



Maximum : 21°C  
Minum : 09°C  
Humidity : 54%

SUNSET  
Today 07:08 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 05:51 AM



## HUMANS TO BLAME FOR SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS AND OTHER 'ZOOSES'

**W**hether it came from a bat or a pangolin is not certain, but one thing is: the coronavirus outbreak that has killed tens of thousands and turned the world upside down comes from the animal world. It is human activity that enabled the virus to jump to people, and specialists are warning that if nothing changes many other pandemics of this nature will follow. The name given to diseases transmitted from animals to humans is "zoonoses", based on the Greek words for "animal" and "sickness". They are not new — tuberculosis, rabies, toxoplasmosis, malaria, to name just a few, are all zoonoses.

## News Digest

### 40 More Discharged After Quarantine

Srinagar: Authorities on Tuesday discharged forty more people after they completed their mandatory quarantine period at a government operated facility in this capital city. According to an official spokesperson, forty more persons who were shifted into administrative quarantine in Srinagar two weeks ago, were discharged today after successfully completing their 14-day quarantine period.

"The group like all others before them was under thorough medical supervision throughout their quarantine period and was discharged after clearance from doctors and health authorities," the official spokesperson said. He said that concerned supervising officers oversaw their discharge and transportation to their respective homes.

"A total of 1906 persons have been discharged from" **P-02**

### High Court Employee Found Dead

Srinagar: An employee of Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Tuesday was found dead in Qamarwari area of Srinagar city. 50-year-old Abdul Gani Lone of Doda district was found dead by locals near PDD Quarter near Police Colony in Qamarwari area this morning, news agency GNS reported. The locals informed the police after spotting the body. Immediately, a police team led by SHO Parimpora and DO Qamarwari reached the spot and taken the body to nearby hospital for medico legal formalities, they said. A police officer said the deceased was working as record assistant in Jammu and Kashmir High Court, the officer said. He said that a case under section 174 CrPc **P-02**

### 36 Vehicles Seized For Lockdown Violation

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir police said Tuesday that 36 vehicles were seized in south Kashmir's Awantipora for defying government imposed restrictions.

12 vehicles were seized by cops in the areas falling under the jurisdiction of police station Awantipora for violating orders issued under section 144 CrPc, a police spokesperson said. Four other vehicles were seized from Pampore for violating lockdown. 6 vehicles were seized in Tral and 14 in Khrew for violating the government prohibitory orders.

### 3 Booked For Hiding Travel History

Jammu: Three people were booked on Tuesday for hiding their travel history in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district, police said.

Radhay Sham, Sham Lal and Ashok Singh travelled to their respective villages from Jaipur and Ahmedabad in a truck carrying essential items, they said. All the three have been put under quarantine at Ghagwal with the help of health department, they said.

## 4G Internet Restoration: SC Seeks Centre, J&K's Reply By April 27

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked Centre and Jammu and Kashmir administration to file their responses by April 27 on a plea seeking restoration of 4G internet services in the Union territory in view of prevailing Covid-19 pandemic.

The top court was told that due to non-availability of 4G services, several aspects are affected including medical facilities and education services.

The Centre opposed the plea by telling the apex court that it is a question of national security as militancy still poses a serious threat in Jammu and Kashmir and cited a recent incident where hundreds of people gathered in the valley for a funeral of a militant killed by state forces.

A bench of Justices N V Ramana, R Subhash Reddy and B R Gavai asked Attorney General K K Venugopal, appearing for the Centre and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing Jammu and Kashmir administration, to file detailed reply on affidavits by April 27 after assessing the ground situation.

At the outset, the bench enquired

from the parties about the status of a 4G services related case, which was taken suo motu (on its own) by the Jammu and Kashmir High Court.

Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, appearing for petitioner — "Foundation for Media Professionals" — said that his petition concerns only with restoration of 4G services in Jammu and Kashmir.

He informed the bench that in the suo motu case taken by the High Court, notice has been issued and it deals with whole gamut of matters **»PAGE 02**



## Covid-19: Doctor, 11 Others Test Postive, J&K Tally At 380

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The number of coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir rose to 380 on Tuesday after twelve more people, including a doctor and ten residents of south Kashmir's Shopian, tested positive for the dreaded infection in the Union Territory, officials said.

"12 new cases- 11 from Kashmir 1 from Jammu division (Kathua), 10 recoveries too. Total cases now 380. Jammu Division-56 and Kashmir Division-324," government spokesperson Rohit Kansal tweeted.

41-year-old junior doctor posted at GMC Baramulla tested positive for the pathogen four days after he developed symptoms of the dreaded disease, reports said.

The doctor had attended general patients and authorities are now trying to trace all his contacts including the patients he has seen at the health facility.

Apart from the doctor's family and his in-laws, the health officials have also put four others doctors and 15 staffers under quarantine, news agency GNS reported quoting sources. **»PAGE 02**

## 57 Iran-Returned Pilgrims Reach Kargil After Quarantine In UP

Press Trust Of India

**Kargil:** The first batch of 57 Iran-returned pilgrims reached here on Tuesday in a special Indian Air Force (IAF) flight after undergoing quarantine in Uttar Pradesh, officials said.

However, they would not be going home just now as they have to undergo another phase of 14-day administrative quarantine for their own and others' safety, they said.

The UT administration is happy to announce the homecoming of the first batch of 57 Iran returnees to Kargil post quarantine, tweeted the of-

fice of the Ladakh Divisional Commissioner and Secretary Saugat Biswas.

The flight carrying the pilgrims from Hindon Air Force Station in Ghaziabad (UP) landed at Kargil at 11:15 am and the administration is actively pursuing the return of the next batch on Wednesday, the tweet added.

When contacted, Kargil District Development Commissioner Baseer Ul Haq Choudhary said they were among over 550 pilgrims hailing from Kargil who were evacuated from Iran in the last week of March in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

The others are under quarantine in different parts of the **»PAGE 02**

## Govt Directs Private Health Institutions To Resume Ops

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Tuesday asked all the private hospitals and diagnostic centers to resume normal functioning within a week failing which strict action will be taken against them.

The directions in this regard were passed by the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole during a meeting held here today. Director Health Services Dr Sameer Matto, senior officials and owners of private health institutions also participated in the meet.

Directing the owners of the private health institutes to resume normal functions with 50% staff on weekly roster, the Divisional Commissioner said that to restrict the movement and ensure health safety, staff should be stationed round the clock at health premises.

"After completion of one week, remaining 50% staff can join duty, as per the same guidelines. Any institution found violating the directions regarding the essential services rules, will be strictly dealt with under relevant laws," he said.

He said all the doctors, paramedics and other staff **»PAGE 02**

## Editors Guild Slams 'High-Handed' Action Against 2 Kashmiri Scribes

Press Trust Of India

**New Delhi:** The Editors Guild of India on Tuesday expressed concern over the "high-handed manner" in which the law enforcement agencies in Jammu and Kashmir used prevailing laws to deal with two Srinagar-based journalists and demanded that the charges against them be withdrawn.

In a statement, the Guild also said it believes that this is an indirect way of intimidating journalists in the rest of the country as well.

It noted that while only an FIR has been filed in connection with a report filed by Peerzada Ashiq, a reporter working for The Hindu, the authorities in the Union Territory have used the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act against Masrat Zah-



ra, a young freelance photographer.

"Any recourse to such laws for merely publishing something in the mainstream or social media is a gross misuse of power. Its only purpose can be to strike terror into journalists," the Guild said.

The editors body said it has noted with shock and concern, the "high-handed manner" in which the law enforcement agencies in Jammu and Kashmir have used the prevailing laws to deal **»PAGE 02**

### Kashmiri Photojournalist Masrat Zahra Questioned By Police

**SRINAGAR-** Journalist Masrat Zahra, who was booked for uploading "anti-national posts", was questioned by police on Tuesday in connection with the case filed against her under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, officials said.

Zahra was questioned for more than an hour at the Kashmir's Cyber Police Station in Shergarhi area of the city, they said. **P-02**

### Police Files Case Against Journalist Gowhar Geelani

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir police on Tuesday filed a criminal case against another journalist over his social media posts terming them "prejudicial to the national integrity, sovereignty and security of India." The cyber wing of police filed case against prominent journalist and author Gowhar Geelani **P-02**



## India, Pak Troops Exchange Heavy Gunfire In Poonch

**SRINAGAR:** India and Pakistan troops on Tuesday exchanged heavy gunfire along the line of control (LoC) in two sectors of Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir.

"At about 1720 hours, Pakistan army initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and shelling with mortars along the LoC in Kirni and Qasba sectors," a defence spokesperson said.

Earlier at about 11.20 AM, Pakistan initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars along the

LoC in Kerni sector, the spokesperson said.

He said the Indian Army retaliated befittingly and cross-border shelling between the two sides was going on when last reports were received.

However, there was no immediate report of any casualty during the shelling by Pakistan, the spokesperson said.

This is the 15th consecutive day of shelling and firing along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir.

Fear has heightened among villagers along the LoC in Rajouri, Poonch and Kupwara since three civilians were **»PAGE 02**

**OVER 3,200 CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS** by Pakistan's troops were recorded in 2019. There is a 198-km IB and over 510 km of LoC with Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir.

## Pak Pushing Militants When World Is Battling Covid-19: DGP

**JAMMU:** The Director General of police (DGP) Dilbagh Singh said on Tuesday that Pakistan was trying to push militants through line of control (LoC) and international border (IB) into Jammu and Kashmir when the entire world is making efforts to combat coronavirus pandemic.

Singh said that Pakistan and its sponsored militants were making all out attempts to disrupt the measures being taken to safeguard the lives of the people in J&K. He said that even during the present health crisis "our forces would continue to consolidate peace while maintaining good security" **P-02**

## Gunfight Rages In south Kashmir's Shopian

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** A gunfight broke out between government forces and militants on Tuesday night in Melhora village of south Kashmir's Shopian district.

Special operations group (SOG) of police, army's 55 RR and CRPF laid a siege around Melhora village on Tuesday night amid intelligence reports suggesting presence of militants in the area, news agency GNS reported. When the joint team start-

ed search operations, the militants hiding in the village opened random fire in a bid to break the cordon.

"The search team fired warning shots towards the spot where militants were believed to be hiding. The militants opened fire to escape from the spot. However, the joint team engaged them,"

officer told the news agency.

Quoting sources, the news report further says that two to three militants associated with Ansar Gazwatul Hind were **»PAGE 02**

**THE SEARCH TEAM FIRED WARNING** shots towards the spot where militants were believed to be hiding. The militants opened fire to escape from the spot. However, the joint team engaged them,"

## Of Two Buddies, Accord, And Lotus in Kashmir: A Blast from Past

Observer Web Desk

Soon after his mother's assassination, as Rajiv Gandhi took over as India's next Prime Minister, he sent his loyalist to Kashmir to break bread with his "buddy" — whom his late mother had hounded for his "secessionist" past.

Later those parleys would shape up into the much-talked about Rajiv-Farooq Accord, floated on the pattern of the 1974 Indira-Abdullah Accord.

Back in the day, negotiations with Farooq were either directly conducted by Rajiv or through his loyalist Union Surface Transport minister, Rajesh Pilot.

With his infectious laughter and shrewd sense of discretion, Pilot

was Rajiv's ace troubleshooter.

But as behind-the-scene deliberations began at Gupkar, many senior Congress members in the state, including Mufti Sayeed and Arun Nehru, were opposed to Farooq's reentry.

Rajiv Gandhi, however, moved out his cousin, Nehru, of discussions on Kashmir, along with Mufti Sayeed, and the old family Kashmiri confidante, ML Fotedar.

Among those covering these intriguing political developments then, was journalist Ashwini Bhatnagar.

Thirty five years later, Bhatnagar, now a seasoned scribe, has come out with his book, 'The Lotus Years: Political Life In The Times Of Rajiv Gandhi'. Published by Hachette, the book of-



fers a "360-degree view" of politics in India during the time of Rajiv Gandhi. "Rajiv and lotus are synonyms,"

Bhatnagar tells those who wonder: Why BJP's symbol, 'Lotus', has been used with the Congress leader?

"His grandfather named him Rajiv after the name of his own wife Kamala. So, I went back to Kamala — hence the Lotus Years. Moreover, I thought the title will intrigue the readers because much of the reference to lotus is currently in the context of the BJP!"

If you look at it closely, the author writes, much of the current BJP agenda is directly drawn from the ideas of the Rajiv regime.

"[It was] Rajiv [who] initiated the majoritarianism process after his landslide win in 1984 by opening the locks at the Ram Jambhoomi in Ayodhya," Bhatnagar notes. "He started drive against corruption and his hectic foreign tours in which he was heartily fetted by governments across the world."

Compare even the **»PAGE 02**

## APHC Seeks Release Of Mirwaiz, Other Political Leaders

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Expressing concern over the continued detention of political leaders and the youth, the Hurriyat Conference Tuesday sought release of Chairman by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and all other prisoners who have no criminal records.

In a statement issued here today, a Hurriyat Conference spokesperson said that the amalgam was greatly concerned for the life and safety of political prisoners and youth locked up in jails in J&K and other states of India, including Bihar, Agra and Jodhpur.

"As the number of coronavirus cases is rapidly rising in India, it makes these prisoners more vulnerable, especially the elderly and infirm among them," the spokesperson said. He said that all the prisoners who

are no criminals should be immediately released and sent home to ensure their safety, ahead of the holy month of Ramzan.

"Chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq who is under arbitrary house arrest since 5th August 2019, along with all other leaders should be released," the spokesperson said.

The Hurriyat spokesperson also condemned the harassment of Kashmiri journalists, especially freelance photojournalist Masarat Zahra and the Hindu correspondent Peerzada Ashiq. He said the journalists were repeatedly being pressurized even as they are reporting in very constricting environment

Extending greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir for the coming holy month of Ramzan, the Hurriyat Conference spokesperson **»PAGE 02**



## Shops For Educational Books, Electric Fans, Prepaid Mobile Phone Recharge Allowed During Lockdown

**NEW DELHI:** The Union Home Ministry on Tuesday allowed opening of shops selling educational books and electric fans, services of bedside attendants of senior citizens and public utilities, including recharge facilities for prepaid mobile phones during the ongoing lockdown.

The home ministry also said bread factories and flour mills located in urban areas can restart operations during the ongoing lockdown to combat the novel coronavirus outbreak.

In separate orders, the home ministry said the decision has been taken after receiving some queries with regard to exemptions of specific services and activities allowed through the guidelines issued so far.

Shops of educational books for

students, shops of electric fans will be allowed to open during the lockdown, which is scheduled to end on May 3.

Beside attendants and care givers of senior citizens residing in their homes and public utilities, including recharge facilities for prepaid mobile connection will be allowed to offer services, the ministry said in its order.

Food processing units such as bread factories, milk processing plants, flour mills, dal mills etc., located in urban areas will be allowed to function during the lockdown.

Facilities for export or import such as pack houses, inspection and treatment facilities for seeds and horticulture produce, research establishments dealing with the agriculture and horti-

culture activities have been exempted from the purview of the lockdown.

Inter and intra-state movement of planting materials and honey bee colonies, honey and other beehive products will also be allowed to function, the order said.

Forest offices, forestry plantation and related activities, including silviculture operations, are allowed during the lockdown.

However, the ministry made it clear that social distancing for offices, workshops, factories and establishments must be ensured.

The home ministry also allowed sign-on and sign-off of Indian seafarers at Indian ports and their movement for the aforesaid purpose as per a standard operating protocol (SOP).

It said that change of crew of a

ship (seafarers) is an important measure for operation of merchant ships.

The SOP has been formulated to streamline the sign-on and sign-off of Indian seafarers at Indian ports for merchant shipping vessels, the ministry added.

For sign-on, the ship owner or recruitment and placement service (RPS) agency will identify the Indian seafarers for joining a vessel.

The seafarers will intimate their travel and contact history for the last 28 days to the ship owner or RPS agency by email, as per procedure laid down by Director General of Shipping (DGS).

The seafarer would be examined by a DGS-approved medical examiner, as per the guidelines prescribed for this purpose.

At the same time, the seafarer

shall also be screened, and his travel and contact history examined for the last 28 days; seafarers found to be asymptomatic for COVID-19 and otherwise suitable may be processed for sign-on.

The local authority in the area where the seafarer resides will be intimidated about his clearance for sign-on and for issue of a transit pass from the place of residence to the place of embarkation on the shipping vessel.

The transit pass for such movement by road, for the seafarer and one driver, may be issued by the government of the State or Union Territory where the seafarer resides.

For sign-off, the master of a vessel, coming from any foreign port, or a coastal vessel from any Indian port, while arriving at its port of call in India, shall ascertain

the state of health of each person on board the vessel and submit a Maritime Declaration of Health to the health authorities of the port and to the port authorities.

In addition, the information required by the local health authorities of the port, like temperature chart, individual health declaration, etc. shall also be provided by the master as per the directives of the health authorities of the port.

Port health authorities shall grant pratique to the vessel prior to berthing as per necessary health protocols.

The Indian seafarer arriving on the vessel would undergo the COVID-19 test for confirmation that he or she is negative for the infection.

After disembarking and till the time the seafarer reaches the

testing facility within the port premises, it will be ensured by the ship owner that all safety precautions as per standard health protocol are observed.

Till the time test reports of the seafarer are received, they shall be kept in the quarantine facility by the port or the state health authorities.

If the seafarer is tested as positive for COVID-19, he or she will be dealt with as per the procedures laid down by Health Ministry.

For the seafarer tested negative and signed off, the local authority in the area where the seafarer disembarks will be intimidated about his or her clearance for sign-off, and for issue of a transit pass from the place of disembarkation to the place of his or her residence.

## 4G Internet Restoration:

in which 4G internet services is one of the issue.

He elaborated the need for 4G services and said for effective video conferencing facility to consult doctors in case of any health emergency, it was the need of the hour.

The senior advocate said that having access to 4G services and being able to consult doctors in time would help in saving lives.

He added that the second aspect is of educations as without 4G internet services, schools are facing problems in holding virtual classes for the students during the lockdown period.

The bench, then asked Ahmadi as how many Covid-19 cases are there in Jammu and Kashmir as of now.

The senior advocate replied, as of now around 354 cases have been reported.

Mehta said he needs a week time to file a reply to the petition.

Venugopal, who raised the issue of national security and threat of militancy, said that there are lots of problem and recently at militant was killed by state forces and around 500 people gathered for his funeral.

The bench asked both – Attorney General and Solicitor General – to clear the stand of the Centre and the Jammu and Kashmir administration by filing the affidavits.

Mehta said he would like to file a consolidated detailed affidavit on the issue after which the bench posted the matter for further hearing on April 27.

Ahmadi intervened and said since the Attorney General has raised the issue of national security, the internet restriction could be there in the areas where there are problems but it cannot be extended to the entire state.

Advocate Charu Ambwani, appearing for petitioner 'Private Schools Association of Jammu and Kashmir', also seeking restoration of 4G internet services in the union territory, said at present 2200 schools are unable to hold classes.

She said that future of over 20 lakhs students of the state are at stake as they cannot study due to unavailability of proper internet connectivity.

The bench, said since it has asked both, Centre and Jammu and Kashmir administration to file their reply, it would like to first go through it.

On April 9, the top court had issued notice to Centre and J&K administration on the plea of 'Foundation for Media Professionals' which has assailed an order of the J&K administration on March 26 that restricted the internet speed to 2G only in the UT.

The plea filed through advocate Shadan Farasat, while seeking restoration of 4G internet services, alleged that the action of the government was violative of Articles 14 (right to equality), 19 (freedom of speech) and 21 (right to life) of the Constitution.

Terming 2G telephone services as "outdated", the plea said 4G internet speed would be useful in ensuring information flow to the citizens in view of the coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic.

"The advent of the COVID-19 global pandemic has fundamentally altered the existing situation. At present, the following facts exist: first, COVID-19 exists in India, and is a highly infectious and communicable disease. Research into its origins and the best ways of tackling this disease is ongoing, and there is a continuing flow of new information about how best to contain the fall out of the virus, and limit its spread and impact," it said.

The slow internet speed also renders telemedicine or online video consultation impossible, it said. "The right to internet connectivity has repeatedly been recognised by the Government of India as a basic necessity or an essential service to ensure the right to health," the plea said and referred to the National Telecom Policy in support of its contention.

## Covid-19: Doctor, 11 Others Test

He is the first doctor in the Valley to have tested positive for the disease. Earlier, four doctors tested positive in Jammu.

Other ten cases from the Valley that came positive are all from south Kashmir's Shopian district. The reports came

Of the ten patients from Shopian, 8 are from Heerpora and two others—one a 32-year-old-male and other 50-year-old female are from Beminipora areas of the south Kashmir district. Regarding those from Heerpora, sources said they include two males—50-year-old and 18-year-old while six are woman including mother-daughter duo aged 45 and 20 while others are aged 25, 30, 45, 60 and 65 respectively.

Principal Secretary Information Rohit Kansal told reporters in Jammu that there are 380 cases in the J&K till date.

"The total number of cases in 380 of which 294 are active—256 in Kashmir and 38 in Jammu divisions," he said.

Kansal, who is also the government spokesman, said that 81 people have recovered while five people have died due to the deadly infection in the J&K.

He said 60,000 people have been enlisted for surveillance out of which nearly 35000 have completed the mandatory 28 days quarantine.

Based on the parameters, he said, five districts—Bandipora, Baramulla, Kupwara, Srinagar and Jammu have been identified as hotspot districts. "These districts account for more than four-fifths i.e 80 per cent of the cases in J&K."

Similarly, he said, 92 areas have been designated as Red Zones in J&K and 82 of them are in Kashmir division.

He said the testing rate in J&K is 703 per million, one of the highest in India. "If you may remind, the last time I spoke to you it was 77.5 per million. Since then we have been continuously ramping up our facilities," he added.

Meanwhile, the media bulletin issued by the government today said that till date 62493 travellers and persons in contact with suspected cases have been enlisted for surveillance, including 6032 persons in home quarantine, 248 in hospital quarantine, 294 in hospital isolation and 17421 under home surveillance.

"Besides, 38493 persons have completed their surveillance period. Out of 9220 test results available, 8840 samples have tested as negative till April 21, 2020," it adds.

## India, Pak Troops Exchange

killed last week in shelling by Pakistan.

There were a total of 646 incidents of ceasefire violation along the International Border (IB) as well as the LoC between January 1 and February 23 this year, Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik said in March.

Over 3,200 ceasefire violations by Pakistan's troops were recorded in 2019. There is a 198-km IB and over 510 km of LoC with Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir.

## Pak Pushing Militants When

and law and order grids"

J&K DGP was referring to the recent militant attacks in a meeting co-chaired by him and Advisor to Lieutenant Governor R.R Bhatnagarto review the security as also the present ground situation in view of the Covid-19 pandemic in Kashmir valley, a police spokesperson said. Senior police officers attended the meeting through video conferencing.

Singh said that Pakistan agencies were engaged with various activities at their launching pads in Pakistan and Pakistan controlled Kashmir to push in militants into J&K through IB and LoC to further its "nefarious designs of disturbing peace and normalcy and lives and livelihoods of the people" without bothering about its own people who have become Corona victims.

"A recent report suggested that even the terrorists at their training centres and launching pads in Pakistan and PoK are suffering from Coronavirus infections," the police spokesperson said.

The officers of Kashmir Zone briefed about the measures taken regarding the security and arrangements at various quarantine centres and health protocols in their respective districts.

Addressing the officers, DGP said that it was important to ensure that government orders and the health protocols are followed on the ground. He said that no unauthorized traffic and movement of the people be allowed except in cases where such movement is exempted.

Advisor Bhatnagar appreciated the role of police and central armed forces for the hard work being put in ever since March 22nd in tackling the situation and assisting the administration, and health department in combating the novel coronavirus and ensuring lockdown restrictions to check the spread of the epidemic.

## 57 Iran-Returned Pilgrims Reach

country, he said.

There were over 850 pilgrims from Kargil who had gone for pilgrimage to Iran. About 300 are still in Iran, he said.

He said the 57 pilgrims have completed their quarantine period in Ghaziabad and their arrival in Ladakh.

However, before they are allowed to go home, the pilgrims would undergo an institutional quarantine as a precautionary measure for their own welfare, and the safety of others, he said.

They have come from high temperature areas, whereas the maximum temperature in Kargil is still very low. The difference in the temperature (between Ghaziabad and Kargil) might cause some health issues among the pilgrims. Therefore, to monitor them, it was decided that

they will undergo another quarantine, he said.

On April 17, the UT administration had decided that returning pilgrims would be sent to institutional quarantine for proper and strict medical surveillance in consonance with the protocols of the World Health Organisation and those of the Union Ministry of Health.

The Kargil administration has already designated institutional quarantine facilities at 22 locations with more than 1100 beds, the officials said.

They said the opening of the 434-km Srinagar-Leh National Highway and operation of flights after lockdown would throw new challenges in the fight against coronavirus.

The need of the hour is to maintain extra vigilance and strict observance of protocols at all levels to contain the spread of the deadly virus in the district, he said.

## Govt Directs Private Health

should wear mask, hand gloves and eye protection and maintain social distancing norms besides follow health advisories of COVID-19. He said before arriving at the private health institutions, patients should first book appointment on phone so that to minimize the chances of over-crowding.

"Earmark reception room at main gate where Doctors will screen all patients regarding Corona-virus symptoms properly and if any person is found having COVID-19 symptoms, he/she should be immediately referred to COVID-19 hospital. Besides, masks must be distributed to all non-Covid patients before entering the institution", Div Com said.

He said all the owners of private health institutions shall apply for movement passes for their staff to concerned Deputy Commissioners.

"Concerned CMOs will closely monitor functioning of private health institutions personally and submit report to the Directorate of Health services, in this regard on regular basis," he added.

## Editors Guild Slams 'High

with the two Srinagar-based journalists.

"The journalists should be put to no harm or further harassment. If the government has any grievance against their reporting, there are other ways of dealing with such issues in the normal course," the Guild said.

Mere social media posts of factual pictures can't attract the toughest anti-terror laws passed for hardened militants , it said.

In the case of The Hindu reporter, the correct course was to escalate the complaint to the newspaper's editor, the Guild said.

It demanded that the Union Territory administration of Jammu and Kashmir withdraw the charges forthwith.

Zahra, who was booked for uploading "anti-national" posts, was questioned by police on Tuesday in connection with the case filed against her under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

While she was booked for a Facebook post about slain Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani, Ashiq was booked for a story about the recent Shopian encounter in which two militants were killed.

## Kashmiri Photojournalist

After the questioning, the freelance journalist said she has answered the investigators' questions.

"I met the concerned police officials of the case and answered their questions regarding the investigation, I have not been arrested and the investigation is going. Thanks all for the support," she tweeted.

Ahead of her appearing before the police, Zahra said she was going to defend her rights as a journalist. "So wish me good luck because it's time to defend my rights as a journalist, Going inside cyber police station," she tweeted.

Zahra is one of the two journalists in Kashmir who were booked on Monday for reportedly posting "anti-national content" on social media and publishing a "fake" news story, police said.

"A case has been registered against Zahra for uploading anti-national posts with a criminal intention to induce the youth and promote offences against tranquillity," a police official had said.

Srinagar correspondent of The Hindu Peerzada Ashiq was booked for a story about recent Shopian encounter in which two militants were killed.

## Police Files

## Case Against

for unlawful activities, including "glorifying militancy in Kashmir

valley, causing disaffection against the country and causing fear or alarm in the minds of public that may lead to commission of offences against public tranquility and the security of State".

"Cyber Police Station Kashmir Zone, Srinagar has received information through reliable sources that an individual namely Gowher Geelani is indulging in unlawful activities through his posts and writings on Social Media platform which are prejudicial to the national integrity, sovereignty and security of India," the police statement said.

The statement further added that several complaints have also been received against the "said individual for threatening and intimidation".

"A Case FIR No. 11/2020 under the relevant sections of law has been registered at Cyber Police Station Kashmir and investigation initiated," the handset added.

The case against Geelani comes a day after a female photojournalist and a correspondent of a national daily were booked under various sections of the IPC and the UAPA. Several media organizations, including CPJ, RSF, besides political parties and trade bodies have condemned the cases against the female journalist Masrat Zahra and Pirzada Ashiq.

## Gunfight Rages In south

believed to be trapped in the area.

Meanwhile, more reinforcement have been rushed to the area to assist the search teams already present in the area.

The government forces have also installed lights to prevent the militants from escaping their dragnet under the cover of darkness, the report added.

## APHC Seeks Release Of Mirwaiz,

said that people were grappling with coronavirus pandemic as well as the suspension of basic rights.

"We pray that may this holy month bring an end to both," he added.

## Of Two Buddies, Accord,

PM Rajiv's sartorial style with the current dispensation, Bhatnagar adds, and you will quickly realize where the inspiration is coming from.

"Many, many things are being repackaged now and are being palmed off as original ideas," he says.

Rajiv not only triggered the Aspirational India but also Delusional India, the writer says.

"Arun Nehru, his cousin and political chaperone in 1985-86, convinced him of the power of the Hindu vote and how it could consolidate the Congress rule forever," the book mentions.

"But one development that Rajiv Gandhi was keen to bring about was an end to the political squabbling and brinkmanship that had dogged the state of Jammu and Kashmir since Partition in 1947."

He also had a personal reason for wishing to do so.

The Nehrus originally hailed from Kashmir and, though the family had settled in Allahabad for the last few generations, the roots still tugged at the offshoots, the writer notes.

"Rajiv's grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, had an abiding fascination with Kashmir, whose tallest leader Sheikh Abdullah was also his good friend. Indira Gandhi had also been similarly inclined," the book notes.

"Both Nehru and Indira, during their innings in power, had gone out of their way to appease Sheikh Abdullah by accommodating his demands for special status to the state. They had hoped the "nationalist" Sheikh would ensure the seamless integration of the region into mainstream polity."

But on each occasion, Bhatnagar writes, their expectation had been belied.

"First Nehru, and then Indira, had to extenuate the Lion of Kashmir from his den to contain his anti-Centre tirade."

The family relationship though had persisted in fits and starts, Rajiv and Farooq had virtually grown up together.

"Whenever the Nehru-Gandhi family was in Kashmir, whether on vacation or a short tour, the Abdullah family was always available to them," the scribe writes.

"Rajiv, therefore, knew Farooq well and, in fact, quite liked the ebullient Abdullah scion, who had studied medicine and then moved to

the UK to practise. He had also married a British girl, Molly, and seemed like a modern liberal at heart."

But Farooq initially had no interest in politics, the book says. "But with his father's failing health, he took the plunge into dynastic politics."

In 1980, about the same time as Rajiv was starting out in his political career, Farooq contested his first Lok Sabha election and won unopposed.

A year later, in August 1981, he was appointed the president of the National Conference (NC) by his father and, when Sheikh Abdullah died on 8 September 1982, he succeeded him as the chief minister. Rajiv called to congratulate him on both the occasions.

"Rajiv was sure he could trust Farooq to end the impasse in Kashmir, and integrate the state into the Indian polity," Bhatnagar writes. "He believed the nitty-gritty of power sharing would not stand in the way of their overall vision of Kashmir being the showpiece of his politics of constructive accords – a policy of give and take in the larger interest of nation building."

Rajiv's belief, however, ran contrary to the feedback on Farooq's first brush with administering the restive state. His performance had been far from spectacular. In fact, there were verified reports that Farooq had a cavalier attitude towards his responsibilities, Bhatnagar notes.

The disenchantment with his potential was to such an extent that his elder sister's husband, GM Shah, had plotted his ouster from power. And, with a little help from the Congress, he garnered enough defectors from the party to form his own government on 2 July 1984.

"Senior Congress leader Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had played an important role in the formation of the new government," the book says.

But these political shenanigans had happened during Indira Gandhi's time. And Rajiv had a different view on Farooq.

"Unlike other Congress politicians, who believed in politics of platitudes or 'jumlas', Rajiv was extremely committed to the delivery mode," Bhatnagar writes. "The aspirational India that we recognise so well today -- India of the 21st century are his substantive legacies. Rajiv was not an arm chair visionary. He was a doer. He could quickly identify problems and move swiftly to find viable solutions."

In Kashmir, Rajiv was aware that the Congress's old guard had its own ambitions and their own sub-regional politics, the book notes.

"This was part of the reason that the waters of the Jhelum were muddied time and again at the cost of political stability in Srinagar."

Rajiv wanted to move away from it and get his own man in – a man who shared his vision of politics aligned with the idyllic setting of the "paradise on earth".

"Farooq's persuasive ways convinced him that he was the go-getter that Kashmir so desperately needed," the author writes.

Mufti Sayeed's own actions were also proving to be his undoing.

Shortly after the locks were opened in Ayodhya in February 1986, he allegedly engineered attacks on Hindus in his home district of Anantnag. It was the only location where violence against Hindus and their shrines had taken place in the otherwise peaceful Valley.

"It was reported to Rajiv that Mufti Sayeed had instigated the violence as he was keen to be chief minister. GM Shah had served long enough," Bhatnagar writes.

On 7 March 1986, Rajiv had Shah sacked and imposed Governor's Rule on the state. He shifted Mufti Sayeed to Delhi, gave him a seat in the Rajya Sabha and also made him the Union minister of Tourism.

In November 1986, after months of hectic parleys mediated by Pilot, Rajiv and Farooq signed an accord that reinstated the latter as chief minister and proposed a roadmap for stabilising the state.

"Even as a caretaker coalition government was being cobbled together, silent dissent was brewing in both the Congress and the National Conference," Bhatnagar writes. "Sections in both parties were apprehensive about the secret goings-on."

But then, soon the announcement of the Rajiv-Farooq Accord was received with much fanfare. And with that, Rajiv's friend took the chief minister's oath of office alone.

## 40 More Discharged

administrative quarantine so far after successfully completing their required two-week quarantine in Srinagar," he added.

## High Court Employee

has been registered and further investigations taken up.



# COVID-19 Control Room Releases SOPs For Pregnant Ladies In Red Zones

**SRINAGAR:** The Divisional Administration Kashmir has come up with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for pregnant ladies in the COVID-19 Red Zone areas across the valley.

As per the laid down procedures, the pregnant ladies in Red Zones will be enlisted and their check up will be managed at recently established health centres in Red and Buffer zones while the proper birth plan will be executed by ANM and ASHA's under the supervision of concerned Block Medical Officers as per Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHPW), GOI guidelines.

The pregnant ladies have been strictly advised to attend anti-natal checkups at the recently established health centers by ASHA's and their cad-



res both in red and buffer zones.

According to such SOPs, all the

asymptomatic pregnant ladies will be tested one week before expected date of

delivery (EDD) using Rapid Antibody Tests. If a pregnant lady is found having symptoms of Influenza like Illness (ILI) or Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI), will be tested using RT-PCR.

Depending upon the test results, such pregnant ladies will be taken to designated Covid-Hospital or Non-Covid hospital where, their deliveries will be conducted.

Besides, the 24x7 ambulance services will be available for pregnant ladies at phone numbers 102 or 108.

The divisional administration has also directed the concerned to release all the assured MCH care incentives due to ASHA's including additional one thousand rupees per month in lieu of working for COVID-19 activities without fail.

## JKSSB approves selection list of 199 Junior Assistants under PM Package, 46 Laboratory Assistants

**JAMMU, APRIL 21:** As a sequel towards fast track recruitment relating to non gazetted posts referred to by various indenting departments and agencies, J&K Services Selection Board (SSB) approved selection list for the 199 posts of Junior Assistant under PM Package and 46 Posts of Laboratory Assistants pertaining to Health Department in its 168th meeting held here today.

Soon after the decision of UT Government directing for opening of Government offices from 20th April, 2020, the Services Selection Board resumed its activities and approved the selection lists for 245 posts relating to Junior Assistants (PM Package) and Laboratory Assistants (Health Department).

Chairman J&K SSB, Khalid Jahangir, chaired the meeting which among others was attended by board members including M. Shafiq Chak, Angrez Singh Rana, Pritam Lal Atri, Harvinder Kour and Controller of Examination JKSSB Musheer Ahmad Mirza.

Secretary, JKSSB, Ranjeet Singh and other officers of the Board assisted the Board in conduct of meeting proceedings.

Pertinently, the above mentioned posts of Junior Assistants are part of the PM Package for Kashmiri Migrants and were referred to the J&K SSB by the Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction while the posts of Laboratory Assistants were referred to by the Health & Medical Department.

It would be relevant to add that the Board since February has released selection lists against more than 1800 posts of various categories which included more than 1100 selections of Health & Medical Education Department in addition to 157 Naib Tehsildars. Moreover, the Board has also released about 150 withheld recommendations giving immense relief to the candidates.

Earlier, the Board in its 164th Board meeting decided to seek preferences from the candidates for the post of Junior Assistants (Migrants) as a special case, to ensure speedy and filling up of maximum vacancies sanctioned under PM Package for Kashmiri Migrants.

## Tackling COVID-19 Pandemic

# Govt To Train 2500 "COVID-19 Warriors"

**SRINAGAR, APRIL 21:** The Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Pandurang K Pole on Tuesday inaugurated Divisional Level Training Programme to combat COVID-19 and mitigation operations across valley at Disaster Relief Force, (DRF) Headquarters Srinagar.

More than 2500 COVID-19 warriors belonging to SDRF, Youth services & Sports, Civil Defence, Home Guards, Red Cross volunteers and NGO persons will be trained under the programme, at Block levels in more than 250 batches, by a trained team of Community Process (ASHA) trainers in different districts for COVID-19 preparedness, management and mitigation.

Speaking on the occasion, the Divisional Commissioner said that the aim of this training is to inculcate basic principles of COVID-19 preparedness, management and mitigation among the trainees besides to augment the teams which are working in each district to ensure supply of essential commodities to concerned households, screening & management at Red Zones, basics about signs and symptoms of COVID-19, types of diagnostic tests, community Surveillance, screening, tackling stigma, home quarantine protocol, personal safety, enforcing lockdown and other operations.

Div Com further said that the important responsibility placed on the shoulders of trainees, as it is a collective effort which will pull through the society from current situation.

Later, Officer Special Duty (OSD) Health & Medical Education Dr Owais Ahmad said that the ongoing training programme will further enhance capabilities of trainees to tackle the challenge of COVID-19 pandemic across Kashmir Division.

Director Health services Kashmir Dr Sameer Matto, Commandant SDRF Bashir Ahmad, Deputy Director Health Services Dr Bashir Ahmad Chalkoo, Programme Manager NHM, & Lab Coordinator J&K Dr Jitender Mehta, Chief Medical Officer Srinagar Dr Jahangir Bakshi and other concerned officials were present in the inaugural function.

## LAWDA demolishes four more illegally raised structures

**SRINAGAR, APRIL 21:** A demolition drive was conducted by the Lakes and Waterways Development Authority under the supervision of Enforcement Officer in the area of Arabal, Shalimar and Harwan in which two houses including one 2nd storey and 02 shops were partially demolished, here today.

Though the demolition squad faced resistance from the mob, which gathered on the occasion, the illegally constructed structures were razed successfully with the help of police force.

It is pertinent to mention here that amid Covid-19 lockdown some miscreants are taking undue advantage of the situation and indulge in illegal constructions.

The people residing within the LDA jurisdiction have asked



to desist from such illegal constructions, as the Enforcement Wing will continue demolition of illegal constructions.

Moreover, the Tripper/Load carrier owners have been directed not to carry any type of illegal construction material in the prohibited area of Dal and Nigeen Lakes without prior and proper permission from the concerned agencies.

## Cash and expensive shawls looted from store

'Efforts on to nab burglars: Police

### Agencies

Srinagar: Police have registered a formal case and constituted a team to nab the burglars who looted expensive shawls and cash from a store here in old Srinagar city on Monday late night.

Police sources said that police station Safakadal received a complaint in which the complainant claimed that during the intervening night unknown burglars entered in his Pashmina Store through a window and besides cash Rs 2.5 lakh, they also stole expensive Kani Shawls worth lakhs.

A police official confirmed this and identified the complainant as Sirajuddin Wani son of Ghulam Mohiuddin, a resident of Narwara Eidgah.

The pashmina store is located inside the residential house of the victim.

## Mobile ATM facility provided in Red Zone areas

**KUPWARA :** On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Anshul Garg, mobile ATM facility was provided to the people living in Red Zone area of Anderhama today to facilitate cash withdrawals in view of upcoming holy month of Ramadan.

"We have deputed a mobile ATM to facilitate Red Zone areas of the district to make cash available to people at their door steps with norms of social distancing and avoiding any large gatherings", said the Deputy Commissioner, adding that the step was taken in view of ensuring holy month of Ramadan. He said that 7 Banking Correspondents (BCs) have been deployed in the Red Zones of the district for cash delivery in the wake of financial assistance under PMKISAN, JanDhan and other schemes of GOI.

As many as 886 transactions amounting to 34.68 Lacs have been facilitated by the BCs Rs 34.68 during the last week.

Deputy Commissioner expressed his gratitude to the Chairman JK Bank for his cordial support in sparing Mobile Van for Kupwara on telephonic request made by him, yesterday. Regarding availability of food grains, the Deputy Commissioner informed that all essential commodities including food grains are available in sufficient quantities in the district, including border areas of Karnah, Keran, Machil and

Jumgund. He said PDS ration have been distributed in advance to all household for the months of April and May, while as distribution of free ration for April under PMGKY for PHH and AAY households will be completed by 25th April.

The medical teams deputed in red zone areas are also actively working and conducting door to door survey besides, testing process is also going on aggressively and over 800 suspects have been tested till date. In addition, over one lakh home delivery of groceries, LPG and medicines have been made during the lockdown period, with special focus on people residing in Red Zones.

Meanwhile, in view of holy month of Ramadan, Deputy Commissioner directed Executive Officers of Municipal Committees of Kupwara, Handwara & Langate and all Tehsildars of the district to keep constant check on the availability and price line of essential commodities. He also directed to constituted market checking squads (MCS), comprising of CAPD, Revenue, police, Municipality and Legal Metrology departments at Tehsil level with a mandate to keep constant check on hoarding and black marketing in the District, so that people don't face any inconvenience during the holy month, amid lockdown due to COVID-19 Pandemic.



### 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

- 536 St. Agapetus I ends his reign as Catholic Pope
- 1056 - Supernova Crab nebula last seen by the naked eye
- 1073 - Pope Alexander II buried and Ildebrando chosen as Pope Gregory VII
- 1145 - 19th recorded perihelion passage of Halley's Comet
- 1164 - Raynald of Dassel names Guido di Crema as anti-pope Paschalis III
- 1370 - Building begins on the Bastille fortress in Paris
- 1500 - Pedro Alvares Cabral is the first european to discover Brazil, landing near Monte Pascoal, claims it for Portugal
- 1521 - French King Francois I declares war on Spain
- 1529 - Treaty of Saragosa: Spain & Portugal divide eastern hemisphere
- 1648 - English army claims King Charles I responsible for bloodshed
- 1659 - Lord Protector Richard Cromwell disbands English parliament
- 1671 - King Charles II sits in on English parliament
- 1674 - Netherlands & Munster sign peace treaty
- 1676 - Battle of Etna - Neth/Spain vs France, M de Ruyter fatally wounded
- 1677 - Battle at Catania: between French & Dutch fleet
- 1692 Edward Bishop is jailed for proposing flogging as a cure for witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts
- 1809 - Battle at Eckmuhl - Napoleon beats Austria Archduke Karl
- 1817 - Curacao prohibits use of white paint due to fierce sunlight
- 1823 - Baltic Club (Exchange) forms in London
- 1823 - R J Tyers patents roller skates
- 1838 - English steamship "Sirius" docks in NYC after crossing the Atlantic, first transatlantic steam passenger service
- 1864 - US mints 2 cent coin (1st appearance of "In God We Trust")
- 1876 - Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky completes his ballet "Swan Lake"
- 1876 - Philadelphia Nationals Wes Fister scores baseball's 1st run
- 1884 - Thomas Stevens starts 1st bike trip around world (2 yrs 9 mths)
- 1884 - US recognizes King Leopold II's Congo Free State
- 1889 - A 1.9 million-acre tract of Indian Territory for white colonial settlement in Oklahoma officially starts at 12pm
- 1893 - Francis Dhanis army occupies Kasongo
- 1915 - 1st military use of poison gas (chlorine, by Germany) in WW I
- 1915 - The Second Battle of Ypres begins on the Western Front
- 1916 - France battles at Fort Douaumont
- 1916 - Karl Spindler scuttles the Aud near Daunt's Rock, to prevent its cargo of 20,000 rifles destined for Irish republicans falling into enemy hands
- 1926 - Persia, Turkey & Afghanistan sign treaties of security
- 1930 - US, Britain & Japan sign London Naval Treaty
- 1930 - British troops battle pro-independence revolutionaries in the Jalalabad hills near Chittagong in Bengal province, British India leaving 80 troops and 12 revolutionaries dead.
- 1931 - Egypt & Iraq sign peace treaty
- 1944 - Allies land near Hollandia, New-Guinea
- 1944 - Hitler & Benito Mussolini meet at Salzburg
- 1952 - 1st atomic explosion on network news, Nob, Nevada
- 1954 - US Senate Army-McCarthy televised hearings begin
- 1954 - USSR joins UNESCO
- 1961 - Uprising of French parachutist of Gen Salan/Challe in Algeria
- 1963 - Lester B. Pearson is sworn in as the 14th Prime Minister of Canada
- 1969 - 1st human eye transplant performed
- 1970 - 1st Earth Day held internationally to conserve natural resources
- 1971 - Soviet spacecraft Soyuz 10 launched
- 1972 - Apollo astronauts John Young & Charles Duke ride on Moon
- 1977 - Shimon Peres becomes the 8th Prime Minister of Israel
- 1982 - Launch of STS-3-Louisa & Fullerton [03/23]
- 1983 - Soyuz T-8 returns to Earth

## From KO Archives

## Sayeed, Mangat Clash At Cabinet Meeting

Observer News Service

**JAMMU -** Deputy Chief Minister Mangat Ram Sharma snubbed Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed at a cabinet meeting here Tuesday, telling him he was not a "headmaster" who could dictate terms to his seniors in politics.

Sharma walked out of the cabinet meeting in a huff, the second time he has done so in the past 16 months. He later flew to New Delhi, telling reporters he would apprise the Congress party leadership about Sayeed's "dictatorial behaviour".

Cabinet meeting was later postponed to April 22.

On Jan 24, almost in similar circumstances, Sharma walked out of a cabinet meeting on being overruled on the appointment of Kashmir's senior most Indian Administrative Service officer KB. Pillai as chairman of the State Public Service Commission.

Ultimately, Sharma had to relent and reconcile to the choice of the chief minister. Tuesday's walkout followed a verbal duel between the two over the use of 'improper' language by Sharma while conversing with Chief Secretar Sudhir S Belloria. The meeting was to discuss a major administrative and police reshuffle in the state. Sayeed termed Sharma's conversation with the chief secretary as 'improper.' "You should not use such language with the chief secretary," Sayeed told Sharma in the presence of the entire cabinet and some top officials. Sharma allegedly told Belloria 'kar do Ji' (do it) instead of 'kar deejlye' while marking the agenda for the day.

Sayeed corrected him in front of the cabinet after which the deputy chief minister replied that he did not have to be taught how to deal with the bureaucracy. Sharma told Sayeed: "I am senior to you in politics by 11 years. You cannot treat me like a headmaster, and I am leaving."

Sharma then burst out of the meeting Sayeed, the sources said, rubbed salt into Sharma's wounds by saying: "If you want to go, no one is going to stop you." He suggested that Congress President Sonia Gandhi should be informed about this incident. Chief Minister was quoted as saying: "How can the govt run amid this indiscipline?"

(Kashmir Observer, 22 April, 2005)



KASHMIR  
OBSERVER

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## Ease Lockdown

The number of Covid cases in Kashmir is showing an upward trend with every passing day. The number of cases has now climbed to more than 350, a predominant number of these cases is from Kashmir Valley and only a small proportion from Jammu. One reason for this is probably that in winter Kashmiris travel more than their counterparts in Jammu. A significant number of people go to Saudi Arabia and Iran for religious pilgrimages. Iran was one of the countries worst hit by the pandemic with more than 80,000 cases, 5000 of whom have so far died.

Kashmiris also visit countries like Dubai and the other Gulf and Arab countries to escape the winter. And in March a large number of them return home. According to the data, 31 percent of the positive cases travellers and 64 percent are the contacts.

A proper screening at the airport may have been of some help to arrest the spread of the virus. However, considering the number of Covid cases in the Valley is still within manageable levels and discounting the fact that the testing is inadequate, we should be able to get over the crisis sooner than later. In a positive development, percentage of samples that test positive at the two laboratories in Kashmir has dropped drastically over the past five days. According to reports in local media, among 2698 samples that were tested at SKIMS and CD Hospital from 14 April to 18 April, only 65 samples were found positive for coronavirus.

This does auger well for the near future. That is if this leads to the gradual flattening of the curve and later its plateauing and eventual elimination of the infection. But there are many ifs and buts before we reach that stage. It is difficult to say with certainty whether this decline in the positive cases is the result of inadequate testing. In the past week, the sample collection had come to a halt for some time after reportedly 5000 test kits bound for Srinagar were diverted to Jammu. Things, however, would become clear in the days and weeks ahead. If the declining trend sustains, it would mean the lockdown is making a redeeming difference.

That said, what after the lockdown comes to an end. Considering the devastating economic impact of the shutdown of the businesses, the lockdown is unlikely to be extended. There is a need for the government to chalk out a plan whereby parts of the economy which don't entail mass gathering of people are allowed to function. At the same time, people will need to be more responsible about their conduct outside home. The use of face mask and sanitizers should be made mandatory till the time the world gets a grip on the disease.

### OTHER OPINION

## Civilisation, dredged up

Beyond borders and under the sea, a British-led team of scientists and archaeologists discovered 12 shipwrecks in the Levant Basin in the Mediterranean Sea in 2015. Now, amidst a halt on the movement of people and goods forced on the world by the coronavirus, the first findings from what promises to be one of the most rewarding archaeological sites are being published. And the Enigma Shipwrecks Project (ESP) is already changing ideas of "civilisation" and "sophistication".

The dozen ships span a large swathe of history — spanning Hellenistic, Roman, early Islamic and Ottoman vessels. The largest among these is a 17th-century Ottoman merchant ship, "an absolute colossus", at least twice the size of the other vessels. Its cargo from 14 civilisations ranges from ancient Chinese artefacts and includes cups repurposed for drinking coffee and spices from India. According to the ESP, this ship reveals a previously unknown "silk route" and also goes some way in establishing the degree of cosmopolitanism in Islamic societies at the time, and how much of what the West values as its civilisational heritage is owed to Asia and Africa.

"Europe may think it invented notions of civility, but the wrecked coffee cups and pots prove the 'barbarian Orient' was a trailblazer rather than a backwater," according to Sean Kingsley, director, ESP. The fact that much of what is seen as "western civilisation" is a result of contact with the Islamic, Asian and African worlds is not a part of public knowledge, even over 70 years after decolonisation. In fact, much of the contemporary criticisms of globalisation and openness to trade stem from a fear of that cultural and economic asymmetry. On the cultural front at least, boats from 2,000 metres under the sea can address these insecurities. It turns out, openness and internationalism create and nurture civilisations — they do not threaten them.

*The Indian Express*

FAIZAN SHAH MALIK

As some of us went to sleep last night, Oil was trading at around \$18.0 a barrel and when we woke up the price flashing on our TV screens was in the range of -\$25 to -\$35 per barrel. Yes, you read that right. -\$37.63 is where the price of May Oil futures settled on the NYMEX (New York Mercantile Exchange).

The benchmark WTI (West Texas Intermediate) Oil that trades on the NYMEX and has become synonymous with Crude Oil around the world, traded as low as -\$40.32 before settling at -\$37.63 a barrel for the day.

History was created today, on Monday, April 20th as the world witnessed for the first time a negative price on Oil.

Price fell in excess of \$55.0 a barrel from the previous day's close. It was a monumental collapse. It is hard to fathom something of this magnitude.

The irony aside of this whole debacle, the whole ride down sounds pretty stupendous not to mention bewildering and quite mind-boggling.

How could it be? How can price of a commodity become negative?

A lot of you out there must be scratching your head and thinking the same and you wonder how is this possible?

#### Here is the explanation:

The price that you see and constantly hear on the news when they talk about Crude Oil, is the Futures price.

A contract to buy or sell something at a predetermined price at a specified time in the future.

The price in question here is the price for May Futures contract (Financial transaction) that needs to be offset on or before the expiry date (21st April for the May contract) and if one cannot offset it by the expiry date, then one has to take delivery of physical Oil.

If you take delivery, you have to then store the Oil somewhere, and it costs money to store this Oil.

During the last month or so as prices started to fall, global storages started to fill up, and they began to fill up faster than anyone could have envisioned. Now as Oil was getting cheaper and cheaper, companies continued to store this "relative cheap Oil" and filled up storages.

And the ones that still had some space were so expensive that people found it cheaper to pay the buyer to take the delivery rather than pay for the exorbitant storage charges.

Since storages are now almost full and there is no place to store the new Oil, the price starts to fall quickly and since this May Futures contract

# The Oil Debacle!

"A physical commodity will never go to zero," I learned this old adage very early in my career when I joined the energy industry and it always held good, at least till today.



OPEC plus agreement to cut production will only start from May. The agreement is set to take away 9.7 million barrels from the market, which is roughly ten percent of the global production but experts are estimating that demand has fallen more than 30 percent and hence those cuts won't be enough to keep the price up.

expires on 21st April, you have very little time to get out of the position, otherwise you will have to take delivery and store the Oil and with no storages available, that is a risk not many people are willing to take.

So the price on this May contract starts to fall a lot faster than the other further out futures contract months like June, July et cetera.

So if you bought May Oil futures, you are now stuck with them with no buyers and you want to get rid of the oil, you will have to pay someone to do so.

So that's why you pay someone to take the oil, hence the minus sign.

Futures prices of the front three months settled on 20th April, as follows:

May: -\$37.63 per barrel — expires on April 21st  
June: +\$20.43 per barrel — expires on May 19th  
July: +\$26.28 per barrel — expires on June 22nd

This debacle had in fact started a little while earlier, in March, when the price war started between Saudi Arabia and Russia, apparently on not agreeing to come to a production cut to prop up prices and ended up deciding to flood the market with more Oil, which in itself is counter intuitive.

#### That started it all.

The price had already started to come down even before the virus began to put the final nail in the coffin. The recent Corona Virus lockdown and the subsequent economic turmoil that followed put a significant damper on the demand for Oil and the prices started to come off further. (Economics 101) — "Supply and Demand"

The road ahead for Oil in the short term doesn't seem too propitious.

With most countries across the world extending their lockdowns or stay at home orders, demand for Oil is not expected to go up any time soon.

OPEC plus agreement to cut production will only start from May. The agreement is set to take away 9.7 million barrels from the market, which is roughly ten percent of the global production but experts are estimating that demand has fallen more than 30 percent and hence those cuts won't be enough to keep the price up.

While on one hand the Producers are pumping as much Oil as they can which is not helping ease the Oil glut either, storages on the other hand are getting filled up very quickly and that exacerbates the problem further.

With prices falling sharply, a

lot of small independent Oil producers in the US are on the brink of bankruptcy now. This OPEC plus deal had given them some hope even though some people were sceptic, but now it seems even that slight sliver of hope has dwindled away. We should now see fresh round of bankruptcies in the Oil sector in the US. The falling prices will have an impact on the poor African and Latin American countries as well, who will have to face further economic challenges in an already tough situation.

Lower prices usually propel demand but we are now in an environment where until the epidemic threat is looming large, a prop up in demand is seen to be a distant possibility. The demand destruction because of the corona pandemic was sudden and immediate while the production cuts will take its effect slowly; we should prepare ourselves for lower prices and a rough road ahead.

.....  
*Writer is MA in Economics & MBA from University of Texas, Arlington and has previously worked as an Oil Trader for Noble Group. He is currently working as a Freelance Investment Advisor, Futures & Commodities trader.*

## Virtual Classroom-Efficacy And Challenges

MUKHTAR AHMAD FAROOQI

The role of education is to empower students with knowledge, skills and attitudes so as to make them productive in economic and social contexts that are essential to their success in a dynamic society. With the emergence of Covid-19 as pandemic and consequent lockdown to break the chain of transmission in both developed as well as developing countries has forced millions of students both at elementary as well as tertiary level to remain out of their respective institutions. This has denied them the access to regular (face to face) classroom instruction.

When death figures are announced on hourly basis, mental state of educators as well as learners is mandated to be at crosshairs due to fear psychosis. Still what is the alternative for educators around the globe in this crisis. Technology comes to our rescue in this situation and one such technology enabled teaching learning process is Virtual Classroom. Let us first understand what is meant by a Virtual Classroom and how it works.

Finkelstein (2006) defines virtual classroom as a visual contact between participants(learners) and instructor in an online environment as if they are engaged in face to face classroom setting. According to Parker & Martin (2010), virtual classrooms are online environments that enable students and instructors to communicate synchronously, by means of audio, video, text chat, interactive whiteboard, application sharing, instant polling and other such features, as though they were

studying face to face in a classroom. A virtual classroom(e-school) is a teaching and learning environment where learners can communicate, interact, view(material), discuss and engage with learning resources in an online setting. Virtual classroom is also known as virtual learning environment(VLE). In simple terms, virtual classroom is an online classroom environment facilitated via specialized video conferencing apps.

The most common tools that we can use in VLE are video conferencing, instant messaging tools, online whiteboard for real time collaboration. There are so many mobile as well as computer apps that can aid us in VLE like Zoom, Vedaemo, Google Hangouts (in Google Classroom) etc. rather are currently used by several educational institutions across the valley. Apart from these Elluminate, Adobe Connect, WebEx, Wiziq, Centra are some commercially available virtual classroom software's.

In virtual classroom setting, the learners are taught through synchronous instruction which means that the teacher and the learner feel in a real world conventional classroom system as they are logged into classroom (rather virtual in nature) at the same time. VLEs are considered most suitable in teaching and learning of science based subjects. But for any type of Virtual Education use of multimedia technologies and availability high speed internet are must have. The advent of virtual classes can be traced back to mid-1990s.

Efficacy of VLEs in  
Public Schooling System

Despite so many benefits of VLE in normal conditions like real time teaching and learning, effective & efficient time management, end to end communication etc., there are several impediments in its implementation at gross root level as far as public educational institutional in India in general and JK in particular are concerned as VLE demands availability of computers/mobile phones(smart) and access to internet which might not be available to everyone.

Lack of access to requisite hardware like smartphones/computers due to poor economic condition is the biggest impediment as far as Public (Govt.) schools are concerned because most of learners in these schools belong to BPL families that hardly manage to live hand to mouth and possessing a smartphone is still a dream. Even at college level almost 20% students don't own a smartphone especially those belonging to rural populace. If participation of the students is 20-30 percent, then what objective we are going to achieve is questionable.

Let's do a case study by quoting an example from real life situation. Let us assume there 15 students in a class and only parents of 4-5 students possess a smartphone who are inside their houses during mornings/evenings only, then how this initiative is going to prove fruitful as participation at the maximum is 30% in this case.

Another limitation is the bandwidth (speed) of internet that is prerequisite to effectively deliver the content as low bandwidth internet(2G) makes the mockery of the whole ini-

tiative as low speed internet takes hours for uploading or downloading even few MB(sized) files.

Last not but the least is the skill set required to use the video conferencing apps like Zoom etc. as most of the students belonging to Govt. schools are first generation learners. Neither they themselves nor their parents whom these innocent children could turn to in the absence of teachers possess those skills.

Apart from above limitations another challenge for a common man is the security flaw in certain apps like Zoom that sends the user data to social networking sites without the knowledge of the user that can prove disastrous as novice users of mobile banking apps can be easily cheated by fraudsters using their personal data.

Conclusion: There is no doubt that the merits of VLE immensely outweigh the demerits especially in developed countries but due to lack of access to high speed internet/hardware(smartphones), its efficacy in public sector education set up especially at elementary level is negligible. Main reason being the age of target group (learners) at elementary level where the role of teacher is supposed to be pivotal, the only option they are left with is turn to their parents who being illiterate and poor are unable to offer any help to them in this situation. Use of multimedia technologies like these may prove helpful at high school and above levels but at elementary level it will prove as a causality and is debatable.

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## Pakistan Records Highest Number Of Coronavirus Deaths In A Day

### Agencies

Islamabad, Pakistan- Pakistan has seen its highest rise in deaths in a single day from the coronavirus, with 17 new cases taking the country's death toll from the highly contagious virus to at least 192, according to government data.

Monday also saw the highest single-day rise in cases in Pakistan, with 705 confirmed cases taking the country's tally to 9,214, according to the data.

The country has been easing its lockdown in order to stave off an economic crisis from stagnating growth.

So far, at least 2,053 patients have recovered from COVID-19 in the country, leaving

sparked mainly by cases of travellers from neighbouring Iran and other countries, Pakistan has seen a spike in local transmission of the virus, which accounted for 65 percent of all cases as of this week, the country's de facto Health Minister Zafar Mirza told reporters.

Mirza also said the government was working on setting up a platform to allow Pakistani doctors in the global diaspora to return to the country and help efforts to fight the coronavirus.

On Sunday, doctors' unions across the country formed the Grand National Health Alliance in protest against what they say is a



the active case tally at 6,969.

The increase in cases has occurred in conjunction with a modest increase in testing capacity, as the government aims to ramp up to 25,000 tests a day.

Pakistan has conducted 111,806 tests, or 0.53 tests per thousand people.

The government appears to be far off its target, however, with only 5,347 tests conducted on Monday, as per government data.

After an initial outbreak

lack of proper personal protective equipment (PPE) kits and other steps to keep doctors safe from the virus.

The move came days after young doctors protesting the lack of PPE kits clashed with police outside a main government building in the eastern city of Lahore. A group of protesters is holding a hunger strike at that protest site, demanding better protection for healthcare workers.



## Prepare For 'A New Way Of Living' With Coronavirus: WHO

### Agencies

Geneva: The World Health Organization warned rushing to ease coronavirus restrictions will likely lead to a resurgence of the contagion as governments start rolling out plans to get economies up and running again.

"This is not the time to be lax. Instead we need to ready ourselves for a new way of living for the foreseeable future," said Dr Takeshi Kasai, the WHO regional director for the Western Pacific on Tuesday.

He said governments must remain vigilant to stop the spread of the virus and the lifting of lockdowns and other social distancing measures must be done gradually and strike the right balance between keeping people healthy and allowing economies to function.

"As we move forward in this difficult time, our lives, our health system and approach to stopping transmission must continue to adapt

and evolve along with the epidemic, at least until a vaccine or very effective treatment is found," Kasai said.

"This process will need to become our new normal," he added.

Countries with limited resources are a priority, such as Pacific Island nations, Kasai said, as they have to ship samples to other countries for diagnoses, and transportation restrictions are making that more difficult.

The WHO Western Pacific region is home to almost 1.9 billion people across 37 countries. The focus of the epidemic is now on Europe, however, the organisation expects it to shift to other regions.

### 'Worst ahead of us'

On Monday, the WHO chief also warned the worst of the coronavirus pandemic has yet to come.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters in Geneva "the worst is yet ahead of us" - but did not specify in what

ways the crisis could get worse.

His warning followed the United States and some European countries beginning the process of slowly reopening and emerging from various lockdowns put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19.

"It has a very dangerous combination and this is happening ... like the 1918 flu that killed up to 100 million people," the WHO chief said.

Tedros added because of the technological advances since then "we can prevent that disaster. We can prevent that kind of crisis".

"Trust us. The worst is yet ahead of us. Let's prevent this tragedy. It's a virus that many people still don't understand," said Tedros.

The new coronavirus first surfaced in central China in late 2019. The number of coronavirus positive cases is about 2.5 million worldwide, with the US, Italy and Spain overtaking mainland China in confirmed cases.

## Trump says will suspend immigrations to save Covid-19 jobs losses

### Agencies

Washington: President Donald Trump on Monday said he is temporarily suspending immigration to protect American jobs threatened by the dire economic consequences of the coronavirus outbreak. India has been the top country of origin for legal immigrants to the US in recent years, with over 126,000 in 2017.

"In light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy, as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens, I will be signing an Executive Order to temporarily suspend immigration into the United States!" the American president said in a post on twitter Monday evening. He has frequently used the phrase "Invisible Enemy" for the coronavirus.

More than 22 million people have filed for unemployment benefits in last four weeks of stay-at-home lockdowns in force in most parts of the United States.

It was not immediately clear from President Trump's tweet what kind of immigrants would be impacted — new immigrants are mostly those applying for Green Cards on professional and family visas, refugees and asylum seekers.

But temporary foreign workers hired on H-1B, tourists and business visitors — the most popular visas for Indians — are unlikely to be impacted because they are on non-immigrant visas.

The order is likely to be challenged in court, said industry sources.

A response was awaited from the US Citizenship and

Immigration Services for what to expect, and who are likely to be impacted, or not. It was not clear if immigrations applications already in the system will be frozen because of the order, and if that could happen to Green Cards as well.

More than 1 million new immigrants are admitted to the United States every year. India sent the most in 2017 with 126,000 people, according to a Pew study. It was followed by Mexico (124,000), China (121,000) and Cuba (41,000). Overall, people from Mexico comprise the largest group of foreign-born US national in 2018 at 25%, followed by India and China, with 6% each, according to the same report.

There were no indications Tuesday when the US president planned to issue the executive order, which could effectively shut down the legal immigration system for an indefinite period.

While Trump has striven to block all illegal immigra-



tion, a key election promise, he has explicitly and repeatedly supported legal, merit-based immigration. The annual diversity visa, granted to residents of underrepresented countries, have been discontinued and intake of refugees has also been curtailed.

## Pakistan Removes Thousands Of Names From Terrorist Watch List: Report

### Agencies

Islamabad: Pakistan has quietly removed around 1,800 terrorists from its watch list, including that of the 2008 Mumbai attack mastermind and LeT operations commander Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, ahead of a new round of assessments by the global anti-money-laundering watchdog FATF, according to a US-based start-up that automates watchlist compliance.

The so-called proscribed persons list, which is maintained by Pakistan's National Counter Terrorism Authority or NACTA, is intended in part to help financial institutions avoid doing business with or processing transactions of suspected terrorists.

The list in 2018 contained about 7,600 names. It has been reduced to under 3,800 in the past 18 months, according to Castellum.AI, a New York-based regulatory technology company.

About 1,800 of the names have been removed since the beginning of March, according to data collected by Castellum.AI. Pakistan is working to implement an action plan that has been mutually agreed to with the Paris-based The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), part of which involves demonstrating effective implementation of targeted financial sanctions.

It is possible that these removals are part of Pakistan's action plan to implement the FATF recommendations, it said.

While Pakistan received a rating of low effectiveness from the FATF regarding terrorist financing preventive measures and financial sanctions, the FATF did note in February that Pakistan has largely addressed 14 of 27 action items, with varying levels of progress made on the rest of the action, it said.

The FATF will again evaluate Pakistan's progress in June 2020.

## Europe Takes Cautious Steps To Ease Lockdowns

### Agencies

**LEIPZIG:** Germany and other parts of Europe took tentative steps to ease lockdown measures on Monday as more countries saw death rates from the coronavirus fall, but officials warned the battle against the pandemic was far from over.

The World Health Organisation defended its handling of the crisis against scathing criticism from Washington and others, with its chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus insisting the UN body had been warning against the virus "from day one".

Spain recorded its lowest death toll in weeks on Monday, Britain its lowest in a fortnight and Italy saw its first drop in the number of cases since its first infection was recorded in February.

The encouraging news came as tight restrictions in place for weeks were lifted in

parts of the continent, with some shops reopening in Germany and Denmark and parents dropping their children off at nurseries in Norway.

The hope is tempered by fears of new waves of infections, warnings that life will not be back to normal for many months and deep concern over the devastating impact the virus is having on the global economy.

But even the smallest return to normality was welcome.

In the German city of Leipzig, fashion store owner Manuela Fischer said she was "incredibly happy" to be welcoming shoppers again.

In Norway, Silje Skifjell dropped off her sons at a nursery in the north of the capital Oslo.

"He was so excited we had to leave the house early to come here and see the other children," she said of four-year-old Isaak, her eldest.

"I almost cried, he was so happy to see his friends."

Governments around the world are mulling how and when to ease lockdowns that have kept more than half of humanity confined to their homes.

### Not yet 'out of the woods'

The virus has so far infected more than 2.4 million people globally and killed more than 165,000, with nearly two-thirds of the victims in Europe.

Germany, which has been hailed for keeping fatalities low despite a significant number of cases, allowed smaller shops to reopen in some regions from Monday.

Larger shops and those in major German cities will open later as part of an attempted phased return to a more normal existence that will also see some students go back to school from May 4.

Leipzig resident Ab-heshek, 25, said he welcomed a requirement to wear masks, but was feeling some trepidation.

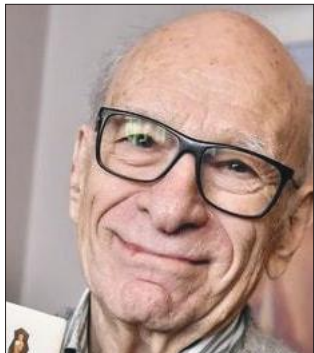
## Tom and Jerry director Gene Deitch passes away at 95

Gene Deitch, an American Oscar-winning illustrator, animator, film director and producer has died. He was 95.

His Czech publisher, Petr Himmel, told The Associated Press Deitch died unexpectedly during the night from Thursday to Friday in his apartment in Prague's Little Quarter neighborhood. No further details were given.

Deitch's movie Munro won the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film in 1960. He was also nominated for the same award twice in 1964 for Here's Nudnik and "How to Avoid Friendship."

Earlier, he had created the Tom Terrific series,



while the Sidney's Family Tree, which he co-produced was nominated for an Academy Award in 1958.

Born Aug. 8, 1924, in Chicago, Deitch arrived in Prague in 1959 intending to stay for 10 days, but fell in

love with his future wife, Zdenka, and stayed in the Czechoslovakian capital.

Working from behind the Iron Curtain, he directed 13 episodes of Tom and Jerry and also some of the Popeye the Sailor series.

He captured life in communist Czechoslovakia and later in the Czech Republic after the 1989 anti-communist Velvet Revolution in his memoirs For the Love of Prague.

In 2004, he received the Winsor McCay Award for his lifelong contribution to animation.

Deitch is survived by his wife and by three sons from his first marriage, all of whom are cartoonists and illustrators.

Prince Harry and his wife Meghan black-listed four major British tabloids on Sunday, accusing them of publishing stories that were "distorted, false and invasive beyond reason", UK media reported.

In a scathing letter to the editors of The Sun, Daily Mail, Mirror and Express, the couple, who have formally stepped down as senior members of the British Royal family, said there would be "no corroboration and zero engagement" with the newspapers, the Guardian said.

"This policy is not about avoiding criticism. It's not about shutting down public conversation or censoring accurate reporting," according to a purported copy of the letter shared by Financial Times media reporter Mark Di Stefano on Twitter.

## Harry And Meghan Are Breaking Up With These British Tabloids



But they did not want to be used as "currency for an economy of clickbait and distortion".

"The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have watched people they know -- as well as complete strangers -- have their lives completely pulled apart

for no good reason, other than the fact that salacious gossip boosts advertising revenue," according to an excerpt published by the Guardian.

The newspaper described the letter as an "unprecedented attack on a large part of the media".

Harry and Meghan made a bombshell announcement in January that they wished to withdraw from frontline royal duties and become financially independent.

Their departure -- dubbed "Megxit" by the British press -- followed reports Meghan was unhappy with royal life and both of them had complained about media intrusion.

The couple's hostility towards some media outlets spilled over into legal action last year, with Harry suing over alleged voicemail interception and Meghan filing a claim over a private letter to her father appearing in The Mail on Sunday after he shared it with the tabloid.

In their message to the editors, the pair said their new policy did not apply to all media and that they would continue to work with journalists around the world.





# Humans To Blame For Spread Of Coronavirus And Other 'Zoonoses'

Agencies

Paris: Whether it came from a bat or a pangolin is not certain, but one thing is: the coronavirus outbreak that has killed tens of thousands and turned the world upside down comes from the animal world.

It is human activity that enabled the virus to jump to people, and specialists are warning that if nothing changes many other pandemics of this nature will follow.

The name given to diseases transmitted from animals to humans is "zoonoses", based on the Greek words for "animal" and "sickness".

They are not new — tuberculosis, rabies, toxoplasmosis, malaria, to name just a few, are all zoonoses.

According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), 60 percent of human infectious diseases originate from animals.

This figure climbs to 75 percent for "emerging" diseases such as Ebola, HIV, avian flu, Zika, or SARS, another type of coronavirus. The list goes on.

"The emergence of zoonotic diseases is often associated with environmental changes or ecological disturbances, such as agricultural intensification and human settlement, or encroachments into forests and other habitats," said a 2016 UNEP report.

"Changes in the environment are usually the result of human activities, ranging from land use change to climate change."

Gwenael Vourc'h of INRAE, a French public research institute, also blames human activity for the crossover between species.

"Given the growth of the human population and its ever more intense use of planetary resources, the destruction of more and more ecosystems multiplies contacts," she says.

A key area of concern is deforestation to make way for agriculture and intensive livestock farming.

Domesticated animals are often a "bridge" between pathogens from the wild and humans. The widespread use of antibiotics in the livestock industry has also led to bacterial pathogens building up immunity to front-line drugs.

Urbanisation and habitat fragmentation are also highly disruptive of the balance between species, while global warming can push disease-carrying animals into new territory.

The novel coronavirus is believed to have emerged in a wet market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

Scientists think it originated in bats and could have been passed on via another mammal like a pangolin, an endangered species whose meat and scales are highly prized in parts of Asia.

But researchers have yet to come up with a definitive answer on how it migrated to people.

The only sure thing is that human activity facilitated

the jump.

"The process that leads a microbe, such as a virus, from a population of vertebrates such as bats to humans is complex, but driven by people," says Anne Larigauderie, executive secretary of IPBES, the panel of UN experts on biodiversity.

"People, through their actions, create opportunities for the microbes to come closer to human populations."

"The rate of global change in nature during the past 50 years is unprecedented in human history, and the most important direct driver of change in nature is land use change."

Beyond the current outbreak of coronavirus, IPBES estimates that zoonoses kill some 700,000 people a year.

A study by American researchers published last week and completed before the new coronavirus outbreak identifies rodents, primates and bats as hosts of three-quarters of viruses transmitted to humans.

But domestic animals also carry about 50 percent of the zoonoses identified.

In terms of endangered wildlife, the study shows that those who share the most viruses with humans are precisely "populations declining due to exploitation and loss of habitat".

Christine Johnson, of the University of California veterinary school, who led the study, blames the human urge to "alter the landscape".

"This also increases the frequency and intensity of

contact between humans and wildlife -- creating the perfect conditions for virus spillover," she says.

According to Larigauderie, this coronavirus outbreak may just be the tip of the iceberg.

"Increased trends in land use change, combined with increased trends in trade, and global travels, are expected to increase the frequency of pandemics in future," she says.

"Transformative change is needed in order to find a solution to this global tragedy."

Vourc'h is also calling for a systemic response.

"Beyond the essential response to each epidemic, we must think about our model... rethink our relationship with natural ecosystems and the services they provide," she says.

The 2016 UNEP report, which noted that "ecosystem integrity underlines human health and development", said effective strategies already exist to control most neglected zoonoses. The main constraint, however, appeared to be "lack of investment".

At 86, Jane Goodall has spent most of her life studying and defending animals, especially chimpanzees in Africa, especially from Tanzania. And she pulls no punches on where she lays the blame.

"It was predicted that this was going to happen and it's going to happen again until we learn the lessons," warns the British primatologist.

"It is our disregard for nature and our disrespect of the animals we should share the planet with that has caused this pandemic."

## Playing Video Games Benefit In Cognitive Development, Study Suggests

Agencies

Playing video games has multiple benefits! Research has shown that experience of playing video games can improve cognitive development such as greater sensitivity to contrasts, better eye-to-hand coordination and superior memory.

Action real-time strategy video games such as Age of Empires, World of Warcraft, and Total War are played by millions. These games, which can be won through strategic planning, selective attention, sensorimotor skills, and teamwork place considerable demands on the brain.

The study finds that expert players of real-time strategy games have faster information processing, allocate more cognitive power to individual visual stimuli, and allocate limited cognitive resources between successive stimuli more effectively through time.

These findings in Frontiers in Human Neuroscience suggest that playing such games can cause long-term changes in the brain and lead to an improvement in temporal visual selective attention.

"Our aim was to evaluate the long-term effect of experience with action real-time strategy games on temporal visual selective attention," said author Dr Dankun Gong, Associate Professor in the Ministry of Education Key Laboratory for Neuroinformation at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China.

"In particular, we wanted to reveal the time course of cognitive processes during the attentional blink task, a typical task used by neuroscientists to study visual selective attention," Gong added.

To study the effect of gaming on temporal visual selective attention, Gong and colleagues selected 38 volunteers, healthy



young male students from the University of Electronic Science and Technology.

Half of the volunteers were expert players of the typical action real-time strategy game League of Legend. The others were beginners, with less than six months' experience of the same game.

All volunteers were seated in front of a screen and tested in a blink task (the tendency of focused observers to "blink" - that is, to fail to properly register - a visual stimulus if it appears so quickly after a previous stimulus that cognitive processing of the first hasn't finished).

The greater a volunteer's tendency to "blink" targets, the less frequently he would press the correct button when one of the two targets appeared on the screen, and the worse he did overall in the task.

"We found that expert League of Legend players outperformed beginners in the task. The experts were less prone to the blink effect, detecting targets more accurately and faster, and as shown by their stronger P3b, gave more attentional cognitive resources to each target," said co-author Dr Weiyi Ma, Assistant Professor in Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Arkansas, USA.

"Our results suggest that long-term experience of action real-time strategy games leads to improvements in temporal visual selective attention: the expert gamers had become more effective in distributing limited cognitive resources between successive visual targets," said author Dr Tiejun Liu.

## Young people leave it too late to seek help for eating disorders like anorexia, bulimia

Agencies

A new study has found that young people are leaving it 'too late' to seek help for eating disorders, citing fear of losing control over their eating or weight, denial, and failure to perceive the severity of the illness as reasons not to get professional advice.

The recent online survey of almost 300 Australian young adults aged 18-25 years found a majority had eating, weight or body shape concerns, and even those with anorexia or bulimia reportedly found reasons to delay getting treatment or expert interventions.

"Not wanting others to worry about their problems was the highest endorsed barrier - it reflects the wish for autonomy and also the fear of being a burden to others in this group of young adults," said Kathina Ali, Research Associate in Psychology at Flinders University.

Feeling embarrassed about their problems or fearing that other people do not believe eating disorders are real illnesses even prevented young adults experiencing symptoms of anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa from seeking help, said fellow psychology researcher Dr Dan Fassnacht.

"Concerningly, only a minority of people with eating disorder symptoms had sought professional help and few believed they needed help despite the problems they were experiencing," says Dr Fassnacht, Flinders University

Psychology Lecturer, co-author of a new paper just published in the International Journal of Eating Disorders.

In the research article, titled 'What prevents young adults from seeking help? Barriers toward help? seeking for eating disorder symptomatology', the Australian and German researchers



recommended clinicians (counsellors, health workers, and others) and the public be made aware of these barriers.

More information and education about the severity and the impact of eating disorders - and how symptoms can get worse without interventions or treatment - should be available to young adults, including the importance of seeking help, and self-management strategies.

Helpful and free evidence-based online resources are available at websites such as Australia's Butterfly Foundation and the National Eating Disorders Collaboration.



## Hundreds Of Amazon Employees To Strike Over 'Unsafe' Working Conditions Amid Virus

**WASHINGTON:** Hundreds of Amazon employees are expected to strike from Tuesday to protest conditions they say are unsafe and demand better protection in the workplace against the coronavirus pandemic.

This is "the biggest mass action by workers yet, as frustrations mount around the company's failure to protect workers and public health in the wake of the coronavirus epidemic," said the Athena coalition, a group of workers' rights organizations, in a statement released Monday.

The protest by more than 300 warehouse workers comes three

that's not safe or risk losing a paycheck in the middle of a global recession," Jaylen Camp, an Amazon employee at a fulfillment center in Romulus, Michigan, said in the statement.

"Rather than take real steps to protect our health, Amazon would rather stall, lie and fire the people who speak up. We will not be intimidated. Our health and everyone's health is too important," he said.

Two weeks ago, Amazon announced it was distributing millions of masks to employees and implementing temperature checks at all of its US and European sites.

But, according to Athena, the ap-



days before an online strike by Amazon coders and engineers.

The online retail giant has been accused since the start of the pandemic of failing to sufficiently protect its employees, as well as of firing employees in the US who led protest movements.

"For weeks, Amazon workers... have sounded the alarm over unsafe conditions at facilities," Athena's statement said, pointing to 130 warehouses where workers have contracted COVID-19, some "with more than 30 confirmed cases."

"We have to make an impossible choice every day: go to a workplace

plication of these measures has been "questioned repeatedly by workers on the ground."

Warehouses and logistics centers are under heavy strain because of restrictions intended to slow the spread of the virus.

The Seattle-based retailer has seen unprecedented demand for its deliveries driven by stay-at-home orders.

Its share price has skyrocketed since the start of the crisis and analysts expect the firm to report bumper profits at the end of this month.

The company has said it will recruit 175,000 new employees in the US to help with runaway demand.



## US Oil Prices Fall Back Below Zero Amid Coronavirus Crisis

US oil markets have fallen back below zero as the coronavirus crisis continues to take a toll on oil demand.

The US oil price – which turned negative for the first time in market history on Monday – climbed above zero overnight before slumping back to -\$4.29 a barrel as trading began in Europe on Tuesday. A negative price means that traders are paying customers to take the oil off their hands and it is the result of the US running out of space to store a glut of crude caused by the global coronavirus lockdown.

The West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the benchmark for US crude prices, crashed to -\$40 a barrel on Monday as oil storage facilities filled to the brim and producers were forced to pay buyers to take their barrels.

John Browne, who was the head of BP from 1995 to 2007, said the negative US prices would remain low due to a chronic oversupply of crude in the global market.

"The prices will be very low and I think they will remain low and very volatile for some considerable time," Browne told the BBC. "There is still a lot of oil being produced that is going into storage and not being used."

"This is very reminiscent of a time in the mid-1980s when exactly the same situation happened – too much supply, too little demand and prices of oil stayed low for 17 years."

The 1980s glut sent oil prices tumbling and played a key role in the collapse of the Soviet Union and a political crisis in Algeria which led to a civil war.

The US market collapse marks the first time that the price of an important oil benchmark has tumbled below zero, and underlines

the severity of the crisis facing producers in the months ahead.

The negative prices were for WTI oil delivered in May, when demand for crude is forecast to fall to its lowest point and before production cuts intended to ease the market oversupply begin to take effect from next month. The WTI price for oil for delivery in June stands at just over \$20 a barrel.

In other global markets, oil prices are significantly lower than they were at the beginning of the year but are faring better than in the US, which faces unique challenges and higher costs to access major storage sites from landlocked oilfields.

The price of Brent crude, the international oil benchmark, traded at just below \$22 a barrel on Tuesday, around two-thirds lower than it was in January before the outbreak of Covid-19 in China raised concerns in the market.

## Sensex Tanks 1,011 Pts After Oil Plunge Sparks Global Sell-Off

**MUMBAI:** Equity benchmark Sensex on Tuesday sank over 1,011 points on heavy losses in banking, IT and auto counters as historic oil plunge brought more unease into markets already reeling from coronavirus crisis.

After hitting a low of 30,378.26, the 30-share index ended 1,011.29 points or 3.20 per cent lower at 30,636.71.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty plummeted 280.40 points, or 3.03 per cent, to 8,981.45.

IndusInd Bank was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, sinking over 12 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, M&M, Tata Steel, ONGC and Maruti.

On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, Hero MotoCorp and Nestle India were the gainers.

According to traders, domestic market plunged following selloff



in global equities as rout in crude market hit investor sentiment world over.

US benchmark oil West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for May delivery recovered to USD 1.10 a barrel.

With space to store oil scarce, WTI for May delivery plunged to

USD 37.63 a barrel ahead of Tuesday's close for futures contracts -- when traders who buy and sell the commodity for profit would have had to take physical possession of it.

Brent crude contracts for June delivery was trading 20.30 per cent lower at USD 20.38 per barrel.

On Wall Street, stocks crashed after US oil prices turned negative on Monday for the first time ever.

Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended with significant losses.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading up to 2 per cent lower.

Further, concerns over mounting Covid-19 cases also kept investors jittery, traders said.

The death toll due to the pandemic rose to 590, while the number of cases in the country climbed to 18,601.

Global tally of the infections has crossed 24.7 lakh, with over 1.70 lakh deaths.

The rupee, meanwhile, settled for the day lower by 30 paise at 76.83 (provisional) against the US dollar.

## Sensex Tanks 1,011 Points As Oil Crash Sparks Global Sell-Off

**MUMBAI:** Equity benchmark Sensex on Tuesday sank over 1,011 points on heavy losses in banking, IT and auto counters as historic oil plunge brought more unease into markets already reeling from coronavirus crisis.

After hitting a low of 30,378.26, the 30-share index ended 1,011.29 points or 3.20 per cent lower at 30,636.71. Similarly, the NSE Nifty plummeted 280.40 points, or 3.03 per cent, to 8,981.45.

IndusInd Bank was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, sinking over 12 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, M&M, Tata Steel, ONGC and Maruti.

On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, Hero MotoCorp and Nestle India were the gainers.

According to traders, domestic market plunged following selloff in global equities as rout in crude mar-

ket hit investor sentiment world over.

US benchmark oil West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for May delivery recovered to USD 1.10 a barrel.

With space to store oil scarce, WTI for May delivery plunged to

USD 37.63 a barrel ahead of Tuesday's close for futures contracts -- when traders who buy and sell the commodity for profit would have had to take physical possession of it.

## Coronavirus Lockdown: Facebook Launches App For Livestream Gaming

Facebook on Monday launched a standalone gaming app, allowing users to create and watch livestreams of games in a challenge to the Amazon-owned Twitch platform.

tions" for people locked down due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Facebook said it sees strong interest in the new app, with some 700 million of its global users already playing games or participating in



The new app was available Monday for Android devices, with a separate version for Apple's iOS in the works.

Facebook said the new app will enable users to watch "e-sports" or game competitions as well as participate in games with other users online.

The leading social network said it accelerated the launch "to encourage meaningful community interac-

gaming groups on its platform. It has been testing the app in some parts of the world since 2018.

"The Facebook Gaming app is a focused, gaming-only experience where you can watch your favorite streamers, play instant games and take part in gaming groups," the leading social network said in a statement on Twitter. "It's all of Facebook Gaming in one neat, app-sized package."

## Amul Eyes 15 Per Cent Growth In Fy20 Turnover This Fiscal Despite Covid-19



**NEW DELHI:** GCMF, which markets dairy products under Amul brand, expects its turnover to grow 15 per cent this fiscal year from Rs 38,550 crore in 2019-20 despite economic slowdown caused by the nationwide lockdown to control coronavirus outbreak.

The household consumption of milk and other dairy products is expected to rise and will compensate any temporary loss of sales caused by closure of hotels, restaurants and cafeterias (HoReCA segment) during the ongoing lockdown period, said R S Sodhi, the managing director of Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF).

"COVID-19 will not have any impact on demand of the food products. Our sales in value terms during this month are at par with the same month last year. The demand of some products has come down but at the same time sales of many products have risen," Sodhi said.

Asked about the outlook for this fiscal year, he said: "We expect our turnover to grow by 15 per cent." GCMMF clocked 17 per cent growth in its turnover at Rs 38,550 crore during the 2019-20 fiscal year. On the current situation of its milk operation, Sodhi said, "Gradually things are settling down." Regarding sales, he said the demand for fresh milk has declined by 8 per cent as hotels and restaurants are closed.

"HoReCa segment contributes 12-15 per cent of the total demand. But, fall is less as household consumption of fresh milk

and butter milk has increased." Sodhi noted that sales of butter, ghee, paneer, cheese and milk powder have gone up in the range of 20-35 per cent as people are consuming more.

However, he pointed out the demand of ice-cream has fallen sharply by 85 per cent, while sales of cream and mozzarella cheese are down by 70 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively.

Sodhi said the company has diverted the idle supply chain of ice-cream into distribution of other dairy products.

"Our milk procurement from farmers has increased by 15 per cent as unorganised players are not buying," he said.

The surplus milk is being processed to manufacture skimmed milk powder (SMP), whose price has crashed to Rs 250 per kg from Rs 320 before lockdown, he said.

"Our capital is getting blocked because of higher milk procurement. But we need to support farmers during this period," Sodhi said.

The GCMMF has not increased or decreased the milk procurement rates, he said, but added that prices have fallen by Rs 7-10 per litre across various states.

Sodhi said the fall in procurement rate is more in states like Uttar Pradesh where there are no cooperatives in the dairy business.

Amul sells 140 lakh litre milk per day mainly in Gujarat, Delhi-NCR, Uttar Pradesh. Its dairy products are sold across the country. It has milk processing plants in many states.

### NEWS MAKERS

## Tata Motors Extends Commercial Vehicles' Warranty Expiring During Lockdown

**NEW DELHI:** Tata Motors on Tuesday said it has extended by two months the warranty period for all of its commercial vehicles which are expiring during the period of the lockdown.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Tata Motors has extended the warranty for its commercial vehicles customers worldwide, the company said in a statement.



As part of the service extensions for the commercial vehicle customers, Tata Motors said it is providing two-month extension for free services previously scheduled during the lockdown period.

Moreover, the company has also extended 'Tata Suraksha' annual maintenance contract

## Will Continue To Pursue Legal Remedies, Mallya Says After Losing Extradition Fight

**LONDON:** Embattled liquor baron Vijay Mallya, who lost his UK High Court appeal against an extradition order to India, has said that he is "disappointed" with the ruling but will continue to seek legal remedies as advised by his legal team.

The 64-year-old former Kingfisher Airlines boss reiterated that he has repeatedly offered to pay the Indian banks the loan amount owed by his now-defunct airline, an offer which the banks have rejected.

"I am naturally disappointed with the High Court decision. I will continue to pursue further legal remedies as advised by my lawyers," Mallya said in a statement on Monday evening.

"I have repeatedly offered to repay the banks in full, but sadly to no avail," he said.

The dismissal of the appeal this week

means Mallya has 14 days to apply for permission to appeal to the UK Supreme Court.

As he has now indicated his intention to seek further legal measures, the UK Home Office would wait for the outcome of that appeal before it can formally certify the court order for Mallya to be extradited to India.

The businessman, who has been based in the UK since March 2016 and remains on bail after his arrest on an extradition warrant executed by Scotland Yard in April 2017, also expressed his disappointment with the media narrative.

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The dismissal of the appeal this week

media narrative which states that I must face trial in India for a fraud of Rs 9,000 crore. Please note that the allegations against me and others are specifically and only related to three tranches of borrowing from IDBI Bank for a total of Rs 900 crores in 2009.

This loan was subsumed along with loans from other banks within the Master Debt Recast Agreement of 2010.

Following the DRT (Debt Recovery Tribunal) order for the payment of approximately Rs 5,000 crore by way of Principal and Rs 1,200 crore by way of unapplied interest

making a total of Rs 6,200 crores, the banks have already recovered in cash a sum of Rs 2,500 crores, which is 50 per cent of the Principal amount," he claimed.

Mallya refers to paragraphs contained within the High Court judgment handed down by Lord Justice Stephen Irwin and Justice Elisabeth Laing, the two-member bench at the Royal Courts of Justice in London presiding over the appeal, which refers to these specific amounts.

The judgment notes that between April and November 2009, five banks – the State Bank of India (SBI), the Bank of India, the Bank of Baroda, the United Bank of India (UBI) and United Commercial Bank (UCO) – extended loans to Kingfisher Airlines (KFA) totalling Rs 1,250 crore, leaving a shortfall of Rs 750 crore from the desired infusion of Rs 2,000 crore.

The KFA then approached an additional bank, the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), to make up that shortfall.



# Guidelines Issued For Handling Of Waste Generated During COVID-19 Patient's Treatment

Using double layered bags, mandatory labelling and colour coded bins for the management of waste generated during the diagnostics and treatment of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients are part of the guidelines issued by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

The apex pollution monitoring body said specific guidelines are required to be followed by all, including isolation wards, quarantine centres, sample collection centres, laboratories, ULBs and common biomedical waste treatment and disposal facilities, in addition to existing practices under BMW Management Rules, 2016.

The CPCB has also written to the state pollution control boards and pollution control committees to consider operation of common bio-medical waste treatment and disposal facility and its associated staff as essential service part of health infrastructure.



"These guidelines are based on current knowledge on COVID-19 and existing practices in management of infectious waste generated in hospitals while treating viral and other contagious diseases like HIV, H1N1, etc. These guidelines will be updated if need arises.

"This Revision-2 of guidelines is mainly to incorporate specific requirements and responsibilities of persons operating sewage treatment plants at healthcare facilities and to clarify on management of general waste from quarantine homes and masks/gloves from other households," the CPCB said.

According to the guidelines, healthcare facilities having isolation wards for COVID-19 patients need to keep separate colour coded bins/bags/containers in wards and maintain proper segregation of waste as per BMW Rules, 2016 as amended and CPCB guidelines for implementation of BMW Management Rules.

"As precaution double layered bags (using 2 bags) should be used for collection of waste from COVID-19 isolation wards so as to ensure adequate strength and no-leaks.

"Collect and store biomedical waste separately prior to handing over the same to Common Bio-medical Waste Treatment and Disposal Facility (CBWTF). Use a dedicated collection bin labelled as 'COVID-19' to store COVID-19 waste and keep separately in temporary storage room prior to handing over to authorised staff of CBWTF. Biomedical waste collected in such isolation wards can also be lifted directly from ward into CBWTF collection van," the guidelines said.

In addition to mandatory

labelling, bags/containers used for collecting biomedical waste from COVID-19 wards, should be labelled as 'COVID-19 Waste', it said adding that general waste not having contamination should be disposed as solid waste as per Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016.

"Maintain separate record of waste generated from COVID-19 isolation wards. Use dedicated trolleys and collection bins in COVID-19 isolation wards. A label 'COVID-19 Waste' to be pasted on these items also. The (inner and outer) surface of containers/bins/trolleys used for storage of COVID-19 waste should be disinfected with 1 per cent sodium hypochlorite solution daily.

"Report opening or operation of COVID-19 ward and COVID ICU ward to SPCBs and respective CBWTF located in the area. Depute dedicated sanitation workers separately for biomedical waste



Medics during a door-to-door examination of Covid-19 amid a nationwide lockdown imposed in the wake of coronavirus pandemic, at Walled City in Jaipur, Wednesday, April 15, 202

# Rajasthan Ceases Use Of China-Made Rapid Testing Kits As Most Results Invalid

The Rajasthan government on Tuesday stopped using the China-made rapid testing kits for coronavirus after they delivered inaccurate results.

The state's health minister Raghu Sharma said the kits gave only 5.4 per cent accurate results against the expectation of 90 per cent accuracy and therefore the kits were of no benefit, adding that the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has been informed about the issue.

"We have written to ICMR asking what to do. We are waiting for their response. The rapid test results were negative even on patients who tested positive in lab tests," the minister said.

A committee comprising heads of medicine and microbiology departments at the Sawai Man Singh government hospital in Jaipur was set up by the government to examine the accuracy of the kits and it found that only 5.4 per cent test results were accurate.

"As per the advice of the committee, we have stopped testing from the rapid testing kits," the minister said.

He said 168 tests were conducted through rapid testing kits that were also used for testing of patients who have already tested positive for coronavirus in PCR-based tests, the minister said, adding the result was negative in their case too, which raised questions about the credibility of these kits.

"If the ICMR's response comes in our favour, the kits could be re-

turned," he said.

Rajasthan had started conducting tests through rapid testing kits on Friday in the state's hotspots, starting from Jaipur.

Additional chief secretary medical and health Rohit Kumar Singh said the kits are made in China. The state government got 30,000 kits through ICMR for free while 10,000 kits were purchased at a cost of Rs. 540 plus tax per kit.

The rapid testing kits, through which blood samples are tested, were aimed at speeding up screening and detection of suspected coronavirus patients as they take less time to show results in comparison to the swab-based tests carried out in pathology labs.

# Civil Servants Handling COVID-19 Fight With Sensitivity, Professionalism: Kovind

President Ram Nath Kovind on Tuesday praised civil servants for handling the COVID-19 situation with sensitivity and professionalism.

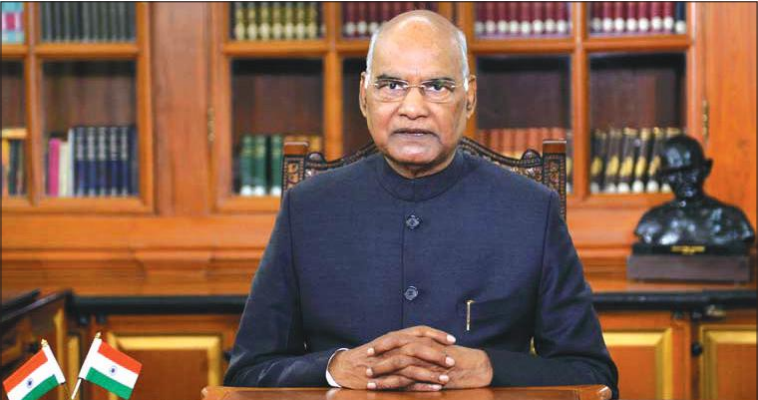
The civil services have played a key role in implementing policies and programmes for public welfare, Kovind said on occasion of the Civil Services Day.

"In the present times too, the steel frame of our country, the civil service, has shown its strength and resolve in handling COVID-19 situation, with sensitivity and professionalism. Confident that our civil services will continue to serve in the best traditions of public service," he tweeted.

The president greeted present and former civil servants and their families on the occasion.

The government of India celebrates April 21 every year as 'civil services day' as an occasion for the civil servants to rededicate themselves to the cause of citizens and renew their commitments to public service and excellence in work.

This date is chosen to commemorate the day when the first home



# I Would Have Killed Wasim Akram: Shoaib Akhtar Makes Stunning Claim About Match-Fixing

Former Pakistan speedster Shoaib Akhtar made a stunning claim, saying he would have taken Wasim Akram's life if the latter made an approach regarding match-fixing. (More Cricket News)

"I was watching few matches of the 1990s and I was amazed to see how Wasim Akram got Pakistan through impossible situations with his brilliant bowling," Cricket Pakistan quoted Akhtar as saying during a television show.

"I will say it very clearly that if Wasim Akram had asked me to do



match-fixing, I would have destroyed him or even kill him. But he never said such a thing to me," he added.

The Rawalpindi Express also thanked Akram for supporting him during the early days of his cricketing career.

minister of independent India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel addressed the probationers of Administrative Services Officers in 1947 at Metcalf House, Delhi, he referred to civil servants as the 'steel frame of India'.

"I played with him for seven to eight years and I can quote many instances where he gave me cover by taking the responsibility of picking up the top-order wickets while leaving the tail-enders for me," said the 44-year-old.

"He even let me bowl from my preferred bowling even though he had a lot more wickets than I did," he added.

Akhtar represented Pakistan in 46 Tests, 163 ODIs and 15 T20Is in which he scalped 178, 247 and 19 wickets respectively. Akram, on the other hand, played 104 Tests and 356 ODIs in which he bagged 414 and 502 wickets respectively.

# Policeman Made To Do Sit-Ups For Stopping Agri Officer'S Vehicle During Lockdown

**Araria (Bihar):** A policeman was forced to do 50 sit-ups here by a senior agriculture officer after he stopped the bureaucrat's vehicle and asked him to show the mandatory pass for moving during the coronavirus lockdown, in yet another instance of front-line workers facing harassment.

Bihar Director General of Police (DGP) Guptaeshwar Pandey on Tuesday took strong note of the incident and asserted that action will be taken after a probe report is submitted.

The incident, whose video has gone viral on the social media, occurred near Surajpur pul (bridge) under Jokihat police station area on Monday when chowkidar Ganesh Lal Tatma halted the vehicle of District Agriculture Officer Manoj Kumar and asked for the pass needed to move around during the lockdown imposed in the wake of coronavirus pandemic.

This riled the officer who, after severely scolding the chowkidar, forced him to do 50 sit-ups while holding his ears.

The agriculture officer did not stop at this and threatened that he could have sent Tatma to jail had he not been in a hurry to attend a video conference.

A police officer, who was heard in the video posing as incharge, also upbraided Tatma for "letting him down" in front of the senior officer.

"You have made me feel insulted in front of the senior officer," the police officer was heard yelling at the chowkidar.

Pandey said he talked to Inspector General of Police

and Superintendent of Police of Araria over the unpleasant incident.

He disapproved of the conduct of the officials, saying they insulted the chowkidar who as part of the administration was playing an important role in enforcing the lockdown.

It is very shameful and against human dignity, Pandey said.

Superintendent of Police Dhurat Sayali has ordered a probe into the incident.

The DGP said strong action will be taken against the erring officials on the basis of the inquiry report.

Leader of Opposition in Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Prasad Yadav came down heavily on the state government for letting bureaucracy "run the show" in the state, where a "dutiful" policeman as made to do sit-ups by an officer.

"Bureaucracy is unbridled in Bihar. How a District Agriculture Officer is making an elderly chowkidar do sit-ups as the dutiful chowkidar just asked (officer) to show a valid pass," Yadav said in a tweet message.

Bihar has reported over 100 case of COVID-19.

There have been several instances of policemen being attacked or harassed while enforcing the lockdown. A policeman's hand was chopped off and two other police officials were injured when a group of people allegedly attacked them in Punjab's Patiala district when the cops stopped their vehicle and asked them to show the pass needed to move during the lockdown restrictions. **PTI**

# India Heaven For Muslims, Says Naqvi After OIC Criticism

Days after the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation expressed concern over alleged incidents of "Islamophobia" in India, Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Tuesday said India is heaven for Muslims and those trying to vitiate the atmosphere of prosperity cannot be their friends.

Asserting that the social, economic and religious rights of Muslims are secure in India, Naqvi said "secularism and harmony" is not a "political fashion", but a "perfect passion" for India and Indians.

His remarks come after the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Sunday urged India to take "urgent steps" to protect the rights of its minority Muslim community and stop the incidents of "Islamophobia" in the country.

Asked about the OIC's criticism, Naqvi said, "We are doing our job with conviction. The prime minister whenever he speaks, he talks about the rights and welfare of 130 crore Indians."

"If somebody cannot see this, then it is their problem. India's Muslims, its minorities, all its sections of the society, are prosperous and those people trying to vitiate this atmosphere of prosperity, they cannot be friends of Indian Muslims," he told reporters.

On criticism of India by scholars in Gulf nations, Naqvi said, "India is a heaven for Muslims and minorities."

The social, economic and religious rights of Muslims are more secure and stronger in India than in other countries, he said.

"If somebody is saying something with a prejudiced mindset, then he should look at the ground reality of this country and accept it," the minister said.

"In this country, there is such a large population of Muslims. An analysis of their educational, social and economic conditions in the last five years should be looked at, their share in government jobs has increased and they have been educationally and economically empowered," Naqvi said.

Muslims ave had an equal share in the progress of all sections and if India is progressing, the community is also progressing, he asserted.



# Lockdown: 12-year-old Girl, Who Left For Home On Foot, Dies After 150 KM

A 12-year-old girl died while making a 150-kilometre trip on foot from a village in Telangana to her native Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh, officials said on Monday.

Jamlo Makdam and a group of people, who work in chilli fields in Kannaiguda village in Telangana, started walking on April 15 and she died near Bhandarpal village in Bijapur on the morning of April 18, an official said.

Her samples have tested negative for coronavirus and she may have died due to electrolyte imbalance, a



health official informed.

"The distance between the place in Telangana where she worked and Bijapur is 150 kilometres and she died some 50 kilometres away from her native village. She had

Saturday and the report returned negative on Sunday evening. Prima facie, it seems she died of electrolyte imbalance," he added.

He said those who were walking along have informed that the girl did not eat well which may have caused muscle fatigue, adding that the viscera had been preserved for further medical investigation.

The state government later in the evening announced a compensation of Rs 1 lakh for the kin of the girl.

# Malaysian Ghost On Lockdown Patrol

A ghostly figure with wild hair and a flowing beard is haunting a small Malaysian community in a bid to ensure superstitious residents stay home during the country's coronavirus lockdown.

It is not a genuine spirit but local man Muhammad Urabil Alias, who has taken to dressing up in a white robe and mask and going on regular night-time patrols.

During his outings in his village in Kemaman, northeast Malaysia, children scream and run back into their homes as they see the "ghost" walking down the road. Like many countries seeking to fight the spread of the virus, Malaysia has ordered people to stay at home, and closed schools and non-essential businesses.

Urabil said that he decided to start the ghost patrols after virus cases rose sharply in the country — Malaysia has



so far reported over 5,000 infections and more than 80 deaths.

"I am watching the news and I see more people are dead, so I... decided to scare people," the 38-year-old said.

And his creative method of ensuring people stick to the rules appears to be effective in a country where belief in the supernatural runs deep, particularly in rural areas.

Muhammad Abdillah said whenever the town's youngsters see him on patrol, they "run like crazy back to their homes. Now before they go out, they have to check whether the ghost is around or not".

When Urabil posted a photo of himself dressed as a ghost on social media, it quickly went viral and prompted a visit by the police to his house. He said he was initially worried they were going to arrest him — but instead the officers thanked him.