to



File Pic.

glorify the anti-national activities and dent the image of law

## KPC Slams Police 'Harassment'

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir Press Club Monday condemned the recent cases of harassment and summons to journalists by police in Kashmir.

While journalism in Kashmir has never been easy, challenges and hardships have multiplied for journalists since August 05, 2019.

"Even in this time of Coronavirus pandemic journalists in Kashmir

## Covid-19 Cases Cross 300 Mark In Kashmir, 14 More Test Positive

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus cases in Kashmir crossed 300 mark, as 14 more people, including six members of a family, tested positive to virus on Monday raising the tally of infected people across the Union Territory to 368.

"14 new cases reported. All from Kashmir. Total number of cases now 368. Jammu-55 and Kashmir-313. Detailed bulletin follows," government spokesperson Rohit Kansal Tweeted.

Out of the 14 fresh cases

today, seven are from Bandipora, five from Anantnag and two others from Kupwara district. The reports of nine of the infected were confirmed by SKIMS authorities while the officials at the Chest Disease hospital here confirmed five others.

In Bandipora district, six of a family were among seven fresh cases detected today from Gunj Jehangir area of the district. Among them are three brothers.

A wife of a cleric is the seventh case from the area

## BJP Leader Demands Deportation Of Rohingyas, Bangladeshis

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir BJP on Monday urged the central government to take immediate steps for the deportation of Rohingyas and Bangladeshis as they are "most vulnerable" to the spread of coronavirus.

Senior BJP leader Kavinder Gupta said, "As Rohingyas and Bangladeshis are mainly associated with the Rehri and hawking business, there is every likelihood of their spreading the virus to the localities they visit to sell their products."

"The central government should take immediate steps for the deportation of Rohingya



and Bangladeshis, who are illegally settled in Jammu, as they are most vulnerable to the spread of the deadly coronavirus," he added.

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the central government should forthwith work out for deporting illegally settled Rohingyas and

## In Covid-19 Crisis, This Doctor Is Kashmir's New Hope

Mrinal Pathak

As Covid-19 health crisis is deepening across the world, a crucial medical intervention evolving in America has Kashmir written all over it.

And the man playing an important role in it is a Kashmiri physician-turned-entrepreneur.

Coming across as a quintessential commoner of the valley, Junaid Nabi defies the image of a global soldier fighting the invisible enemy.

The young doctor is currently supporting a Harvard-MIT team working with local doctors and engineers to design and develop affordable ventila-



tors to increase the capacity of respiratory therapy in Kashmiri community.

As someone who believes that machine learning has an important role in Covid-19, Ju-

naid works as a public health researcher at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston.

The health professional is presently working to detect useful patterns in the large inflow of public health data generated across the world by the current crisis.

Much of his insights and acumen, he says, comes from his growing up experience in Kashmir, a society marred with social, economic, and healthcare disparities.

Junaid, who hasn't been able to get back to Kashmir since 2017, has a vast experience of working with the health systems in the





Cops regulating traffic on the Rambagh flyover crossing in Srinagar on Monday. Pic Abid Bhat



Policemen enforcing restrictions in part of this capital city on Monday. Pic Abid Bhat

## As Pandemic Persists, Stranded

But before those frantic calls would ring the congress leader's residence, many had joined hands to #BringBackKashmirStudents on social media.

Mehvash Munshi, a doctor by profession, said that she will not stop asking for help until the students stuck in Bangladesh will not be brought back to their homes.

About 80 Kashmiri students stranded at Benapole on the India-Bangladesh border are not able to cross the border even after having the passport, she said. "The students are from a medical college in Bangladesh."

Munshi's tweet came at a time when the lockdown-induced agony is increasingly faring on various platforms of social media and showing the growing restlessness among the stranded Kashmiris in different parts of the world.

Among those stranded Kashmiris is Sabreen and her sister.

The siblings are stuck in Ludhiana, Punjab, ever since lockdown. Even after constantly asking for help from the administration, they said, they aren't getting any response.

Similarly, Fahad Rehman, another stranded Kashmiri student has appealed the J&K government to take adequate action and bring back students from Rajasthan.

Around 300 Kashmiri students, he said, are stuck in Rajasthan even though they have already completed a mandatory 14-day quarantine period and tested negative for Covid-19.

"There's rage and anger in all the students who have been asking for help," he said.

Some reports even suggest that hundreds of Kashmiri students are stranded at airports or in their paying guest accommodations across India due to Covid-19 lockdown.

"We are trying our best to bring these students back," a senior government official said.

"But due to the nationwide lockdown, it's becoming almost impossible to do so. We've taken up the issue with higher authorities and hope that some solution arrives soon."

However, according to Amir Khatana, a law student from Kashmir, even as the various state governments have taken initiatives to bring their students and labourers back home, Kashmir government isn't taking it seriously.

Former EJC President and social activist Abdul Qayoom Wani also asked the authorities to bring back all Kashmiris stranded in and outside India.

"Students, as well as their families, are in pain and distress and authorities must look into the matter at the earliest and bring them back immediately," Wani, a former PDP leader, said.

Due to travel ban amid the current situation, hundreds of Kashmiri students stranded in Ukraine, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Iran and several other countries have now joined the growing social media chorus for homecoming.

"All I want is to be at home," said one stranded Kashmiri student. "Even if I have to die, I want to die in Kashmir, in my home. I don't want to die here."

## 40,000 Labourers Stranded

"We have talked to the Ministry of External Affairs about the matter. We have requested them to carry out evacuation in Bangladesh, Iran and other countries. Most of them have been brought back.

He said a large number of students belonging to the Union Territory were stranded in various states due to the lockdown.

"We have evacuated them. They were put in quarantine in Mumbai, Jaisalmir etc, he said, adding others are stranded in Bangalore, Chennai, Noida and Agra.

"We have a list of 350 students still stuck outside the Union Territory. We have given them assurance that once the lockdown ends, they will be brought back, he said.

"We are also identifying labourers of J&K stranded in other states. Over 30,000 to 40,000 labourers are out of Jammu and Kashmir. Some of them want to come back. We will see (how they can be brought back after lockdown ends), he added.

The LG said the administration is dealing with containment of COVID-19 as per strategy.

"In Jammu region, the situation is fully under control. The problematic areas are those with people having travel history abroad. Such people have mostly been identified and quarantined, he said.

Murmu said the administration was taking the help of Aarogya Setu mobile application and booth-wise surveys to trace and track the contacts of COVID-19 positive patients.

"We are also giving preference to testing of elderly people and the ill in red zones, he said.

Saying the coronavirus situation was under control in the Union Territory, the LG said, We have no one on the ventilator. We have 200 ventilators and are procuring 400 more.

He added that the COVID-19 patients who were brought at the last moment lost their lives due to the disease.

"Those who were brought in the initial stage, their mortality rate is very low, he said.

## 700 Soldiers Reach Jammu

and were waiting to join their units.

All of them underwent the mandatory quarantine before coming here and adhered to social distancing throughout the journey, the spokesperson said. "All personnel are medically fit," he said.

On arrival at the Jammu railway station, all the personnel were screened and thereafter transported to their respective units deployed in the union territory, he added.

All passenger trains have been suspended since a nationwide lockdown came into effect on March 25.

## Use New Technology To Neutralize

review meet at Kishtwar, DGP lauded police and other security forces for hunting down the two militants who were involved in the recent attack on two SPOs, a police spokesperson said today. He said the synergy between the forces in J&K has been acknowledged by the governments at highest levels.

"The DGP directed the officers to strengthen the security grid and plug the gaps with strict security measures to root out the residual militancy in the area," the police spokesperson said.

"He stressed to take stringent action against those involved in the anti-national activities. He instructed the officers to use the new technology in neutralizing militants," he added.

The meeting was also attended by officers from army and CRPF, the spokesperson said. Singh was accompanied by the IGP Jammu Zone Mukesh Singh and DIG DKR Range Abdul Jabbar.

During the meeting, DGP Singh also reviewed preparations and measures taken to contain the deadly virus from spreading, the spokesperson said. He directed the officers to take all necessary steps in implementing the government orders on ground and take strict action against violators.

"He directed the officers to follow the health protocols issued in maintaining social distancing among the general public," the police spokesperson added.

SSP Kishtwar Harmeeet Singh and other officers gave the detailed briefing to the DGP about the security scenario and preparedness/ measures taken against the fight of COVID-19 in their respective jurisdiction.

Singh also visited Delta Force Headquarters and discussed security related matters with GoC Maj. General Ravi Murugan.

## Covid-19 Cases Cross 300 Mark

, which has seen a spurt in cases after the death of a Covid-19 patient early this month.

The two other confirmed cases are from Muqam-e-Shahwali village of Kupwara are wife of a previous Covid-19 patient and a teenager, who has contracted the disease after coming into contact with an already infected person.

The positive cases confirmed at the CD Hospital are all residents of Shangus in Anantnag and were admitted in a Trauma hospital at Bijbehara. Except for a 19-year-old girl whose contact is not known, all others, all men—aged 55, 56, 65 and 70, have contracted the disease from a previous COVID-19 patient.

With these cases, Bandipora now has 91 coronavirus patients, highest in all districts, followed by Srinagar (79), Baramulla (44), Kupwara (33), Jammu (26), Shopian (22), Udhampur (20), Ganderbal (14), Budgam (13), Anantnag (8), Kulgam (6), Rajouri (4), Samba (4), Pulwama (3) and Kishtwar (1).

Meanwhile, the media bulletin released by the government today said that out of 368 positive cases, 292 are active, 71 have recovered and 5 others have died.

The bulletin said that till date 61774 travellers and persons in contact with suspected cases have been enlisted for surveillance, including

6463 persons in home quarantine, 229 in hospital quarantine, 292 in hospital isolation and 20115 under home surveillance.

"Besides, 34670 persons have completed their surveillance period. Out of 8612 test results available, 8244 samples have tested as negative till April 20, 2020," the bulletin reads.

The advisory issued in the bulletin informs people that all gatherings- religious, social and others continue to be prohibited. While as no inter-district or inter-division movement is permitted.

The advisory adds that no movement of any kind is permitted in and out of Red Zones designated by the administration, as a precautionary measure. It also urges people not to move out even in areas other than red zones, unless absolutely necessary to do so.

"If at all you have to go out of home, ensure that you wear a mask or face cover. Wearing of face covers/ masks is mandatory in all public and workplaces," the advisory says.

"Basic, essential activities are permitted, except in Red Zones, but all precautions including sanitisation, social distancing, and use of masks is essential," the advisory adds.

## BJP Leader Demands

Bangladeshis from Jammu and Kashmir "to save local residents", Gupta said.

"The demographic and security threat posed by them has reached a boiling point as these people are most vulnerable to the spread of coronavirus, many of these Rohingyas are associated with the Rehri and hawking business," he asserted.

Gupta alleged that there is a well-funded and politically-backed conspiracy to settle them across the province and trigger Hindu migration.

"In November 2017, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees visited at least five Rohingya habitations in Jammu and asked them to leave, promising funds to settle elsewhere. They refused, saying they won't leave as they are used to Jammu and know everyone over here.

"That, in a nutshell, sums up their comfort levels in Hindu-majority Jammu, as opposed to living with their co-religionists elsewhere," the BJP leader said.

"Groups advocating accommodation of Rohingyas in India fail to consider the burden they are bound to put on the country's strained national resources, including the overall socio-economic indicators such as public health, employment, crime, rehabilitation of internally displaced. Jammu and Kashmir should learn lessons from illegal migration into Assam from Bangladesh," he said.

He said that the influx of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants into Assam is posing a "serious security threat" to the Assamese identity.

"It has adversely affected the social, economic and political environment of the state, creating law and order problems, particularly in areas where immigrants are present in large numbers," Gupta added.

Keeping in mind the critical geography of the state and its sensitive communal environment, it is necessary that New Delhi treads carefully and explores all the alternatives before arriving at any long-term solution to the issue, Gupta added.

## In Covid-19 Crisis, This Doctor

developing countries and his strength in the current direction is driven by his passion for medical science.

While in Kashmir, Junaid had worked with a few non-profit organizations. This is when, he says, he noticed that clinical medicine does not answer all the questions clinical work asks.

The entrepreneur is trying hard for machine learning algorithms to find connections that can be further used to inform clinical decision-making.

As an Aspen New Voices Fellow, Junaid believes machine learning can play an important role in the current health crisis.

However, he asserts, there's Covid-19 under-reporting in Kashmir, as the valley's unique geopolitical status has given rise to several disadvantaged groups both in city and countryside.

But as rural populace is most vulnerable to the viral pandemic, Junaid's efforts have come up as a boon to bridge a gap between the socio-economic disparity and the fractured health services in the region.

Apart from doing research, the healthcare specialist has inspired many young Kashmiri minds to come up with a good number of

innovations in healthcare system.

Junaid believes that the cloud of pandemic has given birth to collaboration between Kashmiri engineers and doctors to design life-saving devices that can increase the capacity of a limited number of ventilators in the valley.

Limited resources, he says, have induced a spirit of innovation among these young Kashmiri professionals.

In times like these, Junaid's initiative, a perfect blend of medical science and technology, has turned to be a shimmering hope, not just for the people of Kashmir but for the entire human society.

## 93 Lockdown Violators

and in Vilgam 21 were arrested for defying lockdown orders. Five vehicles were also seized by the police, the spokesperson said. He said cases under relevant sections of law have been registered and investigations started.

In Kralgund, 16people were arrested and four vehicles seized by police for violating prohibitory orders.

"Accordingly, cases under relevant sections of law have been registered and investigations have been initiated," the police spokesperson added.

## Female Photo-journalist In Kash-mir

enforcing agencies besides causing disaffection against the country."

The police action has come as a shock to Zahra, whose work has been published by national and international organisations like Washington Post, Al Jazeera, Caravan and many other publications.

"Since I was stuck at home, I have been putting photos of my work over the past few years on Facebook and Twitter. For example, the photo of a newspaper cutting and money soaked in blood of a man suspected of being a militant who was killed in an encounter. These were all professional photos. I wasn't uploading anything fake or baseless. It was all my work. I don't know why they found my work objectionable," Zahra told HuffPost India.

"I was just uploading my professional work and nothing else... I am clueless, I don't know what to say, how to react," she added.

Police on Sunday also summoned senior journalist Peerzada Ashiq, working for a national daily 'The Hindu', over a story he had filed recently.

Ashiq was summoned by the police in two different districts of Kashmir within a span of six hours to explain his position regarding one of his news reports.

Meanwhile, the Twitterati and journalists in Kashmir started the hashtag #StandWithMasratZahra in support of the woman journalist.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti's daughter Iltija Mufti said intimidating and harassing journalists in Jammu and Kashmir to stifle reportage has become the norm.

"Masarat Zahra, a photojournalist was booked under draconian UAPA for allegedly 'uploading anti national posts'. In J&K using VPNs or social media is now seen as a threat to public order," Iltija tweeted from her mother's handle.

In another tweet, she said, "Predominantly media in the country is largely pliable. The ones that have any credibility left are hounded & punished. It's worse for journalists from J&K who report at the cost of their lives. TOI reporter Samiya Latief was bullied & trolled on twitter."

Meanwhile, two prominent international non-government organizations Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) have called for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of charges against Zahra and Ashiq.

In a statement issued to media, Daniel Bastard, the head of RSF's Asia-Pacific desk said "In the absence of any substantiation by the police, we call on the Jammu and Kashmir authorities to immediately drop these outrageous charges against Masrat Zahra."

"These proceedings clearly amount to intimidation and, as such, directly violate article 19 (1a) of India's 1950 constitution. This photojournalist must be allowed to continue her work without fear of further harassment attempts," he added.

CPJ's senior Asia researcher, in New York, Aliya Iftikhar said that the Police should drop their

investigations into both journalists, and India should reform its laws to make such "capricious actions by police impossible."

"Masrat Zahra and Peerzada Ashiq should be free to report on events in Jammu and Kashmir without facing harassment and intimidation from local authorities," she added.

Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry also condemned the harassment of journalists in Kashmir and demanded withdrawal of case against Zahra.

"The filing of a case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against 26 year old photojournalist Masrat Zahra for uploading posts regarding her previously published works is a direct interference in the independence of the media," a KCCI spokesperson said.

The spokesperson said that earlier also, there have been several instances of journalists being summoned to Police Stations and questioned on "flimsy grounds".

## KPC Slams Police

have been called to police stations and forced to present themselves to explain their stories", KPC said in a statement.

"There are other cases where scribes have been harassed for traveling to report their stories.

In the latest incident in this regard, police has booked a young and promising female photo-journalist Masrat Zahra under 13 UA (P) Act and 505-IPC", the KPC said.

She was summoned to Cyber Police Station, Aircargo in Srinagar on April 18, 2020. However after Kashmir Press Club and Directorate of Information intervened at the highest level, the police dropped the summon.

"But now it emerges the police have filed a case against her with stringent charges and stringent acts and as per the conversation with Masrat, she has been asked to come to the Police Station concerned on Tuesday, April 21, 2020", KPC statement disclosed.

Masrat's work, as a freelance photo-journalist has appeared previously in Washington Post, Al-Jazeera, Quint, and Caravaan among others.

Similarly, police on Sunday (April 19) verbally summoned a senior journalist, Peerzada Ashiq, of The Hindu and asked him to explain the alleged factual inaccuracies in a story that was published the same day. While Peerzada explained his case to police in Srinagar, he was asked to travel to south Kashmir, some 40 kilometers away in evening, and present himself before a police officer in Anantnag district.

He returned late in the midnight to his home in Srinagar but in the meantime his family was terrified and concerned about his safety, according to the KPC.

Earlier also a reporter of Kashmir Observer Mushtaq Ahmad was thrashed and arrested by the police in Bandipora when he was out during lockdown period related to his professional work. He was released only after securing a bail from the court.

The Kashmir Press Club says that J&K government especially the police, need to understand there is a vast difference between journalism and cyber crime.

"While the government has every right to rebut a story of a journalist and allow a journalist to respond, cases against journalists for their stories and work are unwarranted and outrightly illegal and draconian", KPC statement added.

KPC said there is a full fledged government department -information and public relations - to deal with the issues between state and the journalists and any issue should be left for them to resolve.

"It is very unfortunate that when the world is in a grip of pandemic and when we need to stand together to combat the Covid-19, police has started filing cases against journalists and harassing them.

This is unacceptable for journalists of Kashmir who are well within their rights to seek freedom of expression and speech as guaranteed under the Constitution like other parts of the country", the KPC reiterated.

KPC has sought intervention of Home Minister Amit Shah, LG GC Murmu and Director General of Police Dillbagh Singh to issue direction that this harassment comes to end.

"We stand in solidarity with our colleagues especially Masrat Zahra and declare that journalism is not a crime", the KPC said and demanded that the charges be dropped against her.

The Kashmir Press Club has also sought the cooperation and support of Indian and international journalist bodies at a time "when the journalism in the region is under constant onslaught."



COVID-19

# Advisor Bhatnagar Takes Stock Of Medical Supplies, Other Health Measures In Kashmir

## Testing capacity increased, 747 samples taken in single day: DHSK

**SRINAGAR:** Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, convened a meeting here today to review the overall health scenario of Kashmir division in order to contain the spread of pandemic COVID-19. The meeting was attended by Director Health Services Kashmir (DHSK), Dr. Samir Mattoo, Deputy Director, Bashir Ahmad Chalkoo and other officials of the department.

The Advisor took a detailed review of the activities launched by the health department in Kashmir valley regarding prevention and control of corona virus besides taking stock of all the medical supplies and equipment available.

Speaking during the meet-



ing, the Advisor said that all precautions need to be followed to prevent spread of the infection besides the frontline workers should be provided with PPE kits as well as other equipment as they are more prone to infections.

The Advisor also said that testing capacity should be increased besides the rapid

testing should be held aggressively so that the virus can be contained at the earliest.

Director Health Services informed the meeting all the COVID-19 nominated hospitals of Kashmir are functioning normally besides the Sub-District Hospitals, Public Health Centers and other peripheral dispensaries are functioning

smoothly on daily basis.

The meeting was also informed that the field sampling has been increased in the valley and on Sunday around 747 samples was sent to different laboratories for testing.

Director Health Services also informed the meeting that additional staff has been trained for conducting rapid tests be-

sides 375 laboratory technicians of various hospitals have been trained for COVID-19 testing.

Advisor Bhatnagar directed the officials that while the normal patient care should be pursued with all seriousness all possible help should be provided to the patients of the pandemic.

The Advisor also directed the officials to ensure that adequate quantity of PPE kits, medical supplies and other equipment should be made available in all the hospitals to deal with the situation.

Advisor Bhatnagar also appreciated the efforts of health department while dealing with the emergency situation arising due to COVID-19.

## Police recovers kidnapped girl, accused arrested

**SRINAGAR:** Police in Srinagar recovered a girl who was kidnapped, the person involved in the crime was also arrested.

One person reported to Police Station Saddar that his daughter has been kidnapped by some unknown person from Mehjoornagar area of Srinagar.

On receipt of this information, case FIR No. 71/2020 under relevant sections of law was registered at PS Saddar and investigation into the matter was initiated.

During the course of investigation, officers taking assistance of the modern scientific aids were able to track the girl along with the kidnapper. Police recovered the girl and subsequently arrested the accused identified as Mohd Lateef Khan resident of Shunglipora Khag Budgam involved in the crime. After fulfilling all medico-legal formalities, the girl was handed over to her legal heirs. Investigation into the matter is in progress.

Swift action by police against anti-social elements has been appreciated by the locals.

Community members are requested to cooperate with police in curbing social crimes in their neighbourhood. They can share information pertaining to social crimes with police. We reassure the community members that our efforts in curbing social crimes shall continue.

# No shortage of protective gear in Bandipora: CMO

**BANDIPORA:** The District Administration, Bandipora strongly refuted the news report claiming shortage of protective gear for frontline workers handling COVID19 cases, here today. Chief Medical Officer, Bandipora, Dr Tajamul Hussain, said that the district administration and department of Health is providing adequate number of protective gears and other logistics including testing logistics for the frontline workers and the same are being provided to them as per the guidelines.

Contradicting the news report, Dr Tajamul, said there is no doctor in the district by the name Asiya as mentioned in the news report thus amply proving that the news report is concocted and baseless.

Giving details, CMO Bandipora said that there are 31 dedicated screening teams of Health experts in 12 Red zones of Hajin, Naidkhai, Gund Jahangeer, SK Bala, Batagund, Chandeergeer, madwan, Hakbara,



Kunan, Gund Qaiser, Gund Dachina, Nowgam and Bonakoot and the Personal Protective Equipments (PPE) are being provided to them strictly as per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and guidelines issued by the Union Ministry of Health.

He said there is no shortage of PPEs in the district and adequate quantity of PPEs has been procured by the district authorities besides receiving PPEs from several NGO's. He said that as the paramedics of

other health institutions do not require PPEs, all the basic protective gear including surgical masks, gloves and aprons are being provided to them.

Dr Tajamul said that out of the 48969 population of 12 red zones of the district 25821 persons have been screened so far. He added that the Rapid Response Teams are working tirelessly round the clock to conduct survey and lift suspects and contacts of positive cases for testing.

## DIVISIONAL COVID 19 CONTROL ROOM SET UP

### Coordinating efforts to track, treat, counsel people in its fight against Coronavirus infection

**SRINAGAR:** The divisional COVID-19 control room established by the government to combat spread of the infectious disease has emerged as a nerve centre for coordinating the efforts ranging from tracking patients and contacts to monitoring red zones and answering people from all over the country.

Chief Executive Officer JAKEDA and Officer on Special Duty (OSD), Dr Owais Ahmed, said that the Control Room for COVID-19 is functioning as a nerve centre for corona virus mitigation and is working tirelessly 24 x 7 with staff including surveillance officers, epidemiologists, medical officers and data entry operators etc.

He said the control room has been divided into a number of sections which are looking after call centre, contact tracing, coordination of sampling, monitoring quarantine facilities across the division, red zone

surveillance, coordination with districts for essential supplies, etc.

The call centre which also works 24X7 has been set up with dedicated helpline numbers to ensure that people get accurate information, support, counselling and response to health-related queries on novel coronavirus infectious disease, added Dr Owais. While appreciating the locals, he said that people have played a very important role by communicating through these helpline numbers about any suspected person who had concealed travel history or had contact with a positive patient.

Deputy Director Health Services and incharge 24X7 call center Dr Jehanzaib said that the phone numbers 0194-2457313, 0194-2452052, 0194-2440283, 0194-2457312 and a whatsapp number 6006454084 are manned by a team of 12 doctors and other experts every day on rotation basis on eight hour shift.

# SMC'S continual drive against illegal constructions

## 22 illegal constructions demolished during COVID-19 lockdown: Commissioner

**SRINAGAR:** Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) has demolished as many as 22 illegal constructions and removed encroachments during the country-wide lockdown to ordered to curb the spread of Corona virus.

Commissioner SMC, Gazanfar Ali said that despite being pre-occupied with sanitization works, in view of COVID 19 Pandemic, the SMC is constantly keeping vigil on the illegal constructions and encroachments carried by some miscreants.

He said that the anti-encroachment wing of SMC has demolished as many as 22 illegal structures and removed encroachments during current month, till date.

He added that during the current month demolition drives were carried in various areas including Palpora, Lal Bazar, Bemina, Sangam, Saida



Pora, Hyderpora and other places.

The Commissioner appealed people to abstain from illegal construction and encroachments and warned of stern action against anyone found involved in such illegal activity.

# Div Com reviews Ramzaan arrangements

**SRINAGAR:** In view of ensuing holy month of Ramzaan, the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole today chaired a high level meeting to review arrangements put in place by the district administrations across the Kashmir Division.

In view of current COVID-19 Pandemic, threadbare discussion was held in the meeting regarding proper sanitation, fumigation, distribution of essential commodities, uninterrupted electricity & water and other arrangements.

The Divisional Commissioner asked the SMC and ULB authorities to ensure better sanitation and fumigation of all public place including lanes and by-lanes besides installing and repairing street lights in the city and other important places.

SMC authorities informed that the Corporation will start mechanical de-silting of drains by pressing ten machines into



service, soon.

To avoid the overloading on transformers, Pole directed DCs to frame inspection teams in their respective districts stem the incidence of pilferage.

PHE will ensure uninterrupted water supply during the holy month and will keep additional water tankers in ready mode.

DC Ganderbal was asked to ensure that Malshai Bagh canal restoration work is completed in

a time bound manner.

The Director FCS&CA informed the meeting that department had already distributed ration and is presently distributing free ration to BPL category consumers under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojna.

Div Com directed the Deputy Commissioners to ensure smooth and timely distribution of essential commodities in the valley and to monitor the dis-

tribution process by seeking details from the concerned Tehsildars and Patwaris.

It was decided that from the next month, the department of Food Supplies and Consumer Affairs will publicize the ration distribution schedule through media for the information of the consumers.

The District Control rooms will also addressed grievances regarding Ramzan arrange-

ments, the meeting was informed.

Div Com also issued necessary directions to other concerned departments so that people do not face any inconvenience in present COVID-19 situation.

The Divisional Commissioner stressed concerned departments to work with dedication, synergy and close coordination so that people do not face any inconvenience during the holy month of Ramzaan.

The meeting was attended by MD, KPDCL, Aijaz Ahmad, Chief Engineers Power & PHE, Additional Commissioner SMC, Directors of Urban Local Bodies, Deputy Director Health, Joint Director Fire & Emergency Services, Officer of the J&K Muslim Wakf Board besides senior officers of various departments while all the Deputy Commissioners of the Valley participated in the meeting through video conferencing.

## 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
- BIJHERA: 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

- 43 BC - Battle of Mutina: Mark Antony is again defeated in battle by Aulus Hirtius, who is killed. Antony fails to capture Mutina and Decimus Brutus is murdered shortly after.
- 1453 - Turkish fleet sinks ships Golden Receiver in Constantinople
- 1521 - Battle at Villalar: Emperor Charles I beats Communards
- 1526 - Battle at Panipat: Central Asian conqueror Babur defeats Sultan Ibrahim Lodi, establishing the Mughal Empire in India.
- 1572 - France & England sign anti-Spanish military covenant
- 1649 - Maryland Toleration Act passed in the American colony, allowing freedom of worship for Christians but sentencing to death anyone who rejected the divinity of Jesus
- 1654 - England & Sweden sign trade agreement
- 1689 - William III & Mary Stuart proclaimed King & Queen of England
- 1739 - Spain & Naples-Austria sign peace accord
- 1796 - Napoleon and the French defeat the Piedmontese at Battle of Mondovì
- 1836 - Battle of San Jacinto, Texas wins independence from Mexico
- 1857 - Alexander Douglas patents the bustle
- 1898 - Spanish-American War: The U.S. Congress, on April 25, recognizes that a state of war exists between the United States and Spain as of this date.
- 1945 - Allied troops occupy German nuclear laboratory
- 1945 - He Shima Okinawa conquered in 5 days, 5,000 die
- 1954 - Gregori Malenkov becomes premier of USSR
- 1954 USAF flies French battalion to Vietnam
- 1960 - Brasilia becomes capital of Brazil
- 1963 - The Universal House of Justice of the Bahá'í Faith is elected for the first time.
- 1969 - The Ministry of Defence in London announces that British troops would be used in Northern Ireland to guard key public installations following a series of bombings
- 1972 - John Young & Charles Duke explores Moon (Apollo 16)
- 1972 - Orbiting Astronomical Observatory 4 (Copernicus) launched
- 1976 - Swine Flu vaccine, for non-epidemic, enters testing
- 1976 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalatinsk USSR
- 1977 - Zia ur-Rahman appointed president of Bangladesh
- 1981 - US furnish \$1 billion in arms to Saudi Arabia
- 1987 - Tamil bomb attack in Colombo Sri Lanka, 115 killed
- 1989 - Thousands of Chinese crowd into Beijing's Tiananmen Square cheering students demanding greater political freedom
- 1991 - French underwater archaeologist Franck Goddio discovers the San Diego, Dutch galleon sunk in 1600 off Fortune Island in the Philippines.
- 1997 - I. K. Gujral sworn in as Prime Minister of India
- 2008 - The United States Air Force retires the F-117 Nighthawk.
- 2012 - Two trains in Sloterdijk, Netherlands, injure 117 people in a head on collision
- 2013 185 people are killed in a conflict between Islamic extremists and the Nigerian military
- 2013 - Horacio Cartes is elected President of Paraguay
- 2017 - Taliban attack army base at Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan, killing more than 100

## From KO Archives

## Pak, India Must Seize 'Historic Opportunity': Musharraf

### MANILA

Pakistan and India must seize the "historic opportunity" for peace in the wake of the recent meeting "of the two countries leaders, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf said here today.

Addressing the Philippine Congress following his trip to New Delhi. Musharraf said that he was "encouraged by my interaction" with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and other Indian leaders.

"Both sides realise the historic opportunity created by the improvement in bilateral

Relations must be seized to address the. Long standing Kashmir dispute squarely with determination, courage and flexibility," he said.

He said success in this area would "usher in a new era of durable peace, trust and confidence that would ensure a bright future for the region.

Musharraf, who is on a three-day state visit to this country remarked that East and Southeast Asia had left South Asia behind in economic growth, remarking that "our neighbourhood has remained disturbed due to the turmoil in Afghanistan and the Kashmir issue between India Pakistan.

The Pakistan President said with the improvements in Afghanistan and the warming of ties between India and Pakistan, the situation in the South Asian region should improve.

He expressed hope that Pakistan could use its strategic location as a crossroads between South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia to "promote economic cooperation within these regions through special arrangements and development of infrastructure. (AFP)

(Kashmir Observer, 21 April, 2005)



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## UAPA against a journalist

On Sunday, cyber arm of J&K Police registered a formal complaint under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act against the photojournalist Masrat Zahra, 26, for allegedly uploading anti-national posts photographs on social media. Calling her a “Facebook user”, the police complaint charges her for “uploading anti-national posts with criminal intention to induce the youth and to promote offenses against public tranquillity”. The complaint alleges that the journalist “is also believed to be uploading photographs which can provoke the public to disturb law and order”. It also adds that “the user is also uploading posts that tantamount to glorify the anti-national activities and dent the image of law-enforcing agencies besides causing disaffection against the country”.

At the same time, the complaint advises the general public “to refrain from misuse of social media platforms and circulation of unauthorised information through such platforms. Any person found indulging in such activities, the complaint adds, “will be dealt with strictly under law”.

Zahra has been a photojournalist for the past four years and her work has been published in Washington Post, Al Jazeera, Quint, Caravan etc. She is the second journalist to be booked the law after Asif Sultan, who is still in jail. Journalist fraternity in Kashmir has opposed the police complaint her and urged the government to withdraw it. Kashmir Press Club has condemned the “harassment and summons to journalists by police”. The KPC has sought “the cooperation and support of Indian and international journalist bodies at a time when the journalism in the region is under constant onslaught”.

Similarly, Network of Women in Media India has expressed its shock at the FIR lodged against Zahra. The NWMI has termed the charges against her as “preposterous in the extreme” and amounting to “rank intimidation of a journalist”.

Police has also summoned the Peerzada Ashiq, correspondent of Hindu newspaper to explain the alleged factual inaccuracies in one of his stories. However, he was allowed to go home after giving his explanation. That said, the cases against journalists and summons to them over their stories has been normalized over the past year, more so after the revocation of Article 370 in August last. This is undermining the inalienable right to the freedom of expression guaranteed by the constitution. For a journalist to report on the ongoing situation is his profession. Government can have questions about the accuracy of the reports and hold the journalist responsible for any lacunae thereof. Similarly, for a photojournalist uploading photographs on social media goes with the nature of job. Moreover, more than a written story photos give an honest account of a given situation. This can't be held against the professional. Government, therefore, needs to revisit its current approach to journalists and journalism. And to start with, it should drop the case against Zahra.

### OTHER OPINION

## Agriculture's Moment

Farmers are currently harvesting, if they haven't already, a bumper rabi crop. The India Meteorological Department has forecast a 100 per cent normal south-west monsoon (subject to a model error of  $\pm 5$  per cent), with the possibility of weak La Niña conditions (the opposite of El Niño that is generally not favourable for rainfall in the subcontinent) developing in the second half of the four-month season from June to September. That bodes well for the coming kharif planting season too. Agriculture is important from two standpoints. The first is inflation control, which is predicated on adequate supply of food, feed and fibre. Secondly, farmers and rural labourers have high marginal propensity to consume. The Indian economy today needs both low and stable inflation as well as boost to spending, which is best guaranteed by increased farm production and incomes.

That being so, concerted efforts are required to ensure proper marketing of the rabi wheat, mustard, pulses and other harvested crops. The issuing of coupons or SMSes by governments to farmers for bringing their respective produce to mandis at given dates and times is fine, given the imperative for maintaining social distancing. But it raises the question: Why limit procurement only to mandis? Why not open purchase centres at rice and dal mills or, for that matter, even village schools, panchayat offices, primary cooperative societies, district courts and other unused public places during lockdown? Wheat and chana, after all, only have to be unloaded, cleaned, weighed, filled in gunnies and stocked. There's no necessity for cold storage or reefer vehicles for subsequent movement to Food Corporation of India's godowns. If the idea is to procure and pay farmers fast, while preventing overcrowding, the best way is not to stagger, but spread out purchases beyond mandis.

Equally urgent is planning for kharif, where sowing of cotton and paddy nurseries will start from early to mid-May in North-West India. Plantings of these and other crops across the country will take off from June, with the arrival of the monsoon. There is no time to lose with regard to arranging supply of seed, fertiliser and crop protection chemicals. The same farmers who would sell grain in hordes now will very soon queue up for buying inputs for the next crop. The challenge of managing crowds at fertiliser sale points is serious enough in normal times. In the time of novel coronavirus, it would be a herculean endeavour. That extra logistical effort is, however, worth mounting for a sector offering some hope in this most uncertain economic environment. This is also the time to free agricultural markets. Allow the farmer to sell to anyone and anywhere, while simultaneously lifting all restrictions on stocking, domestic movement and export of produce.

*The Indian Express*

# Legal and Human Rights of the Dead; An Overview

ALI MALIK

THESE are not ordinary times. Every now and then we are faced with a moral dilemma while dealing with the enormous situation, one among them being how to deal with those who don't survive the Covid-19 infection. The situation has forced us to bury/ cremate the dead without allowing their families to say them a farewell that may leave them scarred permanently.

On April 17 we had an altogether different issue where some people in North Kashmir objected to the burial of a Covid-19 victim in a local cemetery hurting the sentiments of a whole community. This makes it imperative to have a look at the rights including possibly human rights of the deceased in a global context and the possible collective response of the international community.

The archeological finds at Burzahom show that the dead have been buried with proper ritual as early as 3500 BC like the ancient Egyptian and Harappan/ Indus Valley civilisations. It is difficult to establish the exact nature of space that the dead held among the living during those days but a study of recent/ modern history of Kashmir reveals how we have given the saints of yesteryears a special position in our socio-cultural life. Not only the saints, in our cultural value system those who die just shift their residence to the nearby cemetery but continue to thrive in our consciousness as before as if walking the nearby streets.

Humans have all along treated their dead with extreme reverence, honour and dignity, more so, in performing their last rites and there is hardly any empirical evidence available in any part of the world to suggest something to the contrary. The dead have existed in living human spaces, among diverse cultures and continue to play central and critical roles in daily human lives, in de-



grees and ways that the living would die to emulate. It has been no different in Kashmir.

The archeological finds at Burzahom show that the dead have been buried with proper ritual as early as 3500 BC like the ancient Egyptian and Harappan/ Indus Valley civilisations. It is difficult to establish the exact nature of space that the dead held among the living during those days but a study of recent/ modern history of Kashmir reveals how we have given the saints of yesteryears a special position in our socio-cultural life. Not only the saints, in our cultural value system those who die just shift their residence to the nearby cemetery but continue to thrive in our consciousness as before as if walking the nearby streets.

While all legal systems give recognition to the instructions and nominations through will of the deceased posthumously including, now a days, those regarding donating organs, these are enforced for the benefit and at the behest of the beneficiary as the deceased has no powers to enforce these and therefore is not thought to be invested with a legal right. But it is the same with those who are in a vegetative state or those who are of unsound

mind and these people are holders of perfect legal rights. In any case rights are generally described in bundles, it would be perfectly fine in legal theory that some of these rights stay invested in humans posthumously. For example right not to be defamed after death would be a perfect legal right even though such right would accrue to a person only when he is alive. Codification of such rights would go a long way in removing the confusion on the subject.

Another and probably the most important issue is whether dead bodies have human rights? There are difficulties here. A corpse or dead body is considered to be non living material distinct from a human being and so how can it have human rights? Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises the right to dignity among other human rights as basic and fundamental and that no human being shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. I haven't come across any case law that would suggest this basic right to dignity extends beyond death, although since times immemorial, people have been obliged through custom to give proper

dignified burial or cremation to a corpse and neither to molest/ disturb those buried nor to desecrate the mortal remains.

There have been exceptions where, for example, the bones of those buried during the plague of 1378 were excavated and placed in the bone church/ Sedlec Ossuary during the nineteenth century that has been commercially promoted as a tourist destination (commonly known as dark tourism) even though it can't be said that such ossuaries have been built with intention to desecrate mortal remains of humans. It is true that vandalism of human corpses is categorised as extreme violence in all societies, yet molestation and sexual abuse of corpses is not classified/ codified as rape anywhere in the world. (Correct me if I am wrong).

Coming back to human rights, while the Geneva Convention/ International Humanitarian law expressly provides for decent burial of the soldiers/ prisoners who are killed during any conflict as per the religious beliefs and insists on marking and maintaining their graves, we don't have similar codified international law for civilians. In the absence of such legal principles the world has seen with anguish the treatment meted out to the dead during the recent wave of immigration to Europe by desperate people seeking asylum from hunger and persecution.

With the mass number of casualties during the current Corona crisis, the international community has to come forward with an elaborate set of principles extending the scope of human rights of dignity and non desecration/ non disturbance to human corpses that shall encourage member states to enact their own laws dealing with the subject.

Meanwhile our society has to rise to the occasion and ensure that proper and decent burial is not denied to any Covid-19 victim and our social conscience is not bruised.



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## Tablighi Jama'at and Spread of Covid-19: My Response

This is in response to the reaction of Dr Nazir Ahmad Zargar Sahab to my article on “Tablighi & Covid-19: Where Have We Gone Wrong?”

Mr Zargar writes in his piece titled Tablighi Jama'at and The Spread of Covid-19: “It appears the author seems to have done no research on the subject but has only reproduced the views of Kunwar Khuldune Shahid, a Pakistan based journalist who calls himself a progressive and moderate Muslim and often writes for the cause of weaker sections of Pakistani society like Ahmadiya community etc. The author has outrightly blamed Tablighi Jama'at for spread the disease in the Muslim world.”

The author is an Islamic scholar and by claiming that I have reproduced someones content he has questioned his own integrity. I have published in the Opinion Section of KO where authors draw conclusions based on facts. And my facts are mostly based on my own personal experience and the recently published literature. Since it is a newspaper so references and citations are not part of such writings. This is the first time that I have heard about Mr. Kunwar Khuldune Shahid, and I have not followed his article to write mine. Therefore, expecting such an allegation from a scholar, and that too Islamic one is least expected. What is your proof Mr Zargar? Is this what Islam teaches us? Why can't we have a difference of opinions and live with that. Do we need to blame each other for life without reflecting on our problems? I have a feeling that you have not read my article properly (see below), and you have jumped to conclusion in haste. I have NOT blamed Tablighi Jama'at alone. There are abundance of reports all around the world about these instances, and one cannot just shut eyes. We have to react. And I am reproducing below what I have written:

“So, here we are, dealing with a group of Muslims that has turned into a coronavirus infection carrier. And they are not alone in this. There are many other similar and largely religious groups that are not listening to authorities and are risking their own lives along with others. And the solution to this ignorance is nothing but the awareness of real Islamic knowledge which will only come from highly skilled and knowledgeable scholars of Islam. Therefore, it is time for such scholars to come forward and play their role in delivering the right information to people.”

Any scholar should understand the gravity of blaming people for no reason, and that is what you have done in reaction to my article. Look what you have written again:

“It appears to be part of the wishful and well calculated Islamophobia campaign, which has been there from last so many years”.

Have some dignity and respect for people who write voluntarily with a motivation to spread awareness so that we all change for good. Please spend some time on cross checking facts about authors and what

they have written in the past before writing hate filled pieces. A typical research means you are digging deeper into the truth, and coming up with a balanced writing. But unfortunately what you have written above is fiction and a reflection of your emotional and anger filled mind.

The author further writes: “In addition to maligning the Tablighi Jama'at with respect to the spread of Covid-19 the author (means me) has also tried to spew venom against this movement by projecting it as hub of illiterate and rigid religious people who have no knowledge of religious sciences.”

Please understand that I will never malign anyone, and that includes Tablighi Jama'at. I have read many international and national media reports on how coronavirus was linked to Tablighi Jama'at. And it is true that virus has traveled with them, as it travels with anyone else. As a respectful and responsible organization one would expect it to act sensibly, and responsibly. These people should actually come forward and inform people NOT to come out so that virus spread is checked. They should have helped people to minimize the infection and help those who were in the state of distress. For example it would reflect nicely had they used their influence to facilitate the transport for the poor laborers who are immensely suffering throughout India from the day the sudden lockdown was announced.

And one of the most famous Tablighi Jama'at member Maulana Tariq Jameel has categorically said that one must listen to authorities and follow the instructions. So, the author must relook into all of the coronavirus related incidents in the world that are linked to Tablighi Jama'at, and then re-reflect on what I have written.

Obviously I have not said this: “It as a hub of illiterate and rigid religious people who have no knowledge of religious sciences”, below is what I written, and you seem to have twisted facts.

“They are not capable of any harm that could brand them as an extremist group except that they live in a world that is more fictitious than real and that is because of their religious ignorance. The lack of Islamic scholarship, and abundance of shallow knowledge on Islam has made this group vulnerable to sharp criticism all over the world.”

Now, what I was intending to say is this: Tablighi Jama'at is mostly restricted to superficial knowledge of Islam where they are completely apolitical. Remember this is my opinion. When I tried to discuss with them about Kashmir issue and atrocities on Muslims in India etc, I received absolutely no scholarly feedback. Instead I was repeatedly told to ‘work on yourself’ and ‘be a good Muslim’. And that is the reasons I couldn't continue with them because for me it was contrary to the teaching of Islam, and our dear Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him). Muslims have to follow Prophet (Pbuh) in letter and spirit as their role model. Tablighi Jama'at too claims to follow same but, then how does

it make sense to not react when people around you are lynched, murdered and oppressed? Nizamuddin Center of this organization, is located in Delhi, and have you ever heard them speaking against what just happened to Muslims in Delhi? Why not? Is this what Islam teaches? Absolutely not. If you are saying Islam is apolitical then you have unfortunately superficial understanding of Islam (see below), and that is why I wrote abundance of shallow knowledge.

Islamic Scholar Robin S. Doak writes in his book Empire of the Islamic World:

“During his 10 years in Medina, Muhammad became more than just a spiritual leader. He put his administrative and political skills to good use, effectively acting as town's leader. All of the legal and political decisions in Medina reflected the words of God as revealed through Muhammad. Muhammad's power also improved the lot of Muslims in the town. While they had been spit at and vilified in Mecca, in Medina they had prestige and importance. Islam was evolving from a religious movement to a powerful political one.”

Now, reflect on this: Tablighi Jama'at was founded in India in 1927 and has headquarters in Nizamuddin, Delhi, and that makes this organization ~100 years old. Now in these years I would have expected their contribution in the progression of Muslims (if not all humans). How many media groups do you own, so that they can become your voice when your enemies are targeting you and your religion? How many famous national and international research and technological institutes have you founded to raise the status of Muslim community? What is your role in economic development of Muslim world and so on? And more importantly what is the contribution on the Quranic knowledge and its link with the modern science etc. How many top Islamic scholars are from this group? The concerns are may...

As a family member on this planet I do have issues with Tablighi Jama'at but I am not against your mission. I greatly appreciate their service to Islam, and in making an individual to reflect on oneself, which is a great thing to do. When you use your own savings and earnings to reach people and talk Islam this is one of the best things that one could do, and we all appreciate it. Your mission to reach the entire world is coming true, and it was impossible without your sincerity, hard work, and persistence. As a friend, and a family member I do have some concerns, which I wish you will work on to make this mission a success. We are with you, and we will always be here for you. Those who are deliberately misleading, manipulating, and distorting coronavirus infection to target Muslims are our enemies, and these people are destined to fail in their evil designs. These are hypocrites, and we must have an eye to distinguish foe from a friend. May Allah (SWT) protect us, and unite us as one family unit.

*Dr Afroz Ahmad Shah  
afroz.shah@ubd.edu.bn*



## Iran Opens Up As Economic Woes Trump Coronavirus Infection Fears

### Agencies

Tehran: Iran on Monday began opening intercity highways and major shopping centers to stimulate its sanctions-choked economy, gambling that it has brought under control its coronavirus outbreak



— one of the worst in the world — even as some fear it could lead to a second wave of infections.

Stores from high-end malls to the meandering alleyways of Tehran's historic Grand Bazaar opened their doors, though the government limited their working hours until 6 p.m. Restaurants, gyms and other locations remain closed, however.

There are still lingering questions over Iran's outbreak and the safety of those returning to work. Taxi drivers partitioned their seats from the customers with plastic shields and wore masks, having seen colleagues sickened and killed by the virus and the COVID-19 illness it causes.

"We, the taxi drivers, are at the highest risk than anybody else because we are constantly in touch with people," cab driver Nemat Hassanzadeh said. "Despite that, we have no choice but to work because we cannot afford to sleep at home and not to work

with these high prices. ... I am a tenant and need the money to pay the monthly rent and also pay off my car loan."

Iran's outbreak has killed over 5,000 people in over 80,000 reported cases, though even Iran's parliament suggests the death toll is nearly double that and overall cases remain vastly underreported. Deaths and new cases continue to be reported.

Iran downplayed the crisis for weeks, even as top officials found themselves sick with the virus. The country's civilian government, led by President Hassan Rouhani, has declined to implement the 24-hour lockdowns seen in other Mideast nations.

## Nations Offer Wide Mix Of Solutions For Easing Lockdowns

### Agencies

BERLIN: People relax in a park on Sunday. Germany will take its first steps towards normality on Monday as small shops in some regions will be reopened after a gap of one month.—AFP

BERLIN: Pressure mounted on Sunday on governments to ease the economic pain of coronavirus lockdowns after protests from those fearing for their livelihoods. Authorities responded with a range of possible dates and solutions and a few emphatic "not yet's".

Shutdowns that began in China in late January and spread to Europe, the United States and elsewhere have disrupted economic, social, cultural and religious life across the globe and plunged the world into its most painful economic slump since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Tens of millions of workers have lost their jobs; millions more fear that they are next.



With the arc of infection different in every nation, proposals have differed for coping with the virus that has killed more than 160,000 lives over the past four months and for which there is still no vaccine. Countries such as Britain say it's too soon to give definite lockdown easing dates.

But in Germany, which has managed to significantly slow the rate of new infections since mid-

March, most small stores can reopen on Monday (today).

The head of an association representing German cities said many people would likely welcome the chance to shop in person again. "But (we) are not expecting a huge rush now," Helmut Dedy told Germany's dpa news agency. "The stores that are reopening will be just as accessible a week later."

## In shadow of coronavirus, Muslims face a Ramazan like never before

Days before the holy fasting month of Ramazan begins, the Islamic world is grappling with an untimely paradox of the new coronavirus pandemic: enforced separation at a time when socialising is almost sacred.

The holiest month in the Islamic calendar is one of family and togetherness — community, reflection, charity and prayer.

But with shuttered mosques, coronavirus curfews and bans on mass prayers from Senegal to Southeast Asia, some 1.8 billion Muslims are facing a

Ramazan like never before.

Across the Muslim world, the pandemic has generated new levels of anxiety ahead of the holy month, which is expected to begin from Thursday evening in some countries.

In Algiers, Yamine Hermache, 67, usually receives relatives and neighbours at her home for tea and cold drinks during the month that Muslims fast from dusk till dawn. But this year she fears it will be different.

"We may not visit them, and they will not come," she said, weeping. "The coronavi-

rus has made everyone afraid, even of distinguished guests."

In a country where mosques have been closed, her husband Mohamed Djemoudi, 73, worries about something else.

"I cannot imagine Ramazan without Taraweeh," he said, referring to additional prayers performed at mosques after iftar.

In Jordan, the government in coordination with neighbouring Arab countries, is expected to announce a fatwa outlining what Ramazan rituals will be permitted, but for millions of Muslims, it already feels so different.

## Turkey blocks official Saudi, UAE news websites in retaliation

### Agencies

Ankara: Turkey has blocked public access to the websites belonging to the official news agencies of Saudi Arabia and its regional ally the United Arab Emirates amid simmering tensions between Ankara and Riyadh over the 2018 murder of a prominent Saudi journalist in Istanbul.

The ban was enforced on Sunday against the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) and the UAE's Emirates News Agency (WAM) as well as more than a dozen other websites.

Earlier this month, Saudi Arabia blocked several Turkish media websites, including those of state broadcaster TRT and Turkey's official Anadolu news agency. The UAE, however, is yet to take any action against any Turkish website.

The action by Riyadh came after a move by a Turkish court on April 12 to accept an indictment brought against 20 Saudis, including two former associates of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, for the brutal murder of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018.

Khashoggi, a former advocate of the Saudi royal court who had become a critic of bin Salman, was killed and his body dismembered by a Saudi hit squad after being lured into the consulate. The indictment identified the associates as former deputy intelligence chief Ahmad Asiri and former royal aide Saud al-Qahtani.

According to The Washington Post, for which Khashoggi was a columnist, the CIA has concluded that bin Salman personally ordered his killing. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has also said the killing was ordered at the "highest levels" of the Saudi government.

## Fauci tells protesters no recovery if virus not 'under control'

Washington: Anthony Fauci, the top infectious disease expert on the White House coronavirus task force, pushed back against protesters demonstrating against stay-at-home orders, saying the U.S. economy won't recover until the virus is "under control."

Fauci said his message to the protesters is that "this is something that is hurting from the standpoint of economics" but that re-opening too soon could cause even more harm. His comments on ABC's "Good Morning America" contrasted with remarks made by President Donald Trump, who has encouraged the protests.

"Unless we get the virus under control, the real recovery economically is not going to happen," Fauci said. "So what you do if you jump the gun and go into a situation where you have a big spike, you're going to set yourself back."



Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION CHADOORA NOTICE INVITING FRESH TENDER NIT No: 02 /ET/EE/R&B/Chadoora of 04/2020 For and on behalf of the President of India, e-tenders (in single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-								
SN	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (in Rupees)	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	Time of Completion (days)	Time & Date of opening of Bid	Class of Contractor	MH Account
1	Beautification of IG road km 3 <sup>rd</sup> (RD 0-470 Mtr) by way of clearance of side drains, washing/repairing of kerb stones, painting of new Barzulla Bridge police beats, grills iron Railings, Poles etc including face lifting of walls etc.	3.11	200	3110	05	29/04/2020	SHG	3054 M&R
2	Beautification of IG road km 3 <sup>rd</sup> (RD 470-1000 Mtr) & km 4 <sup>th</sup> by way of clearance of side drains, washing/repairing of kerb stones, painting of police beats, grills iron Railings, Poles etc including face lifting of walls etc.	4.43	200	8860	07	29/04/2020	DEE	3054 M&R
3	Beautification of IG road km 5 <sup>th</sup> by way of clearance of side drain, washing/repairing of kerb stones, painting of police beats, grills iron Railings, Poles etc including face lifting of walls etc and repairing of kerb stones.	3.07	200	6140	05	29/04/2020	DEE	3054 M&R
4	Beautification of IG road km 6 <sup>th</sup> by way of clearance of side drain, washing/repairing of kerb stones, painting of police beats, grills, iron Railings and Poles etc including face lifting of walls etc.	3.03	200	6060	05	29/04/2020	DEE	3054 M&R
5	Beautification of IG road km 7 <sup>th</sup> by way of clearance of side drain, washing/repairing of kerb stones, painting of police beats grills iron Railings, Poles etc including face lifting of walls etc.	3.53	200	7060	05	29/04/2020	DEE	3054 M&R

1. The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website [www.iktenders.gov.in](http://www.iktenders.gov.in) as per schedule of dates given below:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	18/04/2020
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	20/04/2020
3	Bid submission Start Date	20/04/2020 from 1.00 PM.
4	Bid Submission End Date	28/04/2020 upto 4.00 PM.
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	29/04/2020 at 10.00 AM in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora

2. All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form).

No:  
DT:

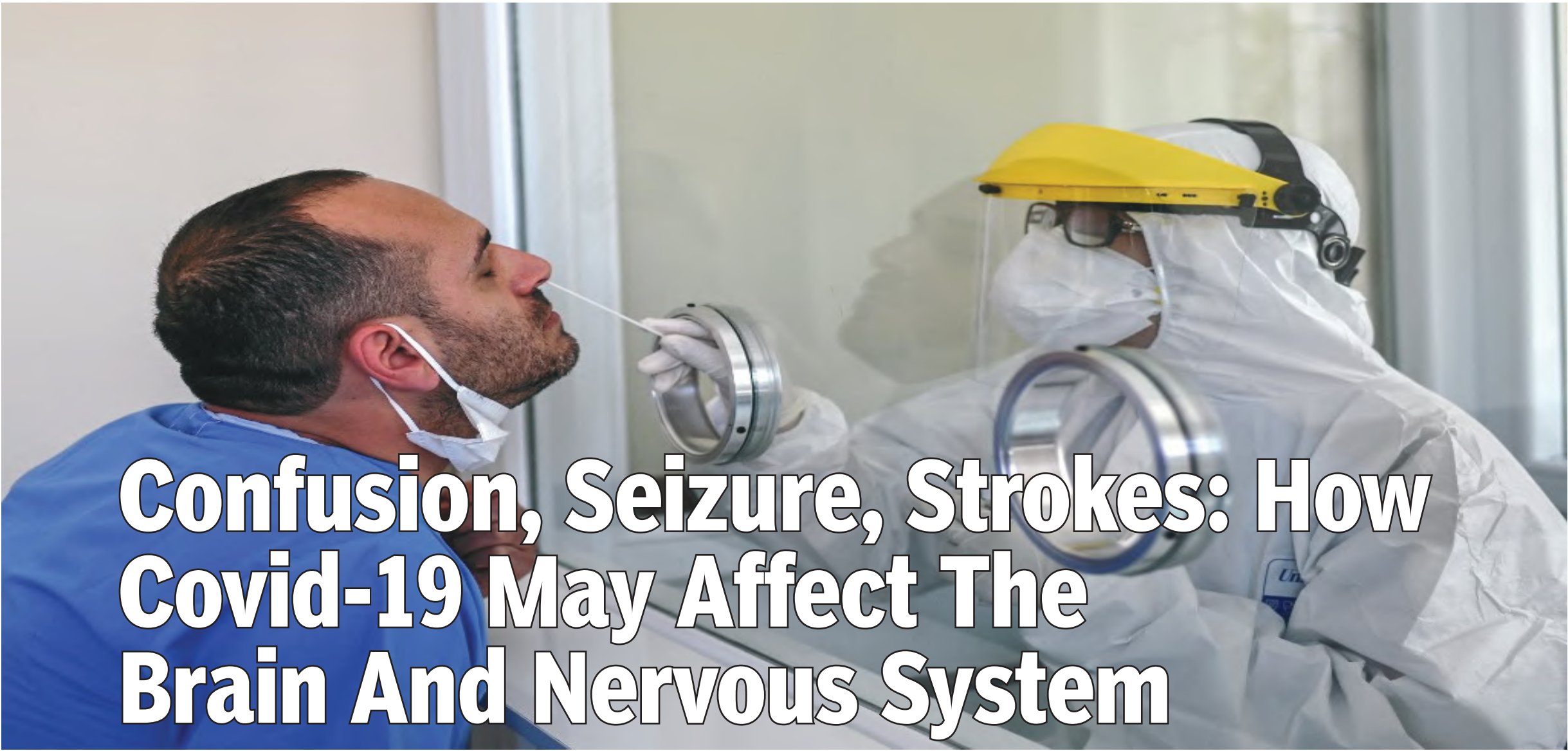
DIPK-228/20

Executive Engineer  
R&B Division Chadoora

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR. OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PHE RURAL WATER SUPPLY DIVISION GANDERBAL / SRINAGAR. H.Q: CHEKI – DUDERHAMA GANDERBAL Fax: 0194 – 2416292 e-mail: pherwsd@yahoo.in	
<b>Corrigendum 5<sup>th</sup></b>	
Reference:- This Office e-NIT No. Fresh 56/PHED/RWSD of 2019-20 issued under No. PHED/RWSD/Corrs/11566-90, Dated: 29.02.2020. Tender id No's. 2020_PHE_94000_1 ***_O_***	
Due to Poor / Nil response for the works bearing tender id No's. 2020_PHE_94000_1 published vide above referred e -NIT, the dates for submission of bids, Last date of submission of bid queries and opening of bids online are extended and re-fixed as under:-	
Last Date of Submission of Bids online	30.04.2020 up to 4:00 PM
Last date of submission of bid queries	28.04.2020 up to 4.00 PM
Date of Opening of Bids online	02.05.2020 11:30 AM
All other terms and conditions of the e-NIT shall remain unchanged.	
DIPK-229/20	
Sd/= (Er. Mohammad Aslam Zargar) Executive Engineer, RWS Division Ganderbal/Sgr. H.Q: Duderhama Ganderbal.	
No. PHE/RWSD/Corrs./356 – 65. Date d:- 16.04.2020	

Government of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir (NIT UNDER SINGLE COVER SYSTEM) OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION HANDWARA NOTICE INVITING TENDER NIT No. 02 –R&B DIVISION HAND. of 2020-21 e-tendering End: 18-23 DATED: - 18-04-2020								
For & on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of J&K Union Territory, e-tenders (in single cover system) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with Union Territory J&K Govt. CPWD, Railways and other state/Central Governments for the followings works:-								
S.No	Name of work	Est. cost (Rs.in lacs)	Cost of T/Doc (in Rs)	Earnest Money (in Rs)	Time for completion	Time and date of opening of Bid	Class of contractor	Major head of account
1	Improvement/Restoration of Natnussa Check Trich road by way of P/L wet mix incl. 25mm thick semidense with seal coat in patches/stretches (Machine mix liad by manually)	6.65	300/=	13300/=	07day s	29-04-2020	C & D/ HMPO	3054-M&R
2	Improvement/Restoration of Kralngud Ashpora road by way of P/L wet mix incl. 25mm thick semidense with seal coat in patches/stretches (Machine mix liad by manually)	5.70	300/=	11400/=	06day s	29-04-2020	C & D/ HMPO	3054-M&R
3	Improvement/Restoration of Natnussa Kandi road by way of P/L wet mix incl. 25mm thick semidense with seal coat in patches/stretches (Machine mix liad by manually)	5.70	300/=	5700/=	06day s	29-04-2020	S.H.G/ HMPO	3054-M&R
4	Improvement/Restoration of Vodhpura Bridge approach road by way of P/L wet mix incl. 25mm thick semidense with seal coat in patches/stretches (Machine mix liad by manually)	2.85	200/=	5700/=	03day s	29-04-2020	DEE/ HMPO	3054-M&R
5	Improvement/Restoration of Langate inner links by way of P/L wet mix incl. 25mm thick semidense with seal coat in patches/stretches (Machine mix liad by manually)	4.75	200/=	9500/=	05day s	29-04-2020	DEE/ HMPO	3054-M&R
Position of AATS : Accorded Position of funds Approved plan 1. The bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q) Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website <a href="http://WWW.iktenders.gov.in">WWW.iktenders.gov.in</a> Govt. in as per schedule of dates given below:-								
01.	Date of issue of Tender Notice	18-04-2020						
02.	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 20-04-2020 ( 11.00AM ) upto 28-04-2020 (4:00PM )						
03.	Bid submission start date	20-04-2020 from ( 11.30AM )						
04.	Bid submission end date	28-04-2020 (4 :00P.M)						
06.	Date & time of opening Bids (on line)	29-04-2020 at (11.00A.M) in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Handwara.						
16. All other terms and conditions are as per detailed NIT No. 01/2020-21 and PWD form 25(double agreement form) .								
Executive Engineer R&B Division Handwara.								
NO:- 18-23 DT:- 18-04-2020		DIPK-253/20						





# Confusion, Seizure, Strokes: How Covid-19 May Affect The Brain And Nervous System

Agencies

A pattern is emerging among COVID-19 patients arriving at hospitals in New York: Beyond fever, cough and shortness of breath, some are deeply disoriented to the point of not knowing where they are or what year it is. At times this is linked to low oxygen levels in their blood, but in certain patients the confusion appears disproportionate to how their lungs are faring. Jennifer Frontera, a neurologist at NYU Langone Brooklyn hospital seeing these patients, told AFP the findings were raising concerns about the impact of the coronavirus on the brain and nervous system. By now, most people are familiar with the respiratory hallmarks of the COVID-19 disease that has infected more than 2.2 million people around the world. But more unusual signs are surfacing in new reports from the frontlines. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association last week found 36.4 percent of 214 Chinese patients had

neurological symptoms ranging from loss of smell and nerve pain, to seizures and strokes. A paper in the New England Journal of Medicine this week examining 58 patients in Strasbourg, France found that more than half were confused or agitated, with brain imaging suggesting inflammation. “You’ve been hearing that this is a breathing problem, but it also affects what we most care about, the brain,” S Andrew Josephson, chair of the neurology department at the University of California, San Francisco told AFP. “If you become confused, if you’re having problems thinking, those are reasons to seek medical attention,” he added. “The old mantra of ‘Don’t come in unless you’re short of breath’ probably doesn’t apply anymore.” - Viruses and the brain - It isn’t completely surprising to scientists that SARS-CoV-2 might impact the brain and nervous system, since this has been documented in other viruses, including HIV, which can cause cognitive decline if untreated.

Viruses affect the brain in one of two main ways, explained Michel Toledano, a neurologist at Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. One is by triggering an abnormal immune response known as a cytokine storm that causes inflammation of the brain – called autoimmune encephalitis. The second is direct infection of the brain, called viral encephalitis. How might this happen? The brain is protected by something called the blood-brain-barrier, which blocks foreign substances but could be breached if compromised. However, since loss of smell is a common symptom of the coronavirus, some have hypothesized the nose might be the pathway to the brain. This remains unproven – and the theory is somewhat undermined by the fact that many patients experiencing anosmia don’t go on to have severe neurological symptoms. In the case of the novel coronavirus, doctors believe based on the current evidence the neurological impacts are more likely the result of overactive immune response rather

than brain invasion. To prove the latter even happens, the virus must be detected in cerebrospinal fluid. This has been documented once, in a 24-year-old Japanese man whose case was published in the International Journal of Infectious Disease. The man developed confusion and seizures, and imaging showed his brain was inflamed. But since this is the only known case so far, and the virus test hasn’t yet been validated for spinal fluid, scientists remain cautious. - More research needed - All of this emphasizes the need for more research. Frontera, who is also a professor at NYU School of Medicine, is part of an international collaborative research project to standardize data collection. team is documenting striking cases including seizures in COVID-19 patients with no prior history of the episodes, and “unique” new patterns of tiny brain hemorrhages. One startling finding concerns the case of a man in his fifties whose white matter –

the parts of the brain that connect brain cells to each other – was so severely damaged it “would basically render him in a state of profound brain damage,” she said. The doctors are stumped and want to tap his spinal fluid for a sample. Brain imaging and spinal taps are difficult to perform on patients on ventilators, and since most die, the full extent of neurologic injury isn’t yet known. But neurologists are being called out for the minority of patients who survive being on a ventilator. “We’re seeing a lot of consults of patients presenting in confusional states,” Rohan Arora, a neurologist at the Long Island Jewish Forest Hills hospital told AFP, saying that describes more than 40 percent of recovered virus patients. It’s not yet known whether the impairment is long term, and being in the ICU itself can be a disorienting experience as a result of factors including strong medications. But returning to normal appears to be taking longer than for people who suffer heart failure or stroke, added Arora.

## Here’s How Breastfeeding May Lead To Fewer Human Viruses In Infants

Agencies

Even small amounts of breast milk strongly influences the accumulation of viral populations in the infant’s gut and provides a protective effect against potentially pathogenic viruses, according to a new study. The findings expand upon prior research that suggests that breastfeeding plays a key role in the interaction between babies and the microbial environment. This latest research, published in the journal Nature, could influence strategies for the prevention of early gastrointestinal disorders, and encourage mothers to feed babies breast milk even when mixed with formula. “These findings can help us better understand why some babies get sick and develop life-threatening infections in their first months of life,” said study senior author Frederic Bushman from the University of Pennsylvania in the US. For the findings, the research team measured the numbers and types of viruses in the first stool – meconium – and subsequent stools of newborns in the US and Botswana using advanced genome sequencing and other methods. Upon delivery, babies had little or no colonization, but by one month of life populations of viruses and bacteria were well developed, with numbers



of viruses reaching a billion per gram of gut contents. Most of the first wave of viruses turned out to be predators that grow in the first bacteria that colonize the infant’s gut. Later, at four months, viruses that can replicate in human cells and potentially make humans sick were more prominent in the babies’ stools. A strong protective effect was seen for breastfeeding, which suppressed the accumulation of these potentially pathogenic viruses. According to the researchers, similar results were seen for infants from the US and Botswana. The newborns’ home country also played a part in the prevalence of viral infections. Babies from Botswana were more likely to have those potentially-harmful viruses in their stools at that 4-month mark compared to the stools of babies from the US. “Location of the mom and baby seems to play a role, probably due to the kind and number of microorganisms babies are exposed to environmentally,” said first author Guanxiang Liang.

## COVID-19: Paper towels may remove virus missed by poor hand washing

Agencies

People should dry their hands with paper towels to avoid spreading the new coronavirus, according to the authors of a study published on Friday that finds disposable tissues are better than jet dryers at removing pathogens missed by ineffective washing. Global health authorities have highlighted the crucial importance of washing hands with soap and water to protect against COVID-19, which has killed tens of thousands and spread around the world. Contaminated hands are a major route for germ transmission, potentially spreading pathogens to surfaces – like door handles or taps – and causing infection when people touch their faces. A small study by experts from Britain’s University of Leeds and Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust found that if hands had not been properly washed, drying with a paper towel was more effective at removing microbes. “We believe that our results are relevant to the control of the novel coronavirus that is spreading at pace worldwide,” said the authors, led by Ines Moura from the University of Leeds. “Paper towels should be the preferred way to dry hands after washing and so reduce the risk of virus contamination and spread.” Four volunteers had their hands contaminated using a bacteriophage – a virus that infects bacteria and is harmless to humans – and then did not attempt to wash the microbes away. They then dried their hands either with paper towels or a jet air dryer in a hospital toilet and went on to touch various surfaces including door handles, stair



rails, phones and stethoscopes. Researchers found that using both paper towels and jet dryers reduced the contamination on hands. - ‘Wash hands properly’ - But for 10 out of 11 surfaces sampled, the jet method left “significantly greater environmental contamination”. Microbes were found on all surfaces touched after using the jet dryer, with contamination on average 10 times higher than after the use of paper towels. The authors said the study was particularly relevant for hospital settings. They noted that while the NHS and World Health Organisation (WHO) recommend the use of disposable towels after hand-washing – as well as using them to turn off taps – healthcare facilities in the UK were increasingly using jet dryers. “Clearly how much virus remains on peoples’ hands after washing depends to a large extent on how efficiently people are at washing their own hands,” said Paul Hunter, professor in medicine at the University of East Anglia, in response to the research. “If people do not wash their hands properly then other people may be at risk if standing close to someone using such a jet dryer. This study reinforces the need to wash hands properly so as much virus is removed as possible before drying.” The study was due to be presented at this year’s European Congress on Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (EC-CMID) in Paris this month, which was itself cancelled due to the

## Hairfall, thinning, dandruff: Onion oil for all your hair care needs

Agencies

While home-made oils are handy, they doesn’t necessarily sort hair problems such as hair fall, thinning and dandruff. An oil that does address all these issues in one potion is ‘onion hair oil’. Our hectic lifestyles and consequently unhealthy eating habits along with pollution and stress become the main contributors to hair problems. Making quick lifestyle changes can be challenging but using a hair oil that helps nourish your hair is easy. Onion hair oil helps nourish your hair strands to make them look healthy and lustrous. It helps enable growth, therefore improving thinning and adding volume to their hair. Massaging onion oil with consistent small circular motions into the scalp can boost blood circulation which in turn helps in strengthening the roots. Shrey Jain and Dr. Vivek Mehta, co-founders of Corporation, underline the benefits of onion oil: - Onion is highly nutritious, which helps in enabling hair growth - It helps to add strength to weak hair strands especially caused due to pollution - Due to its organic nature, onion hair oil nourishes the hair follicles to increase hair volume and improve strength - Onion oil when massaged into the scalp by applying simple massage techniques enables good blood circulation that helps moisturise the scalp, reduces thinning and breakage - Juice of onion also helps control dandruff and reveals sparkling stronger hair - The potent antibacterial properties in onion hair oil help fight infections of the scalp. This reduces hair fall as scalp infections can cause massive loss of hair



## ICICI Bank launches voice banking services on Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** ICICI Bank on Monday said it has launched voice assistance-based banking services for its customers and they can check balance, seek credit card details as well as ask other queries among others through this application.

It said the WhatsApp-based ICICISStack offers nearly 500 services that covers almost all banking requirements including digital account opening, loan solutions, payment solutions, investments and care solutions. To get the benefit of



The bank said it has integrated its artificial intelligence (AI) powered multi-channel chatbot iPal with Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant through which its retail banking customers can undertake host of banking services through voice commands.

This novel facility offers customers yet another way to connect with their bank from home at a time when they are advised to stay indoors in the wake of the nationwide lockdown, ICICI Bank said in a release. The private sector lender said the voice-based facility comes close on the heels of its new digital initiatives such as WhatsApp chat-based ICICISStack aimed at providing uninterrupted banking ser-

ices for both retail and business customers. The voice banking offering, customers need to download the Alexa/Google Assistant and link their ICICI Bank account through a secure two factor authentication process.

Anup Bagchi, Executive Director, ICICI Bank said, the lender recently rolled out ICICISStack to facilitate crores of customers to continue all their banking, digitally and from a remote location, without visiting a bank branch.

"Now, we have introduced voice banking on two of the most popular voice assistants in the world. Our retail customers can execute a host of their banking requirements from their home securely and 24x7, without visiting a branch," Bagchi said.

## Tata Motors' January-March global wholesales down 35 per cent at 2,31,929 units



Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** Tata Motors on Monday said its group global wholesales, including Jaguar Land Rover, stood at at 2,31,929 units in the January-March quarter, lower by 35 per cent over last year.

The company said its global wholesales of all passenger vehicles in the fourth quarter of 2019-20 were at 1,59,321 units lower by 26 per cent from the year-ago

period, Tata Motors said in a statement.

Global wholesales for Jaguar Land Rover were 1,26,979 units. Jaguar wholesales for the quarter were 32,940 units, while Land Rover wholesales were at 94,039 units.

In the commercial vehicles segment, global wholesales of all Tata Motors and Tata Daewoo range in Q4 FY20 were at 72,608 units, lower by 49 per cent from Q4 FY19, the company said.



COVID-19

## Farming Operations Will Only Be Allowed After Following Safety Precautions: Baseer Khan

**SRINAGAR, APRIL 20:** Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan today said that government is taking various measure for the resumption of agriculture and horticulture related activities restricted as part of the nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The Advisor said this during a meeting, he chaired to review preparedness for resumption of agriculture related activities in Kashmir Division. Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Pandurang K. Pole, Director Agriculture, Kashmir, Director Horticulture, Kashmir, Director Floriculture, Director Horticulture Planning & Management, Director Sericulture, Director, Industries & Commerce, besides representatives of various Associations including Fruit Growers Association, Saffron Growers Association, Fertilizer Distributors Association, Pesticide Dealers Association and Dry Fruit Growers Association were present in the meeting.

The Advisor said that measures are being taking to ensure timely spray of required pesticides and fertilizer distribution besides resumption of other farming activities so that rural, agriculture and horticulture economy will not suffer during the lockdown. He asked the stakeholders to spread awareness among farming community about observing social distancing and other norms to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

He directed the concerned to utilize the potent media tools like social media, print and electronic media to spread awareness messages regarding importance of social distancing and adherence of guidelines and advisories related to the prevention of the COVID-19.

The Advisor directed the concerned to submit list of distributors and dealers dealing with fertilizers and pesticides to the concerned Deputy Commissioner's office so that their movement passes will be issued besides supervising and ensuring farming activities are taking place under the norms to prevent spread of Covid-19.

He said that Zonal Agriculture Officers will provide the list of movement passes required for resuming farming activities in their respective jurisdictions and directed the concerned for nominating an officer who will supervise farming activities at Sub-zonal level to ensure that there is no violation of norms in the field.

The Advisor directed deploying medical assistance teams who will physically verify the people being issues movement passes for farming activities.

The Director Agriculture Kashmir informed that the department is taking measure and precautions under the COVID-19 prevention norms. He informed that it is time for maize and paddy plantation and the department is taking various measure to generate awareness among farming commu-

nity regarding the pandemic.

The Director Horticulture informed the Advisor that targeted 150 hectares High Density Plantation is in process and pesticides and fertilizers dealers are being allowed for 2 hours to provide support to the framers in non COVID-19 Red Zones. The Advisor directed monitoring the activities to ensure that government advisory is followed in letter and spirit. Speaking on the occasion, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir asked the Director Horticulture to generate awareness among the farming community about precautions and preventions and the need to avoid the spread of COVID-19 among farming community.

The Director Industries & Commerce were directed to draw a complete movement plan of industrial activities and submit the same to the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir's office so that health and safety of unit holders and inhouse labourers is assured. The Advisor directed the concerned for conduction regular health check-up of the inhouse labourers, besides ensuring that Standard Operating Procures (SOP) are followed by the unit holders.

The meeting also discussed various issues related to the industries including cardboard boxes manufacturing and import of essential industrial raw material, besides floriculture nurseries and cut flower production.

## Air Asia trims staff salaries by up to 20 per cent for April amid lockdown

Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI:** Air Asia India has cut the April salary of its staff by up to 20 per cent to tackle the airline's finances amid the suspension of all commercial services till May 3 due to the lockdown, a source has said.

Those drawing Rs 50,000 per month or less have been spared from the wage cut. The Bengaluru-headquartered budget carrier is the latest to join the other domestic airlines such as IndiGo, SpiceJet and Vistara, who have already taken similar measures to cut fixed cost amid grounding of their fleet.

"AirAsia India has cut the April salary of its employees by up to 20 per cent. The senior management will take a pay cut of 20 per cent



while the wages of the executives falling in others categories have been reduced by 17 per cent, 13 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively," the source who is privy to the development said.

However, employees who are earning Rs 50,000 per month or less have not been given any pay cut as of now, he said. AirAsia India spokesperson refused to comment on the development when contacted.

## Airtel to pay April salaries of nearly 25,000 staff of distributors, retail franchisees



Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** Airtel has decided to pay the basic income for April to nearly 25,000 employees of its distribution partners and retail franchisee network to help them tide over the unprecedented situation arising out of the ongoing lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19.

In a letter addressed to distribution partners in Delhi NCR, Airtel said it is "acutely sensitive that this sudden lockdown has also reduced your (distribution partners) operations and returns during April."

"In order to help you tide over this tough time, we plan to extend a onetime support for the month of April. This is done with an endeavour to ensure that your FSE (field service executive) and other frontline colleagues get their basic income." Similar letters have gone out from various circle CEOs to distributors (of mobile connection and recharges), and retail franchisees network in other locations. While sources said that the move is expected to benefit about 25,000 employees of Airtel's distribution partners, the total monetary outgo for the company on this count could not be ascertained.

"We are all going through an unprecedented situation requiring a lockdown, due to which we are seeing a sharp drop in our business

as well."

This disruption has impacted many categories sharply. In a way we are fortunate that we are associated with an industry that helps keep the 'lights on' thereby, keeping the country connected and people in touch with their loved ones," said the Airtel letter seen by PTL. It added that the company is absolutely confident that once the lockdown is over by 3rd May, it will spring back and win in the market place.

According to a source, Airtel has also provided free Covid-19 insurance to all field service executives working with its distributors, as a gesture of gratitude.

In addition, Airtel will continue to offer scholarship schemes for children of its distributors with the aim of supporting their families.

The support to distributors and franchisee partners is part of 'Atoot Bandhan' campaign of the company.

India, last week, decided to extend lockdown restrictions till May 3, to contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic in the country, which has so far claimed 543 lives and infected 17,265 people. Bharti Airtel has said it is extending validity of 30 million low-income prepaid customers till May 3.

These customers will now be able to receive incoming calls on their Airtel mobile numbers even after the validity of their plan is exhausted, it had said.

## Rupee settles 14 paise lower at 76.53 against US dollar



Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI:** The Indian rupee declined by 14 paise to settle at 76.53 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, amid strengthening of the American currency overseas and a sharp rise in coronavirus cases in the country.

Forex traders said a firm US dollar weighed on the local unit. Besides, investor sentiment remain fragile amid concerns over the impact of coronavirus outbreak on the domestic as well as global economy.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened strong at 76.43, but soon lost ground and finally settled at 76.53, registering a fall of 14 paise over its previous close.

During the session, the rupee witnessed high volatility and touched a high of 76.43 and a low of 76.68 against the US dollar.

On Friday, the rupee had settled at 76.39 against the greenback. Domestic bourses were trading on a positive note on Monday with benchmark indices Sensex trading 126.92 points higher at 31,715.64 and Nifty up by 25.20 points at 9,291.95.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose by 0.15 per cent to 99.93. The number of cases around the world linked to the new coronavirus has crossed over 24 lakh. In India, more than 17,200 coronavirus cases have been reported so far.

## UK High Court dismisses Vijay Mallya's appeal against extradition to India

**LONDON:** Embattled Liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya on Monday lost his High Court appeal against his extradition order to India in relation to charges of fraud and money laundering amounting to an alleged Rs 9,000 crores.

The 64-year-old former Kingfisher Airlines boss had appealed to the High Court against his extradition to India at a hearing in February this year.

Lord Justice Stephen Irwin and Justice Elisabeth Laing, the two-member bench at the Royal Courts of Justice in London presiding over the appeal, dismissed the appeal in a judgment handed down remotely due to the current coronavirus lockdown.

"We consider that while the scope of the prima facie case found by the SDJ [Senior District Judge] is in some respects wider than that alleged by the Respondent in India [Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED)], there is a prima facie case which, in seven



important respects, coincides with the allegations in India," the judges ruled. Mallya is wanted in India on alleged

fraud and money laundering charges amounting to an estimated Rs 9,000 crore.

## India's New FDI Norms Violate WTO Principles Of Free Trade: Chinese Embassy

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** India's new norms for foreign direct investment from specific countries violate the WTO's principle of non-discrimination and are against the general trend of free trade, a Chinese embassy spokesperson said on Monday.

The official said the new policy introducing "additional barriers" was also against the consensus arrived at the G20 grouping to realize a free, fair, non-discriminatory and transparent environment for investment.

Last week, India made grant of prior approval mandatory for foreign investments from countries that share land border with India to curb "opportunistic takeovers" of domestic firms following the coronavirus pandemic.

"The additional barriers set by Indian side for investors from specific countries violate WTO's principle of



non-discrimination, and go against the general trend of liberalisation and facilitation of trade and investment," Chinese embassy spokesperson Ji Rong said in a statement.

"Chinese enterprises actively made donations to help India fight COVID-19 epidemic," it said adding that where companies choose to invest

and operate depends on the country's economic fundamentals and business environment.

"Facing the economic downturn caused by COVID-19, countries should work together to create a favourable investment environment to speed up the resumption of companies' production and operation."



## UP CM Yogi Adityanath to miss father Anand Bisht's funeral

Lucknow/ New Delhi: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's father Anand Bisht died on Monday and will be cremated in Haridwar at a funeral which will not be attended by the CM, who said he is duty-bound to stay in his state.

Bisht, 89, was admitted to the gastroenterology department of the AIIMS after his health deteriorated. His condition was critical, sources at the hospital said.

He died at 10.44 am, according to Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi.

Bisht's last rites will take place in Haridwar in Uttarakhand on April 21, Media Advisor to the Chief Minister Mrityunjay Kumar said.

In a statement, the chief minister said, "I had the ardent wish to get a glimpse of him at the final moment. However, following a sense of duty towards the state's 23 crore people during the COVID-19 pandemic, I could not do so." "For the success of the lockdown and the strategy to defeat the novel coronavirus pandemic, I will be unable to attend the last rites on April 21," Adityanath said. "I am deeply saddened by the demise of my respected father. He instilled in me the values of honesty, hard-work and selfless service for public welfare in childhood itself," he said.

Even as the news of his father's demise reached, Adityanath

continued with a meeting with officials, whom he directed to ensure that the students of Uttar Pradesh who have returned from coaching hub Kota are quarantined at their homes.

Adityanath appealed to his mother and acquaintances to follow lockdown norms and said a small number of people should attend his father's the last rites.

"I offer salutations to the numerous memories of father and offer heartfelt condolences. Will visit after the lockdown is over," he said in Awanish Awasthi.



the statement.

Director for Information Shishir told PTI that a meeting of officials of the core group on COVID-19 was going on since 10 am. It was during this meeting that the chief minister got the information that his father has passed away, he said.

"Despite getting the sad news, he continued with the meeting, and got up only after giving necessary directions to the officials. Even after getting the news of the demise of his father, the chief minister went ahead with the meeting for almost 45 minutes," Shishir said.

## Tamil Nadu youth dies of fever after testing negative for coronavirus

ERODE: The death of a 20-year-old man at the Erode Government Headquarters Hospital sparked off protests from villagers in front of the hospital as they said the man may have died of coronavirus, police said on Monday.

The man belonging to Nambiyur village near Gobichettipalayam was admitted to the isolation ward with high fever some days ago and died on Sunday night.

He was tested negative for COVID-19 and his body was handed over to his relatives.

All arrangements were made for burying the body in Nambiyur, but the villagers raised objection and said he may have died of coronavirus and protested, saying they would not allow the burial.

On information, superintendent of police S Sakthi Ganesan and Gobichettipalayam revenue divisional officer Jayaraman visited the spot.

They tried to pacify the crowd but they were adamant over the disallowing the body to bury there. Some medical officials also pacified them that the person was not affected by coronavirus.

Later, the villagers gave up the protest and the burial took place at 1 am. A posse of police has been posted in the village.



## Coronavirus Cases In India Rise To 17,265; Death Toll Nears 550

Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI:** Death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 543 and the number of cases climbed to 17,265 in the country on Monday, according to the Union health ministry.

The number of active COVID-19 cases stood at 14, 175 while 2,546 people have been cured and discharged, and one patient has migrated, the ministry said. The total number of COVID-19 cases includes 77 foreign nationals.

A total of 24 deaths were reported since Sunday evening. Twelve deaths were reported from Maharashtra, five from Gujarat, three from Rajasthan and two each from Delhi and Karnataka.

Of the 543 deaths, the highest number of 223 fatalities was reported from Maharashtra, followed by Madhya Pradesh (70), Gujarat (63), Delhi (45) and Telangana (18).

The death toll reached 17 in Uttar

Pradesh while Punjab and Karnataka reported 16 deaths each. Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have reported 15 deaths each. Rajasthan has registered 14 fatalities.

The disease has claimed five lives in Jammu and Kashmir, while Kerala and Haryana have recorded three COVID-19 deaths each. Jharkhand and Bihar have reported two deaths each, while Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Assam have reported one fatality each, according to the ministry's data.

However, a PTI tally of the figures reported by various states as on Sunday showed 565 COVID-19 deaths in the country. According to the ministry's data, updated in the morning, the highest number of confirmed cases in the country is from Maharashtra at 4,203 cases, followed by Delhi with 2,003, Gujarat with 1,743, Rajasthan with 1,478, Tamil Nadu with 1,477 and Madhya Pradesh 1,407.

The number of COVID-19 cases has

gone up to 1,084 in Uttar Pradesh, 844 in Telangana, 646 in Andhra Pradesh and 402 in Kerala. In Karnataka, cases have risen to 390, in Jammu and Kashmir to 350, in West Bengal to 339, in Haryana to 233 and in Punjab to 219. Bihar has reported 93 coronavirus cases, while Odisha has 68 such cases.

Forty-four people have been infected with the virus in Uttarakhand, while Jharkhand has 42 cases and Himachal Pradesh has 39 cases. Chhattisgarh has 36 cases so far. Assam has registered 35 cases, Chandigarh has 26 and Ladakh 18, while 16 cases have been reported from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Meghalaya has reported 11 cases, while Goa and Puducherry have seven COVID-19 patients each. Manipur and Tripura have two cases each, while Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have reported a case each. "Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said on its website.

## Most of the accused in Palghar lynching are BJP members: Congress

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** The ruling Congress in Maharashtra on Monday alleged that majority of the people arrested for the last week's mob lynching incident in Palghar district were members of the BJP.

State Congress general secretary Sachin Sawant also accused the BJP of playing "communal politics" to derive a political mileage from the incident in which three people, including two seers, were killed by a mob apparently on suspicion of being thieves or child-lifters.

The saffron party has refuted the charge and reiterated its demand to probe the role of the police in the incident.

"The village Divashi Gadchinchale is known as BJP bastion for last ten years including the post of village head. The current head is also from BJP. Most of the people arrested in the lynching incident are from BJP (sic)," Sawant tweeted.

He also mentioned certain rumours of communal nature, saying a thorough probe is necessary into their cir-



ulation and connection to the lynching incident, if any.

"Who is behind such rumours that is turning people violent. It should be investigated. The BJP should be ashamed of its dirty politics of communalising the issue. The party that failed to stop similar incidents in last five years is now politicising the issue a serious thing (sic)," he said in another tweet.

In the wake of the incident, several BJP leaders slammed the Shiv Sena-led coalition government—also comprising the Congress and the NCP—for the "administrative" failure to protect the Hindu seers.

However, leader of opposition in

the Maharashtra Legislative Council Pravin Darekar refuted the charges raised by Sawant.

"Going by the people and their political affiliations, a zilla parishad member of Congress is also seen in the video footage available of the attack on the seers and their driver.

"So, should we say that the party (Congress) is behind the attack? We are talking about the failure of the police and home department, and not communalising it," he stated.

The incident took place on the night of April 16 when three men from Kandivali in Mumbai were going in a car towards Surat in Gujarat to attend a funeral.

## NCW issues notices to AIIMS, Delhi Police over suicide attempt by woman doctor



**NEW DELHI:**

Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) on Monday issued notices to the AIIMS administration and the Delhi Police in connection with the alleged suicide attempt by a woman doctor at the premier healthcare institute here apparently over caste and gender based discrimination and harassment.

The woman doctor attempted suicide on Friday, one of her colleagues at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) said.

In the notice issued to Delhi Police, the DCW sought a copy of the FIR registered in the matter, status report on investigation and asked whether the accused have been arrested till now.

The panel has sought details about proposed timeline for completion of investigation and has sought the police's reply by April 25.

In the notice issued to AIIMS, the panel asked for copies of all complaints received from the woman doctor till date and action taken report on each.

It also asked whether the matter was dealt with by the Internal Complaints Committee and details of the action taken against the accused faculty member.

The panel also asked for details of steps taken to assist the victim in seeking legal remedies in the matter and sought the reply by April 25. "It is critical that exemplary action is taken against the perpetrators of caste and gender based violence. The Commission has instituted an inquiry into the matter," the notice said.

The National Commission for Women (NCW) had written to the Union Health Ministry asking it to conduct an immediate inquiry in the matter.

The Resident Doctors Association (RDA) of AIIMS had written to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday about the administration's "inaction" on the alleged harassment of the resident doctor on the basis of caste and gender by the faculty at the premier hospital.

## 53 journalists test positive for COVID-19 in Mumbai



**NEW DELHI:** At least 53 mediapersons from Mumbai have tested positive for coronavirus, a city civic official said on Monday.

During a special camp organised at the Azad Maidan here on April 16 and 17 for COVID-19 testing of scribes, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) collected swab samples of 171 mediapersons, including electronic and print media journalists, photographers and cameramen.

"Out of the 171 mediapersons, 53 tested positive for

coronavirus," BMC spokesperson Vijay Khabale said, adding that most of those who tested positive are asymptomatic at present.

All the mediapersons found infected with coronavirus will be kept in isolation and a process was underway to find out suitable places to the purpose, he said.

Efforts were also on to trace their high and low risk contacts.

Till Sunday, Mumbai recorded 2,724 coronavirus cases and 132 deaths due to the disease.

### BOTTOM LINE

## COVID-19 situation especially serious in Mumbai, Kolkata, Jaipur, Indore: MHA

Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI:** The Union government has said the COVID-19 situation is "especially serious" in Mumbai, Pune, Indore, Jaipur, Kolkata and a few other places in West Bengal, and warned that violation of lockdown measures risks the spread of the novel coronavirus further.

Acting swiftly, the Union home ministry also announced that six inter-ministerial central teams (IMCTs) will visit these identified areas in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan within the next three days to make on-the-spot assessment and recommend remedial measures in a report to the Centre.

In identical orders issued to the four states on Sunday, the home ministry said there have been several incidents of violence against COVID-19 front-line healthcare professionals, complete violation of social distancing norms and movement of vehicles in urban areas.

Reacting to the development, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the basis on which the Centre has proposed to deploy its

teams was "unclear" and added "we would not be able to move ahead on this as without valid reasons this might not be consistent with the spirit of federalism".

The home ministry said in some districts, a number of violations to the lockdown measures have been reported, posing a serious health hazard and risk for spread of COVID-19 which include attacks on front-line healthcare professionals, complete violations of social distancing norms outside banks, PDS shops and in market places, movement of private and commercial vehicles with passengers in urban areas and so on.

These incidents, if they are allowed to occur without any restraining measures in hotspot districts or emerging hotspots, with large outbreaks or clusters, pose a serious health hazard, both for the population of these districts and for that living in other areas of the country, it said.

After analysing the prevalence of such violations in major hotspot districts, it is clear to the central government that the situation is



"especially serious" in Mumbai and Pune (Maharashtra), Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Kolkata, Howrah, East Medinipur, North 24 Parganas, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Jalpaiguri ( West Bengal), the home ministry said. The death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 543 and the number of cases climbed to 17,265 in the country on Monday, according to the Union health ministry.

There are 4,203 confirmed coronavirus cases in Maharashtra of which 223 people lost their lives, according

to Union health ministry data.

In Madhya Pradesh, out of the 1,407 cases, 70 people have succumbed to the disease.

Rajasthan has reported 1,478 cases of which 14 people lost their lives. In West Bengal, there are 339 confirmed cases of which 12 people died due to the infection, according to health ministry data.

After the government announced its decision, the West Bengal chief minister tweeted, "We welcome all constructive support & suggestions,

especially from the Central Govt in negating the #Covid19 crisis. However, the basis on which Centre is proposing to deploy IMCTs in select districts across India including few in WB under Disaster Mgmt Act 2005 is unclear."

"I urge both Honb'le Prime Minister @NarendraModi Ji & Home Minister @AmitShah Ji to share the criterion used for this. Until then I am afraid, we would not be able to move ahead on this as without valid reasons this might not be consistent with the spirit of federalism," she added. The orders, signed by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, in his capacity as the chairperson of the National Executive Committee under the Disaster Management Act, also said the six inter-ministerial central teams will visit these hotspot areas and make on-spot assessment of the COVID-19 situation in these places and issue necessary directions to the four states. The teams, comprising five members each, will be headed by an additional secretary-rank officer of the central government.

The six teams will make on-the-spot assessment of the situation, is-

sue necessary directions to the state authorities for redressal of the situation, and submit their report to the central government in larger interest of general public.

The IMCTs will focus their assessment on the compliance and implementation of lockdown measures besides issues like the supply of essential commodities, social distancing, hospital facility and sample statistics in the district, safety of health professionals, availability of test kits, PPEs, masks and other safety equipment, and conditions of the relief camps for labour and poor people.

The orders also made it clear that the ministry of civil aviation will provide air transportation, to and fro, from New Delhi to their respective place of visit (nearest airport), as their deployment is for an essential purpose of ensuring compliance to the lockdown measures.

The state governments will have to provide logistic support to the IMCT, for their accommodation, transportation, PPEs and extend all cooperation for their visits to local areas, production of documents and records as requested by the IMCTs.