



Maximum : 23°C
Minum : 09°C
Humidity : 45%

SUNSET
Today 07:09 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 05:49 AM



**PEOPLE MAY KNOW
THE BEST DECISION FOR THEMSELVES
AND MAY STILL NOT MAKE IT**

When faced with a situation that requires decision-making skills, people may know which choice gives them the best chance of success, but still take the other option, suggests a new study. People may choose based on a "gut feeling", a habit, or what worked for them last time, rather than on what they have learned will work most often, said Ian Krajbich, co-author of the study and associate professor of psychology and economics at The Ohio State University. The results run counter to the belief that people make the less optimal choice because they just don't know....

.....LIFE & TIMES
P6

News Digest

Ramazan Moon Not Sighted, Holy Month From Saturday

Srinagar: Ramazan moon was not sighted in the region and the holy month will begin in Kashmir on Saturday. The Ramazan crescent was sighted in Saudi Arabia, however, where the fasting month will begin on Friday, Arab News reported. It was also not sighted in Iran where Ramazan will begin from Saturday. This year, the holy month will be observed amid the coronavirus pandemic, which ● P-02

22 Held From A Truck On Highway

Udhampur: Twenty-two people travelling in Kashmir-bound trucks under the disguise of cleaners were nabbed on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway in Udhampur district and sent to a quarantine facility on Thursday, officials said. During a checking, the district administration and the police caught 22 people disguised as truck cleaners on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway ● P-02

Employee Booked For Group Prayers

Bandipora: Acting tough against the violators of prohibitory orders in the district, Bandipora Police on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Bandipora Shabaz Mirza, booked a government employee who tried to violate the restriction orders, on Thursday. Mohammad Shaban Wani a government employee was booked on the charges of trying to organize congregational prayers in the area thereby risking lives ● P-02

Woman Booked For Lashkar Poster

Handwara: Jammu and Kashmir police have filed a charge-sheet against a lady who was earlier held along with posters of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant outfit at main town Handwara during a naka checking. Woman, according to reports, was held last year along with threatening posters of banned militant outfit based in Pakistan. In a statement police said the FIR pertains to the incident dated October 26, 2019, ● P-02

13 Year Old Boy Drowns In Canal

Ganderbal: A thirteen year old boy lost his life after drowning in a canal in Ganderbal district on Thursday. A thirteen year old boy drowned in Shekhpura irrigation canal, while he was taking bath. The boy is said to have jumped into the nallah and when he did not resurface, another boys present nearby alarmed people, who fished out the boy out of water in an unconscious condition and rushed him to Primary Health Center Kachan, where he was declared brought dead by the doctors. A class 5th student was ● P-02

27 More Test Positive, J&K Tally Reaches 434

Ramban Records First Case, Bandipora Nears 100; 64876 People Under Surveillance

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Twenty six more persons tested positive for the novel coronavirus in the Kashmir Valley on Thursday taking the total number of cases to 434 in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to officials 27 persons tested positive in J&K of which 26 are from Kashmir and one from Jammu division. They further added that among 434 total positive cases, 377 are from Kashmir division and 57 are from Jammu province.

Officials from Kupwara said that new positive four cases are contacts of already positive patients and 84 samples were tested negative in district today. They further added that total number of positive cases in district are now 41 with 6 recoveries.

Officials from Baramulla said that wife of already tested positive doctor besides a woman from old Town Baramulla and a resident of Uri are among three tested positive from Baramulla on Thursday.

Nodal officer for Covid-19 at SKIMS said that 18 persons were tested positive at SKIMS on Thursday while four persons were discharged from the Institute after their complete recovery.

Nodal Officer Dr Saleem Khan said that in last 24 hours eight persons have been tested positive at CD hospital Lab, among them one is from Baramulla while seven are from Shangus, Anantnag. He further added that 235 samples were tested at the Lab in last 24 hours and on Thursday 300 more samples were received.

According to Dr Tabasum, Deputy Medical Superintendent ten more patients from Shopian district are being shifted to hospital and with that total number of positive patients at JNM has reached to 35.

Chief Medical officer Shopian Dr Ramesh Malla said that among nine new patients, 8 are from Hirpora and one from Bemmipora Shopian.

The total number of positive cases in Shopian has reached to 55 out of whom 6 have recovered, he said adding that total number of positive cases in ● PAGE 02

Lockdown Completes 30 Days, Police Maintains Vigil



File Pic Abid Bhat

The lockdown continued for the 30th consecutive day in Kashmir with all the markets, educational institutions and the private offices barring essential sectors remaining closed. Contingents of police and paramilitary forces are deployed on the roads to enforce the lockdown imposed in the wake of the deadly virus, which has claimed five lives so far and ● P-02

Did Covid-19 Positive Doctor Treat Patients at GMC Baramulla? MS GMC Baramulla Says Allegations Baseless

BARAMULLA: Panic has gripped the residents of Baramulla district after a junior doctor posted at GMC tested positive for novel Corona-virus. He is believed to have attended hundreds of patients even after his sample was collected for Covid-19 testing on Sunday afternoon.

Official sources said that a junior doctor who tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday was working as per the routine roster at GMC Baramulla even after his sample was collected.

A health official posted at GMC Baramulla said that the said doctor was attending Covid-19 patients admitted in

isolation ward and was also attending other patients on daily basis as per the routine roster.

He claimed that the doctor has come in contact with many health workers and other hospital staff at GMC. "He was also offering joint prayers with the staff posted there."

This has caused fear ● PAGE 02

ACCORDING TO THE BULLETIN, 44,940 PERSONS HAVE COMPLETED SURVEILLANCE period and 13,283 persons are under home surveillance besides that so far results of 10,977 samples are available.

Freedom of Press In Kashmir Not Curtailed, Says IGP

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A top police official Thursday said that the freedom of press in Kashmir, as claimed by certain groups, was not being curtailed, urging people to assertion facts before making such broad generalizations.

IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar said that only one journalist has been questioned about a journalistic work as only one FIR of instigating people for violence has been registered over an encounter in Shopian at PS Anantnag.

"Remaining two persons have not been booked for any journal-

istic work of their's but because of the reason that they have posted explicitly seditious, incendiary and incriminating texts on social media, challenging sovereignty and integrity of India and attempting to instigate people for violence", IGP Kumar said.

He said one of them in the recent days has also met him along with 3-4 members of Kashmir Press Club Srinagar and "accepted the mistake claiming ignorance of the relevant law and assured not to repeat the same in future". IGP assured that an impartial investigation will take place.

Regarding the other person who has additionally been ● PAGE 02

18 Kashmiri PSA Detainees Set Free

JAMMU- Eighteen Kashmiri prisoners, detained under stringent Public Safety Act, were released from different jails in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, while 36 others, whose detention orders have been revoked, are to be freed soon, officials said on Thursday.

In addition, 52 prisoners were released from various jails in Jammu and Kashmir over the past few days, taking the total number of released inmates in the Union Territory to decongest prisons to save them from turning into fertile grounds for COVID-19 to 288, the officials said.

A number of persons were arrested under the PSA and ● P-02

J&K's Film City Investor Named In A Massive Bank Fraud Case

Mrinal Pathak

NEW DELHI: A prominent UAE-based Indian business tycoon, who last summer pledged a billion dollar investment in the newly created union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, is on the radar of probe agencies for fraud cases.

Bavaguthu Raghuram Shetty, once a typical billionaire with a taste for the high-life, has left UAE as legal problems continue to mount in his companies NMC Health and UAE Exchange. Shetty is reportedly under ra-



dar of various Indian probe agencies for his alleged involvement in 'one of the biggest' bank fraud cases of recent times.

The Indian agencies are looking into BR Shetty's exposure to

who is known for plain speaking on many issues. "Under CSS Samagra, Rs 400 crore lying unspent with directors/ ceos/zeos/MHs/ teachers; SPD may try to expedite expenditure on ground in next 4 weeks," Samoon tweeted.

The disclosure has been made by Samoon at a time when there is complete lockdown in Jammu & Kashmir as part of the ● PAGE 02

IUST Creates RUHDAAR, A Low-Cost Frugal Ventilator



Observer News Service

AWANTIPORA: Amid COVID outbreak and presuming the shortage of ventilators, the engineers and innovators at Design Innovation Centre (DIC) of Islamic University of Science and

Technology have created a prototype of a low-cost ventilator which is running successfully in the laboratory.

The prototype named 'Ruhdaar' is expected to be handed over to the medical experts in the SKIMS for evaluation purposes which ● PAGE 02

Jyotsna Bharti

During present pandemic, doctors hailed as 'knights in shining armour' have bet all ideas of marvel heroes, celebrity love, action and thriller. In this vein, micro-blogging site Twitter over this weekend flagged a Kashmiri doctor, Dr Shahnawaz B Kaloo as 'Superman' in their tweet.

Twitter asked its users to put up their selfies, promising to give them a 'haircut' during this crucial lockdown. Dr Kaloo put out his selfie in his doctor gown with mask and medical goggles resting on his head and red-face.

Twitter responded to his tweet by photoshopping the doctor's photo, giving him the red cape, a big S across his chest and the signature Clark Kent/ Superman hairstyle. Furthermore, Twitter added a cap-

A Candid Talk with Kashmir's 'Superman' Doctor

tion along with the edited photo. 'You look SUPER'.

Living in Delhi with his wife, two children and mother-in-law, Dr Kaloo had kept his number public for people and patients to contact him smoothly during the current health crisis situation.

But now after Twitter's 'Superman' gesture, he's getting gazillions of calls and messages thanking and greeting him from all over.

In an interview with Kashmir Observer, Dr Kaloo talks about his newfound fame, acclaimed medical career, and current pandemic routine.

How do you feel about Twitter's gesture on your selfie?

I was surprised and excited too! You know, doctors hardly get



any appreciation for their work especially on social media, which is mostly used for otherwise. But thanks to twitter, they made my day. This is especially important today when healthcare professionals

around the globe need encouragement and support.

As we cannot do it without community backing, I request all people to be aware of fake news, contact your local authorities in case you need any help and extend a helping hand to your neighbours and people in need.

Media can play a great role in spreading awareness regarding the issues faced by healthcare workers and the need to improve our healthcare system.

Tell us more about yourself.

I'm a doctor, a researcher, a speaker and an author.

I was born in Sopore town of Baramulla and became the first Interventional Radiologist from Kashmir when I secured the first rank in the

All India level entrance exam conducted by ILBS in December 2015.

My research project during training at ILBS became the first paper on Trans Jugular Kidney biopsy from Asia to get published in a reputed journal in the USA.

I'm currently working as a Consultant at Max Hospital in Saket, Delhi.

My active area of practice and research is an interventional Radiology in liver diseases and liver transplant. I've presented my research in various countries and have delivered talks on multiple issues.

What exactly is an Interventional Radiology?

Well, as an Interventional Radiologist, I take help of medical imaging (X rays/ Ultrasound/ CT scan) to do procedures and surgeries.

It's just like any other surgery. The difference here is we don't open up the abdomen to look ● PAGE 02

27 More Test Positive...

Hirpora village has reached to 42. He further added that so far 301 samples have been taken from Hirpora village and results of 56 samples were awaited.

Officials from Ramban said that person whose sample was taken at Ramban is a Kashmiri business who had managed to reach Ramban somehow and was intercepted at Batote. He was already in administrative quarantine at Ramban and has been shifted to GMC Jammu now, they said

Dr Jameel Ahmad Mir Medical Superintendent at District Hospital Pulwama said 60 more samples were taken today, he said adding that so far 782 samples have been taken at DH, among them reports are 282 are yet come

As per officials figures 79 positive cases including one death and 27 recoveries are from Srinagar, 99 positive cases including 18 recoveries and one death are from Bandipora, 50 including two deaths and four recoveries are from Baramulla, 41 including six recoveries from Kupwara, 55 including six recoveries are from Shopian, 14 including two recoveries are from Ganderbal, 14 including nine recoveries are from Budgam, 6 are from Kulgam, 9 from Anantnag and all 3 recovered from Pulwama in Kashmir division.

In Jammu division, 26 including five recoveries are from Jammu district, 20 including one death and eight recoveries are from Udhampur, 4 from Samba and 4 from Rajouri including three recoveries, one from Kishtiwar who has also recovered and one from Ramban

As per the daily information bulletin 64,876 persons in Jammu and Kashmir are under observation while as 6039 persons have been kept under home quarantine besides that 330 persons are in hospital isolation while as 279 persons are under hospital quarantine.

According to the bulletin, 44,940 persons have completed surveillance period and 13,283 persons are under home surveillance besides that so far results of 10,977 samples are available.

Out of 10,977 the number of samples tested negative stands at 10,550 while as 427 have been tested positive, among them 330 are active and 92 persons have recovered and 5 persons have died

Lockdown Completes 30...

infected over 400 people in J&K.

The markets across Jammu and Kashmir wore deserted look while as the people preferred to stay indoors. The vehicular movement—both private as well as public remained off the roads throughout the day.

Moreover, authorities continue to book the people for defying the government's prohibitory orders issued under section 144 CrPC.

Ten shops were sealed and over a dozen vehicles and two-wheelers seized in different areas of Srinagar for violating lockdown orders. Concerned authorities including Tehsildars and police swung into action against violators found in their respective jurisdictions.

It followed instructions of Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary for strict action against violators of lockdown as ordered for containment of COVID-19 in the district.

These shops were sealed in jurisdictions of 4 Tehsils — including 4 shops in Eidgah, 3 shops in North, 2 shops in Shalteng and 1 shop in Chanpora. In Koker Bazar area of South tehsil two shopkeepers were arrested for violations and others given strict warnings against future violations.

Strict action was also taken against private vehicles found moving around without permission. Seven cars and five two-wheelers as well as a tipper truck with construction material were seized during the inspection drive held in different areas of the district.

It should be noted that complete restrictions on public movement and activities have been ordered till May 3 in the district. Concerned authorities have been instructed for strict enforcement of restrictions and strict action against violators.

In Ganderbal, 49 vehicles have been seized by police for defying the prohibitory orders in the district. In Sopore area of north Kashmir, police seized a car for defying the government orders

Did Covid-19 Positive Doctor...

and panic among the health workers and other staff posted at GMC, fearing that they might have contracted the virus from the doctor.

Meanwhile the officials said that doctors' wife has also tested positive for Covid-19 on Thursday, thereby creating more fear among his contacts.

However the medical superintendent, GMC Baramulla, Dr. Syed Masood denied the allegations and said the doctor was not allowed to perform his duty after his sample was collected on Sunday.

"Rumours are being spread about the doctor that he has attended the patients after collection of sample are baseless. He was not allowed to work after his samples was collected instead was put under quarantine," he said.

Dr. Masood said that over 50 contacts including some health workers have been put under quarantine so far—(KNO)

Robust Arrangements...

Murmu said that at a time when the administration was working round the clock for ensuring the welfare of the people, he urged people to cooperate with the administration and follow the health and administrative advisories in letter in spirit to minimize the spread of the virus and urged people to take special care of vulnerable

age groups like elderly, children and people with existing illnesses. Murmu reiterated that there would be no shortage of essential commodities or any service and asked people to maintain social distance as a precautionary measure to stop the spread of the virus.

"We are here for people to give our best. People shouldn't suffer any cost. They (people) shouldn't panic and people must stay indoors till the time lockdown is in place," he said.

Reviewing the arrangements for Kashmir division, the LG lauded the efforts of frontline health workers, security forces and the staff of essential services and appealed to the general public to complement the efforts of the government and cooperate in breaking the chain.

'Profile Vulnerable Groups'

Murmu urged the divisional administration to begin aggressive profiling of vulnerable age groups in the communities—saying that people above the age group of 60 should be profiled and their medical history should be tallied by a team of experts—which will minimize surge of COVID-19 positive cases across Jammu and Kashmir. He also assured the locals that all necessary measures are in place to prevent the spread of the infection; however they should cooperate and come forward for getting screened.

"Testing capacity should be accelerated and people above age group of 60 should be screened and if any healthcare issue is seen they should be immediately provided healthcare facilities," he said. "There shouldn't be any lapse from the health department on this," he added.

'Positive Cases, Contacts & Sampling'

Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole, in his detailed presentation gave overall view of the COVID-19 preparedness, saying that divisional administration was building robust capacities for contact tracing & sampling. He said that 8211 samples have been collected so far, besides 7410 contacts traced and 351 positive cases so far. He said that Pulwama is least affected district while as Bandipora is highest number of cases.

The meeting was informed that separate teams trained at 58 medical blocks for contact tracing and sampling have been constituted. 423 Lab technicians (LTs) and 80 paramedics have been trained for sampling purposes.

"Each district is having capacity for mobile sampling and besides that sampling kiosks have been established in all the district headquarters," he said. "So far 3938 RNA extraction kits have been procured."

Providing the district-wise breakup, the meeting was informed that Bandipora has 97 positive cases wherein 78 are Active Positive, 18 recovered and 01 has died, Srinagar 79 positive cases with 51 Active Positive, 27 recovered and 01 died, Baramulla 47 positive cases with 41 Active Positive, 04 recovered, and 02 died; Shopian has 46 positive cases with 40 Active Positive, 06 recovered; Kupwara has 37 positive cases with 31 Active Positive and 06 recovered; Ganderbal has 14 positive cases with 12 Active Positive, 02 recovered; Budgam 13 positive cases of which 04 are Active Positive with 09 recovered cases; Kulgam has 06 cases and all are Active Positive; Pulwama 03 positive cases and all recovered; Anantnag district has 09 positive case and all are Active Positive.

The meeting was informed that there are 84 containment zones, including 37 (Red Zones), 45 (Orange zones), 02 (Green zones) across Kashmir division. The officials informed the chair that there is a nearly 10000 bed capacity for the COVID-19 patients. It was also informed that till date 64089 travellers and persons in contact with suspected cases have been enlisted for surveillance which include 5806 persons in home quarantine including facilities operated by government, 252 in Hospital Quarantine, 310 in hospital isolation and 15376 under home surveillance. Besides, 42340 persons have completed their surveillance period.

'Disposal of Medical Waste'

The Lieutenant Governor said that clear guidelines and SOP should be adopted to deal with coronavirus-related biomedical waste. He directed concerned Deputy Commissioners to adopt guidelines for handling, treatment and safe disposal of biomedical waste generated during treatment, diagnosis and quarantine of patients confirmed or suspected to have the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19). "There shouldn't be any lapse in disposing off the biomedical waste. A proper scientific method should be adopted," he said.

'Protect Healthcare Workers'

The Lieutenant Governor directed the administration, especially heads of the tertiary care healthcare institutions and Director Health Services, Kashmir, to protect the healthcare workers. He said that healthcare workers are at risk from handling Covid-19 patients and people in quarantine centres.

"You all have to make sure that all your staff are protected and there is no compromise on their safety," he said. "they should be provided with every possible support and help from the administration and they should be fully geared," he added. He said that medical experts and specialists should send out warnings to the masses on mishandling of biomedical waste. He said that discarded masks, gloves and tissues could be potential sources for the spread of this highly contagious virus.

The meeting was attended by Advisors to Lieutenant Governor, Rajiv Rai Bhatnagar and Baseer Ahmad Khan, Chief Secretary, BVR Subrahmanyam, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole, Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Director, SKIMS, Dr AG Ahnagar, Principal, Government Medical College, Srinagar, Dr Saima Rashid, Director, Health Services, Kashmir, Sameer Mattoo, OSDs COVID Management, Aijaz Ahmad Khan, Vikas Kundal, Owais Ahmad, Joint Director, DIPR, Kashmir, Haris Handoom among other senior officers.

LG Chairs Security Review..

Subrahmanyam, Director General of Police Dilbag Singh, Corps Commander 15 Corps B S Raju, Special DG CRPF Zulfikar Hassan, Principal Secretary, Home Shaleen Kabra, ADGP CID Dr. B. Srinivas, Joint Director IB, Mahesh Dixit,

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir P K Pole, IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar, Additional Commissioner SB Rakesh Bansal and other senior officials of various security forces.

While briefing about the prevailing security scenario of Kashmir Valley, DGP gave a detailed overview enunciating the security measures initiated for ensuring peace and stability in the valley. The DGP also briefed Lieutenant Governor about the measures being taken by J&K Police and other security forces in containing the spread of COVID-19.

Lieutenant Governor reiterated the importance of maintaining a close watch on all inimical elements. He also appreciated the role of J&K Police and other security forces in conducting successful anti-militancy operations amid COVID-19 pandemic and also at the same time working tirelessly to contain its spread in the valley.

Rs 400 Cr Lying Unspent In

shutdown announced by the Centre to prevent spread of deadly coronavirus.

A senior official revealed that these funds are meant for civil construction works approved under the scheme.

"While work on some of these projects is in progress, the other works could not be taken up due to unavailability of land and other issues," he said. Samoon also revealed that Rs 870 crore released by the Centre last year are lying with Finance Department.

The Samagra Shiksha scheme was unveiled by the Centre in 2018-19 after subsuming the three erstwhile Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).

Under the programme, MHRD funds states and Union Territories for infrastructure and teaching staff in school education sector. The fund sharing pattern for the scheme between Centre and J&K is at present in the ratio of 90:10

Freedom of Press In Kashmir...

booked, IGP said, "there are written complaints as he has exposed life of some peaceful and law abiding citizens to grave risk by posting incriminating and provocative adjectives against them on social media platforms like FB and Twitter".

"The content of these specific complaints discloses a criminal act and law will take its course and the written complaints against this individual will be investigated as mandated by law", he said.

IGP also reiterated that J&K Police has always maintained highest regard for freedom of press. Media persons and other relevant organisations are expected to issue statements only after ascertaining the facts.

18 Kashmiri PSA Detainees...

shifted outside J&K in August last year following nullification of Article 370 and bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two UTs.

On April 1, a three-member high powered committee headed by Executive Chairman of J-K State Legal Services Authority, Justice Rajesh Bindal along with Principal Secretary (Home) Shaleen Kabra and DGP (Prisons) V K Singh as its members, passed directions for the release of jail inmates except those involved in militancy related cases to decongest prisons in the UT.

The committee was constituted by the J&K government following a Supreme Court n order on March 23, directing the states and the UTs to decongest jails to ensure social distancing among prisoners.

The apex court had issued the order, observing that overcrowding of prisons is a matter of serious concern in the wake of coronavirus outbreak.

The officials said a total of 54 PSA detention orders were revoked this month as on April 23, of whom 18 detainees were released by Wednesday. They included 13 from four jails in Uttar Pradesh and five from two jails in Haryana.

The process is on to ensure the release of the other PSA detainees, they said, adding eight detainees were released from Central Jail Agra (UP), three from district prison Jhajjar (Haryana), two each from district jail Bareilly (UP), district jail Ambedkar Nagar (UP) and district prison Karnal (Haryana) and one from Central jail Varanasi (UP).

The PSA detainees whose detention orders have been revoked include 33 in Central Jail Agra, seven in district jail Ambedkar Nagar, four each in district jail Bareilly and Central jail Varanasi, three in district prison Jhajjar, two in district prison Karnal and one in Central jail Naini-Alallahabad (UP), the officials said.

They said the release of the prisoners took time as authorities had to prepare movement passes for their close relatives to bring them back in view of the ongoing lockdown across the country.

The officials said 52 prisoners including four PSA detainees and 10 undertrials were also released from different jails in Jammu and Kashmir from April 18 to 22, taking the number of prisoners who were released this month to 288.

Six of the 52 prisoners were released on parole, the officials said.

While nine were released from Central jail Kot Bhalwal and district jail Jammu each, eight were released from Central jail Srinagar, seven each from district jail Baramulla and special jail (correctional home) Pulwama, six from district jail Kupwara, three from district jail Rajouri, two from sub-jail Hiranagar and one from district jail Anantnag.

Earlier, 236 prisoners were released from various jails between April 1 and 17. They included 61 prisoners arrested under the PSA, 82 undertrials through the undertrial review committee, 11 undertrials falling under section 107, 109, 151 of the CrPC besides 18 prisoners who were released on parole.

Out of the total 288, the officials said the highest number of 55 jail inmates were released

from Central jail Srinagar followed by 48 from Central jail Kot Bhalwal, 31 from district jail Rajouri and 29 from district jail Jammu.

The other released prisoners include 28 from district jail Anantnag, 22 from district jail Kupwara, 20 from district jail Udhampur, 19 each from special jail Pulwama and sub-jail Hiranagar, nine from district jail Baramulla, and four each from district jail Bhaderwah and district jail Kathua.

J&K's Film City Investor Named..

in the London Stock Exchange (LSE).

As the leading health Group of UAE, Shetty's NMC, founded in 1970s, has presence in 19 countries.

But the group, which was delivering high hopes of reshaping the fractured healthcare system of J&K, is now facing a risk of insolvency. NMC is subjected to legal scrutiny after it was found that the hospital operator had \$6.6 billion in bank debt and was in no position to pay it off.

In its complaint, ADCB said the fraud was committed as a result of alleged 'window dressing' between the accused to fabricate and use forged financial statements.

ADCB has the highest exposure of 3.6 billion dirhams, whereas, the total exposure of UAE banks if combined, stands at more than 10 billion dirhams.

J&K's Pipe Dream

An old Jan Sangh hand, Shetty had hogged headlines for his interaction with Prime Minister Modi during the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Global Business Summit held on August 24, 2019 — barely 20 days after New Delhi abrogated special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Shetty while addressing PM Modi in his broken English and overzealous tone promised to bring investments worth billion dollars to J&K.

Apart from turning around the tourism, health, and agriculture sector, Shetty had announced his ambitious plans to open a film city in J&K that would be spread over 12 square kilometres.

"It [J&K] is a very scenic place, and I'm going to have a film city there, so that people can come and shoot films there, and for tourism," he said in an interview with Arabian Business.

"I've already got land offers from Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, about 3,000 acres."

But as his investment agenda looks bleak to many now, Shetty has not been in UAE for over a month, from where he promised to pour in billions of dollars into J&K.

He has flown to India amid legal troubles in his UAE-based companies.

The other arm of Shetty's business, UAE Exchange Centre is also facing an investigation by the UAE Central Bank for alleged fraud.

During the Investor Meet last summer, Shetty had promised to set up super-specialty hospitals across India including J&K and PM Modi's Lok Sabha segment of Varanasi.

While responding to Shetty during the summit, PM Modi had said, "Dr. Shetty ke har shabd par hamko bharosa hai (We have full faith in each and every word Dr. Shetty is saying)."

IUST Creates RUHDAAR, ...

will immediately begin once the innovators are satisfied with its functioning in the laboratory,IUST official told Kashmir Observer.

"The raw materials for the said frugal ventilator are easily available within J&K", he said.

Team members headed by Coordinator DIC, Dr. Shahkar Nehvi included Dr. Majid Hamid Koul, ex faculty IUST who recently joined the NIT, Peerzada Shoaib, Asstt. Prof. IUST, two IUST alumni Asif Shah and Zulquarnain, Jawad, Design Fellow IUST, Dr. Saad Parvaiz from NIT Srinagar, Dr. Shabir Hassan from Harvard University as overseas mentor and Ab. Rahim from Rahim Greens contributed towards the designing of the said prototype.

"The prototype ventilator is cheaper in comparison to what is available in the market, he said adding while the prototype, is working successfully in the laboratory, it eventually will be assessed by the medical experts who will have to use it.

"Once the prototype is approved by medical experts, there is the possibility of manufacturing it for commercial use", IUST spokesman said.

Meanwhile Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof. Mushtaq A. Siddiqi has congratulated the entire team for this big achievement. "I am thrilled because our team members has achieved it in a very short span of time. It is our own design and its components are mostly local", Prof. Siddiqi said.

He said that the University will go for patenting and handover the technology to a start-up or couple of start-ups, so that the ventilator is produced on the large scale. Prof. Siddiqi himself an eminent immunologist, further added that the prototype is fine and alright, but it depends on the medical fraternity to accept it or suggest certain modifications.

A Candid Talk with Kashmir's...



where the disease is. Rather we take guidance from medical imaging to help our instruments reach the exact site of disease and deliver treatment.

It has many advantages, like minimal scars, less pain, quick recovery, etc. Examples are like angiography, stem placement, tumour ablation, biopsy, drainage.

Since this is a crucial and disastrous time, how are you balancing your personal and professional life?

It's struggle in many ways.

As healthcare specialists, one of our struggles today is to provide care to patients who were already under our treatment from quite some time before this pandemic started.

We've patients from various cities of India as well as many countries of South Asia and Central Asia and the Middle East. Since all the flights are suspended, they can't come to the hospital for follow up and continuation of their treatment.

It's especially difficult for patients suffering from cancer. We've started online consultation, but many patients need hospitalisation or surgeries.

Then we've Covid-19 positive patients right now admitted in our hospital. We're directly or indirectly involved in their care. We try our best to take all the necessary precautions, however, there's still a risk of contracting the infection.

We've families. We do not want to carry infection back home. This is certainly a stressful situation.

How people can cope up with this outbreak?

People should stay home.

But if they've to go out, they must wear a mask. They must remember that anyone among us might be infected and should maintain a safe distance from others.

Never touch your face with your hands unless you have washed them with soap. Do not go to crowded places. Prayers may be offered at home. Virtual meetings and online classes should be encouraged. People should stay connected with their relatives and friends on phone or online.

Stay determined, be united and follow the guidelines. I assure you, we're going to beat this pandemic very soon.

What's your say on the recovered patients and their psychological balance?

Though most of the patients recover, but the uncertainty and psychological trauma associated with this diagnosis make it a unique challenge for us as well as for the patient.

Plus there've been some instances of stigmatisation of the Covid-19 patients.

Today we can safely say that patients who recover can live their life completely normally. They're not a threat to any of us. They should not be discriminated.

Ramazan Moon Not Sighted...

has brought life in most parts of the World to a halt. Kashmiri too, is struggling to cope with the challenge by trying to ensure social distancing to curb the spread of the virus with business activities and religious congregations on hold.

22 Held From A Truck...

at Udhampur, they said.

Police lodged FIRs against them and all of them were put under quarantine, they added."We have kept a close watch to understand all possible modus operandi. People are coming without declaring their travel history on entry points, Deputy Commissioner, Udhampur, Dr Piyush Singla said.

Employee Booked ...

of people and violating prohibitory orders which have been strictly enforced by the administration.

A FIR no. 16 under section 188 IPC has been registered in Police Station Hajin against the said employee and further investigations have been taken up.

Pertinently, Bandipora district has turned out to be hotspots in the context of COVID-19, where till now 99 cases of Coronavirus have been reported. However, 18 persons have also recovered.Meanwhile, appealing the public to stay indoors for their own safety, Deputy Commissioner Bandipora said that the chain of the chain of the pandemic can be broken only by staying indoors. He said more cases have been reported in the district and warned of strict action against people who risk the lives of others by violating restriction orders.He appealed the general public to cooperate with the administration and ensure strict adherence to the order. He said violation of the order would constitute criminal offence and attract strict action under Section 188 of IPC.

Woman Booked For Lashkar...

wherein a lady was apprehended at a naka with threatening posters of militant outfit LeT and other incriminating material at Market Handwara and accordingly she was booked in Case

After conclusion of investigation the Chargesheet has been filed before the competent Court by Handwara Police U/s 20,38,39 UA(P) Act and substantive offences thereof subsequent to obtaining necessary Government sanction for prosecution under UA(P)Act, reads the statement.

The statement furthermore reads that the Chargesheet has been filed against Haseena Begum W/o Mohd Yousuf Bhat R/o Sheeri, Baramullafor being a member of militant outfit LeT, and giving Support to the said proscribed militant Organisation. Handwara police in this regard has registered a case FIR No 281/2019 of Police Station Handwara and had initiated investigation into the matter.

13 Year Old Boy Drowns...

identified as Zahid Ahmed Bhat son of Mohammad Yousuf Bhat a resident of Chanduna village.

People In Covid-19 Red Zones Should Step Out For Medical Emergencies Only: Expert

SRINAGAR, APRIL 23: Public Health Expert at Red Zone Surveillance Divisional Control Room, Kashmir, Dr Rouf Hussain Rather Thursday advised people in Covid-19 red zones to not to venture out of their homes except under medical emergencies.

He said that red zones become vulnerable as far as further transmission of the coronavirus is concerned and it becomes imperative for people to remain indoors to break the transmission chain of the disease.

"People should realize that the government is taking measures for the safety of their family and society. People in red zones should continue to follow lockdown norms and contribute their bit to ward off the infection. This will give government enough time to effectively fight the deadly disease," he said.

He said that an area is declared a red zone when more than one person of that area is found to be Covid-19 positive. He said that declaring an area a red zone is for the safety of people and they should adhere to all the Standard Operating Procedures and healthcare guidelines issued from time-to-time.

Maintaining that Red zones are closely monitored by the health officials to check the spread of Covid-19, he said that if lockdown measures are strictly followed by people in red zones, that area will be removed from the list of red zone category after 28 days after the last patient of that area tests negative for coronavirus.



He said that if people in red zones need to come out for any health emergency, they should wear a mask and maintain social distance of at least one meter from others. Once they return to their homes they should wash their hands with soap for at least a minute.

While spelling out the insights on how to fight the corona pandemic, Dr Rather said that people showing any symptoms should immediately report to the nearest health authorities.

"If any person in red zone shows symptoms of cough, sneezing, breath-

lessness or sore throat, he should immediately contact health workers of that area so that timely measures will be taken. Hiding symptoms will do no good. People of that area should keep proper care of their health, eating habits, drinking water and do daily exercise within their yards," he said.

He also said that reports of the corona virus's lethality vary by an order of magnitude and most people manage to recover from it.

"The coronavirus does not create much problem in most of the people

except cough or cold. But if they will not report to the health authorities they will not come to know about the infection and will be carrying the virus without knowing it," he said.

Five people have died so far in Jammu and Kashmir who had tested positive for coronavirus.

The expert warned that transmission of the virus to elderly and weak people will prove deadly to them, if timely measures are not taken.

He also advised people suffering from chronic diseases like diabetes, blood pressure, thyroid, not to discontinue their medication at once to prevent any complications.

"Pregnant ladies in Red Zones should keep in touch with the Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers and in case of emergency call 102 and 108. An ambulance will reach to their place and they will be shifted to a designated hospital," he said.

He also appealed people to download Aarogya Setu mobile app launched by the central government to help people identify the risk of contracting the coronavirus.

"People can also use the app to alert the authorities if they come in contact with a person infected with the deadly virus. The app is designed in such a way that it keeps a user informed through a beep on his mobile in case he or she has crossed paths with some person who has tested positive for coronavirus," he added.

ECMO life-saving for critically ill coronavirus patients: DAK

Srinagar :- While most of the novel coronavirus patients who get placed on conventional ventilators die, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Thursday said Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) machine is life-saving for critically ill COVID-19 patients.

DAK President Dr Nisar ul Hassan in a statement issued to news agency KINS said

"ECMO is an advanced type of mechanical life support that removes blood from the body, oxygenates and removes carbon dioxide from that blood, and then returns the blood to the body, allowing the patient's damaged lungs to recover," he said.

Dr Nisar said the machine improves the chances of survival in dying patients compared to using conventional ventilation management.

Citing a study, he said 63 percent patients with severe respiratory failure survived without disability on ECMO compared to 47 percent of those who were assigned conventional management.

Dr Nisar said most COVID-19 patients who end up on conventional ventilators go on to die, according to several studies from US, China and Europe.

"A study from UK found that

of 98 ventilated patients, just 33 were discharged alive," he said adding that "the numbers from another study of Wuhan, China are even grimmer. Only 3 of 22 ventilated patients survived."

Dr Nisar said conventional ventilatorworks by intermittent positive-pressure ventilation where oxygen-enriched air is blown into the lungs at high pressure. This in turn causes pressure injury to the lung tissue damaging further the already ravaged lungs of COVID-19 patients, delaying or preventing their recovery.

"While FDA has approved the use of ECMO as treatment for extreme cases of COVID-19, WHO considers it as a rescue therapy for those cases who fail to maintain oxygenation on conventional ventilation," he said.

Dr Nisar said we have one ECMO machine installed at SKIMS hospital, but it has not been put to use yet.

"Based on the data from China which has passed the peak of its suffering from the pandemic, about 5 percent of confirmed cases of COVID-19 were critically ill and vast majority of them required mechanical ventilation for respiratory failure," he said.

10 shops sealed seized for violating lockdown orders in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, APRIL 22: Ten shops were sealed and over a dozen vehicles and two-wheelers seized Thursday in different areas of Srinagar for violating lockdown orders.

Concerned authorities including Tehsildars and police swung into action against violators found in their respective jurisdictions.

It followed instructions of Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary for strict action against violators of lockdown as ordered for containment of COVID-19 in the district.

These shops were sealed in jurisdictions of 4 Tehsils — including 4 shops in Eidgah, 3 shops in North, 2 shops in Shalteng and 1 shop in Chantpora. In Koker Bazar area of South tehsil two shopkeepers were arrested for violations and others given strict warnings against future violations.

Strict action was also taken against private vehicles found moving around without permission. Seven cars and five two-wheelers as well as a tipper truck with construction



material were seized during the inspection drive held in different areas of the district.

It should be noted that complete restrictions on public movement and activities

have been ordered till May 3 in the district. Concerned authorities have been instructed for strict enforcement of restrictions and strict action against violators.

Jei District President Shifted To Srinagar Central Jail

Bandipora: Banned Jamat-e-Islami district president for Bandipora was shifted to Srinagar Central Jail after court extended his judicial remand.

Jei district president of Bandipora, Sikandar Ahmed Malik, a resident of Gundpora had been arrested last year after the abrogation of special status of Jammu and Kashmir. He was booked under PSA under an FIR vide number 19/2029 under section 10, 13, ULA Act.

The court of Justice Tashi Rabistan had quashed his detention under Public Safety Act, however, he was again booked after the court verdict in a different case.

Sources told KNT that Sikandar Ahmed who was lodged at police station Bandipora was shifted to Srinagar Central Jail.

Scores of banned Jamat-e-Islami leaders and workers were arrested post annulment of Article 30 in erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. (KNT)

With 8-month pay pending, private school teachers struggling in Valley

Srinagar, Apr 23, KNT: The exploitation of private school teachers is continuing unabated in Kashmir valley as most of the schools have not paid salaries to the teaching staff since August 2019.

With COVID-19 positive cases emerging every day all over the Valley, the resumption of normal life appears bleak in the near future. And, teacher community employed in private schools has been badly affected.

"It was the month of March when we were expecting the salaries to be released but now, given the coronavirus pandemic, we have no hope either. Our struggle has gotten worse, to say the least," Manzoor Dar, a private school teacher from Shopian told KNT.

He added, "As we are observing that the administration is taking various steps to combat the epidemic crises of coronavirus like relief work, advance salary to employees etc but a high percentage of population working as private teachers on meagre salaries are facing difficult conditions. We are

without salaries from last more than seven months."

Except a few reputed schools, the private educational institutions have largely been evading the release of salaries to the teachers.

"We have been without salaries from the last eight months. In fact, we have not been paid from August 2019," Qayoom Wani, a private school teacher working in Nawa Pulwama, said.

As a mark of protest, many teachers have refused the directive of their school heads to teach online as the Valley witnesses a strict lockdown, imposed to check the spread of Coronavirus. "We can't teach without salaries. How can the school heads even ask us after not releasing our salaries for months without end?" asks Shabnum Jan from Prichoo Pulwama, another private school teacher.

It is an open secret that the teachers are underpaid and when the payment of their meager salaries is delayed, it aggravates problems further for them.

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

- 1479 BC - Thutmose III ascends to the throne of Egypt, although power effectively shifts to Hatshepsut (according to the Low Chronology of the 18th Dynasty)
- 1066 - Halley's Comet sparks English monk to predict country will be destroyed
- 1185 - Battle at Danoura: Yoshitsune Minamoto's fleet beats the Taira during Japan's Genpei War
- 1793 - French revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat is acquitted by the Revolutionary Tribunal of charges brought by the Girondin in Paris
- 1800 - US Library of Congress establishes with \$5,000 allocation
- 1872 - Volcano Mt Vesuvius erupts in Italy
- 1877 - Russo-Turkish War, 1877-78: Russia declares war on the Ottoman Empire
- 1898 - Spanish-American War: Spain declares war after rejecting US ultimatum to withdraw from Cuba
- men of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition launch a lifeboat from uninhabited Elephant Island in the Southern Ocean to organise a rescue for ice-trapped ship Endurance
- 1920 - British Mandate over Palestine goes into effect (lasts 28 years)
- 1920 - Polish troops attack Ukraine
- 1921 - 1st municipal elections for men & women in Belgium
- 1921 - Under Allies supervision, a plebiscite in the Tyrol favors merging with Germany; unhappy with the outcome, Allies give the area to Italy
- 1928 - Fathometer, which measures underwater depth, patented
- 1941 - British army begins evacuation of Greece
- 1950 - Independent republic of South Molukkas declared
- 1950 - US President Harry Truman denies there are communists in the US government
- 1950 - Jordan formally annexes the West Bank
- 1955 - Conference of Bandung against colonialism and for self determination, ends
- 1955 - Gaullists lose elections in France
- 1967 - Vietnam War: American General William Westmoreland says in a news conference that the enemy had "gained support in the United States that gives him hope that he can win politically that which he cannot win militarily."
- 1968 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakhstan/Semipalitinsk USSR
- 1968 - Mauritius becomes a member state of the United Nations.
- 1971 - Soyuz 10 returns to Earth
- 1980 - US military operation to save 52 hostages in Iran, fails, 8 die
- 1989 - 10s of thousands of student strikes in Beijing, China
- 1990 - Security law violator Michael Milken pleads guilty to 6 felonies
- 1990 - US 66th manned space mission STS 31 (Discovery 10) launches into orbit
- 1990 - West & East Germany agree to merge currency & economies on July 1st
- 1993 - The IRA explodes a 1000kg car bomb in Bishopsgate, London, killing a news photographer and injuring 44 others
- 1996 - The UN and Iraq end a third round of negotiations over Iraq's possible sale of \$1 billion of oil for 90 days for a 180-day trial period
- 2006 - King Gyanendra of Nepal gives into the demands of protesters and restores the parliament that he dissolved in 2002.
- 2013 - 33 people are killed and 115 are injured after a magnitude 5.7 earthquake strikes Jalalabad, Afghanistan
- 2013 - 256 people are killed and 1,000 are injured after a building collapses Savar Upazila, Bangladesh
- 2015 - Armenia commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Empire

PRAYERS

FAJR

4: 20

ZUHR

12: 29

ASR

5:14

Magrib

7:12

ISHA

8:39

SMC adheres to guidelines, financial norms: Commissioner

"Will take legal action against such miscreants"

SRINAGAR, APRIL 23: Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Gazanfar Ali on Thursday said that the efforts are being made to curtail the spread of Corona virus in Srinagar and in this process the Corporation is adhering to all guidelines and financial norms prescribed by the relevant law.

The Commissioner made these remarks in reference to certain baseless, unverified and motivated allegations by a certain individual against SMC.

He said that the figures quoted on some social media platform by a particular individual are grossly exaggerated with isolated bits of information, intentionally used out of context to mislead the general public.

"SMC stands by the ideals of transparency and accountability and is, therefore, taking a legal recourse – both in the routine course of civil and criminal law and is also filing an official complaint with the Chairman District Disaster Management Authority, in view of multiple attempts by



the an individual, to impede the initiatives being undertaken by the Corporation to prevent the spread of Novel Corona Virus in Srinagar," Commissioner said.

He added that the Corporation's legal cell is also initiating legal action against the media outlets & publications both online and print which have published such baseless allegations and figures without verification. According to the Health Officer, SMC, Dr Qazi Javaid, Corporation is using the premium and un-adulterated chemicals, approved by the competent authorities, to fight the spread of Corona virus.

From KO Archives

Withdraw ban on dance bars: Farooq

Shillong - National Conference patron, Farooq Abdullah today came out strongly against the government move to ban dance bars in Mumbai and other cities across Maharashtra.

Farooq sahib believes the banning of dance bars would encourage 'prostitution'.

"Where (they dancing girls) will go now for money to buy food, medicine and education expenses of their children? Mumbai, as we know, is a 'costly city and those dancers were so far eking out a living without selling their bodies," Abdullah told a gathering on spreading awareness of HIV AIDS here Friday.

"With the Maharashtra government banning the dance bars, these women would be forced to go in for prostitution which would in turn spread the dreaded virus of AIDS into the society," the former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir alleged.

The NC leader also voiced concern over truck drivers 'transporting' the HIV/AIDS while ferrying goods.

Lauding the efforts of Assam Rifles Wives Welfare Association, which organised die campaign today, tor spreading the awareness among the jawans' families, the Rajya Sabha member said he was sanctioning Rs 5 lakh to the organisation to start AIDS awareness campaign in local languages in remote' areas ; of the North East

(Kashmir Observer, 24 April, 2005)

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Review 4G ban

Hearing a petition on Tuesday seeking restoration of 4G mobile internet services in J&K, the Supreme Court asked the Central government and Jammu and Kashmir administration to file a detailed response by Sunday. The hearing was held through video conferencing. However, the Attorney General KK Venugopal defended the ban on 4G citing threat to security. He said curbs on internet was “a very serious issue”, arguing that the militants “are being made into martyrs” in Kashmir and people attend their funeral in large numbers. He also cited a recent example when “about 500 people came for the funeral”.

Advocate for the petitioner Huzefa Ahmadi urged the court to ask Centre and J&K administration to file a response “expeditiously”. But Solicitor General Tushar Mehta sought more time to file a response saying there are “some communication and other issues”.

The petition filed by an NGO named Foundation for Media Professionals seeks directions for the restoration of 4G mobile internet services in the union territory in view of the spread of coronavirus.

Government has refused to lift the curbs on 4G despite a chorus of voices calling for its restoration. Recently, human rights watchdog Amnesty International too had sought restoration of the service to access health and safety-related information. The government, however, has chosen to do exactly the opposite and extend the ban. There is no credible explanation for this. Government is hiding under a blanket excuse of security. But there is not even a distant sign that Kashmir faces any immediate security challenge. Apart from protests in the first month after the revocation of Article 370 on August 5 last year, Kashmir has been peaceful over the past seven months. By December last even the hartal had come to an end and the daily life has since returned to normal. Besides the recent release of Abdullahs has done nothing to upset the public order contrary to government charges against them when they were in detention.

So, to say that 4G will pose threat to security doesn't hold water. Besides, even if a few people are suspected to “misuse” the internet it doesn't justify the collective punishment. More so, at a time when health of people is at risk. While on the one hand, government is taking every preventive to ensure COVID-19 by locking down the Valley and marking out the red zones it is restricting what should have been its main tool to spread awareness. It is therefore important that the government reviews its policy on 4G and restores it forthwith. This will strengthen the fight against coronavirus and at the same time there is no reason to fear its implications for the security.

OTHER OPINON

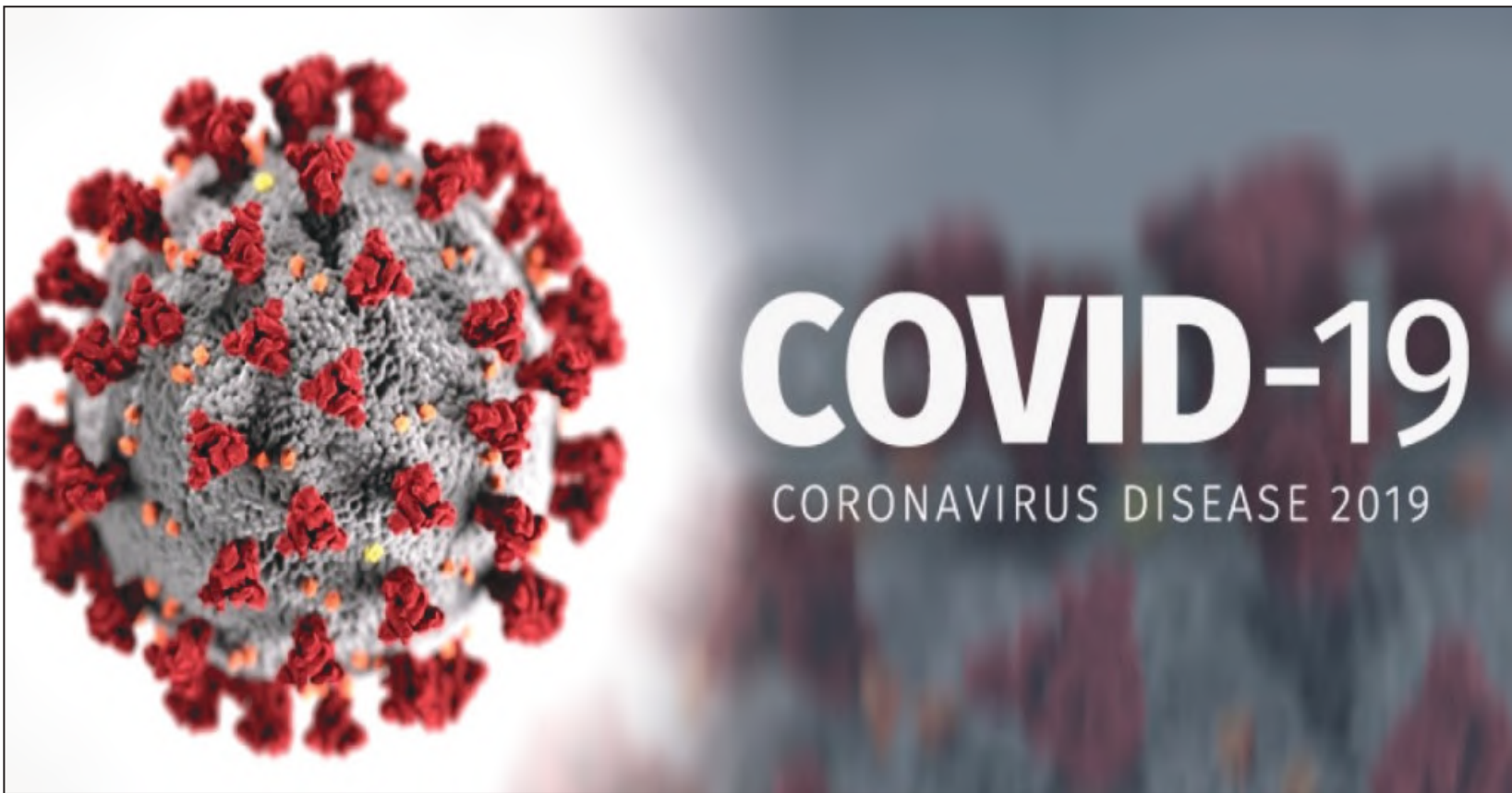
Crude shock

Reverberations from the economic dislocation caused by the coronavirus are being felt across the world. On Monday, the price of the May futures contract for West Texas Intermediate crude (WTI) in the US that is due to expire on Tuesday fell into negative territory — settling at — \$37.63 a barrel. This extreme price movement is indicative of how deeply oversupplied the US market is owing to the collapse in demand as economic activity has come to a standstill and the fact that there isn't storage capacity to absorb this excess supply. The “negative” price indicates that investors holding these May contracts essentially did not want to take delivery of the oil, unable to find storage facilities. And while the June contract is currently hovering around \$20 a barrel, the price crash in the May contracts suggests that storage will continue to be a problem. This implies that unless supply in the US is cut back further to readjust to the collapse in demand, more pain is likely.

This isn't a US-specific problem. Earlier, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, along with Russia, agreed to cut crude oil output by 9.7 million barrels per day to bring down supply. This cut is effective from May and is supposed to last till June. But this cut is unlikely to be enough to readjust supply given the extent of the collapse in global demand. While according to some estimates demand is likely to be 30 per cent lower, it is difficult at this stage to accurately gauge the extent of the fall. Thus, it is likely that these cuts will need to be followed up by further cuts to readjust supply. In this situation of low crude oil prices, while oil producing countries will suffer, oil consuming countries like India will benefit. Lower prices should not only help in reducing the current account deficit, but could also ease inflationary pressures if governments do pass on the benefit, even partially, to end consumers. However, it is also likely that as the lockdown restrictions are eased, and as economic activity gradually picks up, the Centre and the states raise taxes on crude oil to shore up their struggling revenues. Further, as lower oil prices will impact the economies of oil producing countries in the middle east, they could also affect remittance flows to India.

India must seize this opportunity to build on its oil reserves. The government has said that it will take advantage of the low crude oil prices to fill its strategic petroleum reserves. The country's strategic petroleum reserve facilities have a capacity of 5.3 million metric tonnes — amounting to 9.5 days of its crude oil requirements (as per consumption pattern of 2017-18). Additionally, the government has approved the setting up two additional SPR facilities which will add another 6.5 MMT or about 11.57 days of the country's crude requirements. In comparison, each IEA country has to hold emergency oil stocks equivalent to at least 90 days of imports. India should be working on similar lines.

The Indian Express



A Lesson Coronavirus Is About To Teach The World

JONATHAN COOK

It is only an arrogance cultivated in us by those narcissists who have risen to power through their own destructive egotism that blinded us to the necessary mix of humility and awe we ought to feel as we watch a drop of rain on a leaf, or a baby struggle to crawl, or the night sky revealed in all its myriad glories away from city lights.

If a disease can teach wisdom beyond our understanding of how precarious and precious life is, the coronavirus has offered two lessons.

The first is that in a globalised world our lives are so intertwined that the idea of viewing ourselves as islands — whether as individuals, communities, nations, or a uniquely privileged species — should be understood as evidence of false consciousness. In truth, we were always bound together, part of a miraculous web of life on our planet and, beyond it, stardust in an unfathomably large and complex universe.

It is only an arrogance cultivated in us by those narcissists who have risen to power through their own destructive egotism that blinded us to the necessary mix of humility and awe we ought to feel as we watch a drop of rain on a leaf, or a baby struggle to crawl, or the night sky revealed in all its myriad glories away from city lights.

And now, as we start to enter periods of quarantine and self-isolation — as nations, communities and individuals — all that should be so much clearer. It has taken a virus to show us that only together are we at our strongest, most alive and most human.

In being stripped of what we need most by the threat of contagion, we are reminded of how much we have taken community for granted, abused it, hollowed it out. We are afraid because the services we need in times of collective difficulty and trauma have been turned into commodities that require payment, or treated as privileges to which access is now means-tested, rationed or is simply gone. That insecurity is at the root of the current urge to hoard.

When death stalks us it is not bankers we turn to, or corporate executives, or hedge fund managers. Nonetheless, those are the people our societies have best rewarded. They are the people who, if salaries are a measure of value, are the most prized.

But they are not the people we need, as individuals, as societies, as nations. Rather, it will be doc-

tors, nurses, public health workers, care-givers and social workers who will be battling to save lives by risking their own.

During this health crisis we may indeed notice who and what is most important. But will we remember the sacrifice, their value after the virus is no longer headline news? Or will we go back to business as usual — until the next crisis — rewarding the arms manufacturers, the billionaire owners of the media, the fossil fuel company bosses, and the financial-services parasites feeding off other people's money?

The second lesson follows from the first. Despite everything we have been told for four decades or more, western capitalist societies are far from the most efficient ways of organising ourselves. That will be laid bare as the coronavirus crisis deepens.

We are still very much immersed in the ideological universe of Thatcherism and Reaganism, when we were told quite literally: “There is no such thing as society.” How will that political mantra stand the test of the coming weeks and months? How much can we survive as individuals, even in quarantine, rather than as part of communities that care for all of us?

Western leaders who champion neoliberalism, as they are required to do nowadays, have two choices to cope with coronavirus — and both will require a great deal of misdirection if we are not to see through their hypocrisy and deceptions.

Our leaders can let us “take it on the chin”, as the British prime minister Boris Johnson has phrased it. In practice, that will mean allowing what is effectively a cull of many of the poor and elderly — one that will relieve governments of the financial burden of underfunded pension schemes and welfare payments.

Such leaders will claim they are powerless to intervene or to ameliorate the crisis. Confronted with the contradictions inherent in their worldview, they will suddenly become fatalists, abandoning their belief in the efficacy and righteousness of the free market. They will say the virus was too

contagious to contain, too robust for health services to cope, too lethal to save lives. They will evade all blame for the decades of health cuts and privatisations that made those services inefficient, inadequate, cumbersome and inflexible.

Or, by contrast, politicians will use their spin doctors and allies in the corporate media to obscure the fact that they are quietly and temporarily becoming socialists to deal with the emergency. They will change the welfare rules so that all those in the gig economy they created — employed on zero-hours contracts — do not spread the virus because they cannot afford to self-quarantine or take days' off sick.

Or most likely our leaders will pursue both options.

If acknowledged at all, the conclusion to be drawn from the crisis — that we all matter equally, that we need to look after one another, that we sink or swim together — will be treated as no more than an isolated, fleeting lesson specific to this crisis. Our leaders will refuse to draw more general lessons — ones that might highlight their own culpability — about how sane, humane societies should function all the time.

In fact, there is nothing unique about the coronavirus crisis. It is simply a heightened version of the less visible crisis we are now permanently mired in. As Britain sinks under floods each winter, as Australia burns each summer, as the southern states of the US are wrecked by hurricanes and its great plains become dustbowls, as the climate emergency becomes ever more tangible, we will learn this truth slowly and painfully.

Those deeply invested in the current system — and those so brainwashed they cannot see its flaws — will defend it to the bitter end. They will learn nothing from the virus. They will point to authoritarian states and warn that things could be far worse.

Excerpted from: 'A Lesson Coronavirus Is About to Teach the World'.

Courtesy: Counterpunch.org



OBSERVER
MAIL

All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name and address, even if a pseudonym is used. Letters are edited as clarity, space and accuracy of expression require. Our publishing a letter does not mean we agree with everything or even anything in it. -EDITOR

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Let's Behave Like Humans Too

What is our worth on this planet, unless we understand that people who live around us, with us, matter. Wherever I look at my society I see different nasty things occurring around me, sending shudders down my spine. In our part of the globe torturing others, mentally and emotionally, on the basis of their background, has become so rampant, as if we can't live without putting someone else to pain. In a belief that by mistreating others our strength comes to the fore, which in reality exhibits nothing but complete sickness of our minds, we are busy attacking them so relentlessly

ly that it doesn't cross our mind what might be happening to others.

Herein lies the rub! Coming straight to the point, a couple of days back, strolling in the vacant lots of my area, I stumbled upon some well-off young lads discussing the prevailing situation of Kashmir. The discussion was worth listening to, but the distressing part of it was when this thick bearded man, owing to his inner rush, mocked a soft-looking rural guy that stood in the corner there — “Gamuk, Gruuss, backward certificate.” The person used vulgar language to such an extent that the victim's eyes were turning moist and his face scarlet

with every passing second. Oh God! I wish I would have been elsewhere that time rather than seeing the heart-rending expressions wearing on the face of the victim. Uttering not even a single word to those reverberating taunts, the innocent ultimately bade adieu to this choking environment; that was probably the sole option left for him.

What was more depressing was the way the abuser was discussing — only a moment after the innocent left the place almost crying — with others. It had appeared as ‘what is done is done-who cares!’ Forgetting the dreadful influences of those taunts,

abuses could have on others; ripping apart their emotional & psychological aspect-the wicked create divisions in our societies, resulting in violence.

In these times when people are already going through torments incalculable, we need to understand — and understand well — that our lingual and behavioural approaches matter. Thus it should not be torturing in nature. But rather be something imbued with love and care. Something welcoming and encouraging. It's high time we clean our minds — put an end to the nasty stuff which resides within.

*Faizaan Bashir
faizanbashir170@gmail.com*

Ramazan Is Not A Month Only But A Pledge

MEER ABBAS

Ramazan is here to liberate us from all this. Here is a powerful message that it is soul over body. Take a break from the pop culture. Turn off the music and TV. Say goodbye to the endless and futile pursuit of happiness in sensory pleasures. Rediscover your inner self that has been buried deep under it. Reorient yourself. Devote your time to the reading of the Qur'an, to voluntary worship, to prayers and conversations with Allah. Reflect on the direction of your life and your priorities. Reflect on and strengthen your relationship with your Creator.

Why does God want us to fast? This is because fasting may adversely effect our routines like working, studying, sports and various other life routines. Apparently, it merely looks like depriving our bodies of essential energy and a somewhat needless hardship that religion has asked us to undergo.

The most important message of Ramazan is that we are not just body. We are body and soul. And that what makes us human beings and that determines our value as human beings is the soul and not the body. During Ramazan we deprive the body to uplift the soul. This is all simple and familiar. But we can understand its significance if we remember that the message of the materialistic hedonistic global pop culture that has engulfed every Muslim land today just like the rest of the world is exactly the opposite. It says that body is everything. That the materialistic world is all that counts. That the greatest happiness if not virtue is in filling the appetites of the body. This message produces endless appetites and consequently endless wars to fill those endless appetites through endless exploitation. It produces endless frustrations since the gap between desires and achievements can never be filled. It produces endless chaos and endless oppression. Yet this trash comes in such beautiful and enticing packages that we can hardly resist it. We equate this slavery with freedom. We consider this march to disaster as progress. And with every movement, we get further and deeper into the mire.

Ramazan is here to liberate us from all this. Here is a powerful message that it is soul over body. Take a break from the pop culture. Turn off the music and TV. Say goodbye to the endless and futile pursuit of happiness in sensory pleasures. Rediscover your inner self that has been buried deep under it. Reorient yourself. Devote your time to the reading of the Qur'an, to voluntary worship, to prayers and conversations with Allah. Reflect on the direction of your life and your priorities. Reflect on and strengthen your relationship with your Creator.

The fast is a symbolic equalizer for all Muslims from every part of humanity. From the very rich to the very poor, the fortunate or the less fortunate, during this month every Muslim finds common goodness in the challenge and rewards of the daily fast. The hunger and thirst is a remembrance of the cornerstone of free will and discipline in faith as much as it is a sign of health. It is a reminder of thanks for our health and a test for Muslims to see and feel the plight of those less fortunate. In hunger and in thirst, we are all equal. It is an equality that not only crosses social boundaries, but religious, political and geographical as well. It is a reminder of our shared humanity with every individual around the world.

In that equality, Ramazan bears significance beyond its spirituality for Muslims. Every year it reminds me of my love of personal liberty and free will from Islamist coercion. A respect for universal equality is a central community value vital to ultimately defeating the theocrats of political Islam. Muslims need an Islam whose laws stay out of government, and instead teach the equality of all humanity regardless of faith practice.



The spirit of Ramazan is a true example of how Islam can flourish under the separation of mosque and state.

You read that correctly. Ramazan illustrates the true potential of Islam under the separation of mosque and state. That's because no matter where you are in the world, the fast of Ramazan should be a personal practice of the heart shared by all Muslims but imposed by none. Choosing to partake in the daily fast and month of prayer must be an exercise of pure free will outside the purview of everyone but God. Those that partake must be willing and government should certainly stay out of it.

My prayer is that this year during the month-long introspection, our Muslim faith communities begin to come to a universal understanding, that living under the oppressive rule of Shar'iah law (Islamic jurisprudence) is not only strangling our religion, but perverting it. The application of Shar'iah law in government suffocates the basic human right to practice our own beliefs how we freely choose. No matter how benevolent it is packaged, when Shar'iah law is imposed through religious mandate rather than through reason and liberty, it denies the very inalienable rights which Ramazan teaches us to cherish. It is my prayer that the introspection of the month brings millions of Muslims to the realization that the recurrent problem of radical Islam is a symptom of the underlying supremacism of political Islam.

Let us try to understand this.

Each human being has two forms of existence: physical and spiritual. Both forms have separate needs. Our physical needs relate to food, drink and sex. Our

spiritual needs relate to connection with God and moral conduct. In eleven months we seem to be fulfilling our physical needs to the utmost. Our spiritual needs are generally neglected if not sacrificed.

In many ways, Ramazan mirrors a form of spiritual renewal a time for new resolutions and a revival of inner peace. Similar to how one might attend a nature retreat once a year to escape the humdrum of a dog-eat-dog world, Ramazan provides an internal retreat where the mind and it's natural thirst for knowledge, awakening and reason is given greater precedence over the physical needs and desires of the body needs which are regularly served but rarely satisfied. Human desire in its bare essence is animalistic and somewhat selfish. It has been the evolution of teachings of faith that has kept in check much of our primitive needs for constant self-gratification.

For one month (ie Ramazan), God wants us to pay prime attention to our spiritual needs in such a powerful manner that we forget about our physical needs for a major part of the day. This gives the chance to our spiritual being to develop and grow and prepare itself to function at a high level for the rest of the eleven months.

In other words, it gives us the chance to strengthen our connection with God and also develop our selves into good human beings with little interference from our physical needs.

Let,s make a pledge to help poor ,needy and orphan. Let,s feel the pain of destitutes, poor ,needy and hungry.

O Allah, Allow us to witness Ramazan, benefit from it, use it to earn your mercy, and emancipation from the fire...(Aameen)

Concept Of Hygiene & Infection Control In Islam

DR. RAIES AHMAD

With the rise of the corona virus, health professionals around the world have become increasingly concerned with the spread of infectious diseases. In recent years several break-outs of infectious diseases such as the swine flu, SARS, and now the corona virus (COVID-19) have meant that infectious diseases have taken on a global context and are now on the agenda of world leaders and health policy makers alike. Easy and frequent air travel allows diseases to spread rapidly between communities and countries and makes it difficult to contain.

Islam being a comprehensive religion, takes every aspect of life into account, including the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual aspects of human life. Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) was teaching his followers hygiene practices before more than 1400 years ago, that are still applicable in the 21st century. Prophet of Islam described cleanliness as half of believers faith. Similarly, the Quran states: Truly, God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves (Quran 2:222). While this purity involves a spiritual aspect, it also includes physical cleanliness.

The guidelines that are practiced today by major health organisations are almost entirely in line and inspired by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) :

Washing Hands Before Eating : The Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), taught that blessings are found when one washes their hands before eating. He said: Blessing in food lies in washing the hand before and after eating.

Washing Before Prayer (Ablution) : Muslims perform five daily prayers. In order to conduct these prayers, Muslims must be in a state of physical purity known as ablution (wuzu in Arabic). This consists of washing the hands,



Washing Before Prayer (Ablution) : Muslims perform five daily prayers. In order to conduct these prayers, Muslims must be in a state of physical purity known as ablution (wuzu in Arabic). This consists of washing the hands, mouth, nose, face, wiping the head, ears, and washing the feet three times. When an entire community of people do this five times a day it builds a culture of cleanliness and decreases the risk of infectious diseases.

mouth, nose, face, wiping the head, ears, and washing the feet three times. When an entire community of people do this five times a day it builds a culture of cleanliness and decreases the risk of infectious diseases.

Cleaning Oneself After Using The

Washroom : When relieving oneself, the Prophet instructed his followers to use no less than three stones. Obviously, at the time, they did not have toilet paper, but this implies that one should ensure they are clean. Furthermore, the Prophet also encouraged Muslims to clean their pri-

vate parts with water after using stones.

Covering The Face When Sneezing : The Prophet, peace be upon him, instructed Muslims to cover their faces when sneezing. Although it may seem obvious to us today, but he taught Muslims to do this before

there was an understanding of how airborne diseases spread.

Infection Control In Islam : Infection Control In Islam includes isolation and quarantine. Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), instituted strategies that are today implemented by public health authorities. He commanded his followers not to travel to places known to be afflicted with illness and he advised those in the contaminated areas or communities not to leave and spread the disease further afield. He said, "If you hear that there is a plague in a land, do not enter it; and if it (plague) visits a land while you are therein, do not go out of it" (Sahih Bukhari). He also counselled ill people not to visit healthy people.

Quarantine In Islam: Quarantine is essential for the comfort of the sick individual as well as the protection of the larger public. In Islamic history, several hospitals were built to prevent the spread of sicknesses. For example, in 706 Caliph Al-Walid built the first hospital in Damascus and issued an order to isolate those infected with leprosy from other patients in the hospital. This practice continued during the Ottoman Empire until 1838.

The teaching and principles of Islam are designed to benefit all of humankind. Rules and recommendations for personal hygiene and cleanliness promote the well-being of individuals and communities. Infection control is inherent in Islamic hygiene behavior. Washing the hands, covering the mouth when sneezing or coughing, voluntary isolation, when one is feeling unwell, and restricted travel is an effective and comprehensive public health strategy. Measures taken in the 21st century to prevent the spread of infections and viruses conform almost exactly to the hygiene and infection control practices taught by Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

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PEOPLE MAY KNOW THE BEST DECISION For Themselves And May Still Not Make It

Agencies

When faced with a situation that requires decision-making skills, people may know which choice gives them the best chance of success, but still take the other option, suggests a new study.

People may choose based on a "gut feeling", a habit, or what worked for them last time, rather than on what they have learned will work most often, said Ian Krajbich, co-author of the study and associate professor of psychology and economics at The Ohio State University.

The results run counter to the belief that people make the less optimal choice because they just don't know any better.

"In our study, people knew what worked most often. They just didn't use that knowledge," Krajbich said.

The research, published in the journal Nature Communications, was led by Arkady Konovalov, a former graduate student at Ohio State who is now at the University of Zurich in Switzerland.

Krajbich said the results of this study suggest that many times we will take the route that worked yesterday and ignore the evidence of what normally works best.

"There's this tension between doing what you should do, at least from a statistical perspective, versus doing what worked out well recently," Krajbich said.

In the study, participants played a simple computer game in which noticing and exploiting patterns could make them more money. The researchers tracked their mouse movements to detect whether they picked up on those patterns.

For example, participants would choose one of two symbols on the top half of the screen - one on the top left and one on the top right. They would then move the cursor to the bottom half of the screen and a symbol would appear on the bottom right or bottom left. They would click on that to see their reward.

Participants repeated this game dozens of times. The researchers could determine if the participants learned the pattern between what they chose at the top and what they got at the bottom (for example, choosing the top left symbol usually led to the bottom right symbol with the largest reward) by watching their mouse movements.

"We could tell where they thought the next

symbol was going to appear by where they moved the cursor," Krajbich said.

"And we found that nearly everyone - 56 of the 57 participants - learned the pattern. That was no problem for our participants."

But the researchers designed part of the study so that the pattern that usually led to the largest reward didn't work 10 to 40 percent of the time.

So the question was: After one of the trials in which the pattern that usually led to the largest reward didn't work, what would participants do? Would they stick to the pattern or choose something else?

Results showed that participants followed the plan that gave them the best chance of success - which was following the pattern that worked at least 6 out of 10 times - only about 20 percent of the time.

In other parts of the study, the pattern that produced the biggest reward always worked the same way. Here, where the pattern was consistent, participants followed it about twice as often as in the other cases: about 40 percent of the time.

Why don't people follow the best strategy more often? While the answer to that is beyond the scope of this study, Krajbich said it likely takes a lot of mental energy and planning to always make decisions based on your knowledge of the environment.

And the rewards of following the best strategy aren't always obvious - especially if following that strategy increases your success by only a small percentage, he said.

This tension between using a statistical-based strategy versus going with your "gut" comes up a lot in sports, Krajbich said. Coaches and managers must decide whether to go for it on fourth down in football or walk a batter in baseball. The decision that has the best chance to succeed statistically is often only a bit more successful than the other choice.

"It can be hard to judge whether you made a good or bad decision based just on the outcome. We can make a good decision and just get unlucky and have a bad outcome. Or we can make a bad decision and get lucky and have a good outcome," Krajbich said.

In those situations, it is easy for people to stop being disciplined and just choose whatever decision got them rewards most recently.

The lesson from this study, is that people often do learn what works best, said Krajbich.



“THERE’S THIS TENSION BETWEEN DOING what you should do, at least from a statistical perspective, versus doing what worked out well recently,” Krajbich said.

Covid Symptoms To Watch Out For In Kids

Press Trust Of India

Most children with Covid-19 may exhibit only mild symptoms, if any, requiring only supportive care, with good prognosis and full recovery possible within one to two weeks, according to a review of studies, which presents the clinical manifestation of the disease in the young people.

The research, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, assessed 18 studies with a total of 1065 participants from China and Singapore, who were mostly pediatric patients with the novel coronavirus infection.

According to the researchers, including those from the University of Pavia in Italy, most pediatric patients with SARS-CoV-2 infection presented with fever, dry cough, and fatigue, or were asymptomatic.

They said only one infant presented with pneumonia, complicated by shock and kidney failure, and was successfully treated with intensive care.

Most pediatric patients were hospitalised, and symptomatic children received mainly supportive care with no deaths reported in the age range of 0 to 9 years, the scientists noted in the study.

The researchers believe that defining the clinical characteristics and severity of the disease in large cohorts of patients is an urgent need.

While data are available for adult patients with COVID-19, limited reports analyse pediatric patients infected with SARS-CoV-2, they said.

In this context, the current review study of COVID-19 in children and adolescents sheds light on the clinical features, diagnostic tests,

current therapeutic management, and prognosis.

Fever and cough were the main symptoms, the researchers said, adding that both were reported in six of the included studies.

Only one case of a 13-month-old infant reported severe symptoms.

The scientists said this patient developed vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and pneumonia, complicated by shock with metabolic acidosis and kidney failure that required intensive care and assisted ventilation.

Among the two studies which presented gastrointestinal complications from COVID-19, vomiting was described as the primary clinical manifestation.

Except for the single case of severe infection, none of the included patients required oxygen or assisted ventilation, the scientists noted.

They said in general, the patients had a good medical outcome, however, one death was reported in the age range of 10 to 19 years.

Based on the analysis, the scientists said pediatric patients acquired infections mainly through close contact with their parents or other family members.

Citing a case study, they added that COVID-19 infection might affect newborns who acquired the infection from the mother, suggesting a possible perinatal-peripartum transmission.

However, they said larger studies need to be conducted to confirm this.

The scientists added that there were a few limitations to their analysis method.

They said the research occurred over a brief 3-month period with nearly all the studies from Chinese reports.

Why Proper Eye Care Is Crucial To Stop COVID-19 Spread

Agencies

NEW DELHI- While facial masks and hand sanitisers are mandatory as a preventive measure against the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, eye care specialists in India have stressed that as the virus can transmit through the eyes too, people should avoid wearing contact lenses to curb its spread.

The ophthalmologists point out the need for wearing glasses and taking good care of the eyes to reduce the risk of the virus entering into the eyes.

"One of the rare manifestations of COVID-19 is a pink eye or conjunctivitis. Sometimes, patients may not have a fever, cold, cough or any other symptom other than mild conjunctivitis. These patients can also experience loss of smell and loss of taste," Ikeda Lal, Ophthalmologist at Delhi Eye Centre and Sir Gang Ram Hospital in New Delhi,



told news gathering agency.

The recent study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, claimed that of the 1,099 patients across 30 different Chinese hospitals, nine had "conjunctival congestion."

Symptoms of conjunctivitis,

also known as pink eyes, include redness, watering, irritation, pain, discharge and photophobia. Discharge from the infected eye can be a potential source of contamination, the experts said.

"Although there are very few

reports of COVID-19 conjunctivitis and that too only from China, one should be careful when one develops conjunctivitis during this COVID era and get oneself tested immediately," Rajesh Sinha, Professor of Ophthalmology, All India Institute Of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi, told IANS.

According to Sinha, when a person touches an affected surface and then touches the eyes or the face, the virus can enter the body. With spectacles, one can prevent virus droplets from coming in contact with the eyes.

"It is advisable to wear glasses when you step out of the house, and those who wear contact lenses should switch to glasses immediately," he added.

To stop the spread of the deadly virus, Dr Lal further said: "Eyecare during coronavirus pandemic is very important. Do not rub your eyes, avoid wearing contact lenses. Those

who wear contact lenses have a tendency towards rubbing their eyes, which can allow the virus to get into the eyes.

"Stay at home and avoid going out as much as possible. Sunglasses or prescription glasses can be worn while going out to protect our eyes," Lal added.

"One should take frequent breaks in between the sessions with monitor which may be webinars, web series, news channels, movies or video chats, intentionally increase your blink rate, put some lubricating eye drops or keep your eyes moist even by splashing water into the eye," Sinha said.

On Tuesday, coronavirus cases in India reached 18,601, with 14,759 active cases, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said in a morning update. "A total of 3,252 patients have been cured and discharged, while the death toll stood at 590," the Ministry said.

Scientists Discover Protein That Helps The Human Heart To Heal

Agencies

WASHINGTON D.C.: A group of scientists from the UT Southwestern Medical Center scientists have discovered a protein that works with other proteins during development to put the brakes on cell division in the heart and helps it to heal.

The research was published in the journal-Nature.

The findings could eventually be used to reverse this developmental block and help heart cells regenerate, offering a whole new way to treat a variety of conditions in which heart muscle becomes damaged, including heart failure caused by viruses, toxins, high blood pressure, or heart attacks.

Current pharmaceutical treatments for heart failure - including ACE inhibitors and beta blockers - center on trying to stop a vicious



cycle of heart muscle loss as strain further damages remaining heart muscle, causing more cells to die, explains UT Southwestern physician-researcher Hesham A. Sadek, M.D., Ph.D., a professor of internal medicine molecular biology, and biophysics. There are no existing treatments to rebuild heart muscle.

Nine years ago, Sadek and his colleagues discovered that mouse hearts can regenerate if they're damaged in the first few days of life, spurred by the division of cardiomyocytes, the cells responsible for a heart's contractile force.

However, this capacity is com-

pletely lost by 7 days old, an abrupt turning point in which division of these cells dramatically slows and the cells themselves enlarge. The reasons why these cells gradually slow and stop dividing has been unclear.

Sadek and his team discovered in 2013 that a protein called Meis1, which falls into a category known as transcription factors that regulate the activity of genes, plays a key role in stopping heart cell division.

However, he explains, although deleting this gene in mice extends the window of heart cell division, this effect is transient - heart cells missing this gene eventually slow and stop their multiplication.

Consequently, the researchers wondered whether there were redundant mechanisms in place that stop heart cell division even when Meis1 is absent.

This Is How Human Cells Respond To Stress

Agencies

WASHINGTON D.C.: Scientists in a new study observed and studied the response of human cells on coming in contact with stress.

Cells are often exposed to stressful conditions that can be life-threatening, such as high temperatures or toxins. Fortunately, human cells are masters of stress management with a powerful response program they cease to grow, produce stress-protective factors, and form large structures, which are called stress granules.

Scientists at the Biotechnology Center (BIOTEC) of the TU Dresden and the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics (MPI-CBG), together with partners

in Heidelberg and St. Louis (USA) have investigated how these mysterious structures assemble and dissolve, and what may cause their transition into a pathological state as observed in neurodegenerative diseases such as ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis). The results of the study have been published in the journal - Cell.

ALS is a hitherto incurable disease of the central nervous system in which the motor neurons - nerve cells responsible for the muscles movement - gradually die.

Stress granules are formed in the cytoplasm of the cell and assemble from a large number of macromolecular components such as messenger RNAs and RNA-binding proteins.

'This Wasn't Just Flu, We Were Attacked,' Says Trump As US' COVID-19 Deaths Cross 47,000

Press Trust Of India

WASHINGTON: Struggling to restore normalcy in the US where COVID-19 has claimed the lives of more than 47,000 people and infected over 8,52,000, President Donald Trump has said that the the country was "attacked".

"We were attacked. This was an attack. This wasn't just the flu by the way. Nobody has ever seen anything like this, 1917 was the last time," Trump told reporters at his daily White House news conference on Wednesday.

He was responding to a question about the growing US national debt as a result of the



multi-trillion dollars stimulus packages that his administration has come up with to help people and businesses in distress as a direct fallout of the pandemic.

"We have no choice. Do we have a choice? I'm always concerned about everything. We had to fix this problem," he said.

"We had the greatest economy in the history of the world... Better than China, better than any place," he said.

"We built it in the last three years and then one day, they came and they said you

have to close it. Now, we're going to open it again and we're going to be just as strong or stronger but you have to spend some money to get it back open," he said.

"We saved our airlines. We saved numerous companies that are great companies that two months ago were having the best year they've ever had. Now all of a sudden, they're totally shut out of markets," he added.

Trump said the number of new positive cases continue to decline nationwide.

"Recent hotspots appear to be stabilising. They are going in the right direction. Cases in the Boston area are now declining. The Chicago curve appears to have flattened, which is terrific... Detroit has passed its peak," he said.

"These trends demonstrate that our aggressive strategy to battle the virus is working and that more states will soon be in a position to gradually and safely reopen. That's very exciting," he asserted.

Trump said that his administration is working closely with governors to ensure that they have the testing infrastructure in place to reduce further spread of the virus if they're so inclined to use the testing apparatus, including strategies for older individuals, low income Americans, minorities, and Native Americans.

"I'll not rest until that prosperity has been fully restored. I really believe that we're going to lift those numbers higher than ever before, and it will be as long as people might think," he said.

Trapped By Virus, Foreign Labourers In Gulf Fall Sick

Agencies

DUBAI: Long a lifeline for families back home, migrant workers in oil-rich Gulf Arab states now find themselves trapped by the coronavirus pandemic, losing jobs, running out of money and desperate to return to their home countries as Covid-19 stalks their labor camps.

Whether on the island of Bahrain, hidden in the industrial neighborhoods behind Dubai's skyscrapers or in landlocked cities of Saudi Arabia, a growing number of workers have contracted the virus or been forced into mass quarantines. Many have been put on unpaid leave or fired.

The United Arab Emirates is even threatening the laborers' home countries that won't take them back with possible quotas on workers in the future something that would endanger a crucial source of remittances for South Asian countries.

Some 35 million laborers work in the six Arab Gulf states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as in Jordan and Lebanon, according to U.N. figures. Foreigners far outnumber locals in the Gulf states, accounting for over 80% of the population in some countries.

Gulf states have increased coronavirus testing for residents and citizens alike. The UAE, for example, says 10,000 workers are being screened daily in Abu Dhabi's industrial district.

Many of the migrants hold low-paying construction jobs, laboring in scorching heat to transform the region's deserts into cities teeming with highways, skyscrapers, luxury hotels and marbled malls. Others work as cleaners, drivers, waiters and in jobs traditionally shunned by locals. Women often find jobs as nannies or maids.

The virus represents a new danger, especially in their living quarters. Krishna Kumar, the head of the Abu Dhabi-based Kerala Social Center, named after the Indian state from which many laborers come, said up to 10 workers share a room in some labor camps in the region.



UN Chief: Pandemic Is Fast Becoming A 'Human Rights Crisis'

Press Trust Of India

United Nations: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Thursday that the coronavirus pandemic is a human crisis that is fast becoming a human rights crisis.

The UN chief said in a video message that there is discrimination in the delivery of public services to tackle COVID-19 and there are structural inequalities that impede access to them.

Guterres said the pandemic has also seen disproportionate effects on certain communities, the rise of hate speech, the targeting of vulnerable groups, and the risks of heavy-handed security responses undermining the health response.

He warned that with rising ethno-nationalism, populism, authoritarianism and a push back against human rights in some countries, the crisis can provide a pretext to adopt repressive measures for purposes unrelated

to the pandemic.

In February, Guterres issued a call to action to countries, businesses and people to help renew and revive human rights across the globe, laying out a seven-point plan amid concerns about climate change, conflict and repression.

As I said then, human rights cannot be an afterthought in times of crisis and we now face the biggest international crisis in generations," he said.

The secretary-general said he was releasing a report Thursday on how human rights must guide the response to the virus and recovery from the pandemic. Neither he nor the report name any countries or parties responsible for human rights violations.

Guterres said governments must be transparent, responsive and accountable, and stressed that press freedom, civil society organizations, the private sector and civic space are essential.

World could face multiple famines of biblical proportions due to COVID-19: UN body

Yoshita Singh | PTI

United Nations: The UN food relief agency has warned that the world is on the brink of a "hunger pandemic" and could face multiple famines of biblical proportions within few months if nations don't act now to avoid funding shortfalls and disruptions to trade due to COVID-19, which continues to spread unabated.

The novel coronavirus, which originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December last, has so far infected over 2,565,290 people and claimed more than 177,770 lives.

While dealing with a COVID-19 pandemic, we are also on the brink of a hunger pandemic," David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), said at a virtual session of the UN Security Council on the "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Protecting Civilians Affected by Conflict-Induced Hunger" on Tuesday.

"There are no famines yet. But I must warn you that if we don't prepare and act now -- to secure access, avoid funding shortfalls and disruptions to trade -- we could be facing multiple famines of biblical proportions within a short few months," he said.

Beasley said with COVID-19, the world not only faces a global health pandemic but also a global humanitarian catastrophe.

Millions of civilians living in conflict-scarred nations, including many women and children, face being pushed to the brink of starvation, with the spectre of famine a very real and dangerous possibility, he noted.

Beasley said 821 million people go to bed chronically hungry every night all over the world. A further 135 million people are facing crisis levels of hunger or worse.

"But now the World Food Programme analysis shows that due to coronavirus, an additional 130 million people could be pushed to the brink

of starvation by the end of 2020. That's a total of 265 million people," he said.

Noting that the global spread of COVID-19 this year has sparked "the worst humanitarian crisis since World War-II", Beasley pointed to deepening crises, more frequent natural disasters and changing weather patterns, saying, "We're already facing a perfect storm."

WFP currently offers a lifeline to nearly 100 million people -- up from about 80 million just a few years ago.

"If we can't reach these people with the life-saving assistance they need, our analysis shows that 300,000 people could starve to death every single day over a three-month period. This does not include the increase of starvation due to COVID-19," Beasley said.

He called on the Security Council to "act now" and "lead the way", saying the world needs peace first and foremost to deal with the challenges.

Race for vaccine picks up as Germany, UK start trials

Agencies

BERLIN: The race to develop an effective vaccine against the novel coronavirus gathered pace this week, as clinical trials on humans were approved in Germany and launched in the UK.

Though there are now around 150 development projects worldwide, the German and British plans are among only five clinical trials on humans which have been approved across the globe.

In Britain, volunteers in a trial at the University of Oxford are set to be given on Thursday the first dose of a potential vaccine based on a virus found in chimpanzees.

Meanwhile on Wednesday, German regulatory body PEI green-lighted the country's first trials on human volunteers for a vaccine developed by German firm Biontech and US giant Pfizer.

The Oxford trial, run by the university's Jenner Institute, will involve 510 volunteers aged between 18 and 55 in the first phase.

Research director Professor Sarah Gilbert estimated that it has around an 80 percent chance of being successful.

The institute aims to develop a million doses of the vaccine by September, so as to distribute it as quickly as possible after approval.

The Oxford trial is part of

a nationwide effort in the UK which since Friday has been spearheaded by a government taskforce. In Germany, meanwhile, the PEI said its approval of the Biontech trial marked a "significant step" in making a vaccine "available as soon as possible".

In the first phase, it will see "200 healthy volunteers aged between 18 and 55 years" vaccinated with variants of the vaccine, while the second phase could see the inclusion of volunteers who belonged to high-risk groups.

On Wednesday, Biontech CEO Ugur Sahin told a press conference that tests would begin "at the end of April".

He added that the firm expected to have collected first data by "the end of June or beginning of July".

Biontech also said that they and Pfizer hoped to gain regulatory approval soon to test the same vaccine candidate in the US.

The PEI meanwhile claimed that "further clinical trials of Covid-19 vaccine candidates will start in Germany in the next few months".

There are currently no approved vaccines or medication for the Covid-19 disease, which has killed more than 170,000 people worldwide and infected more than two million.

Experts estimate that it will take at least 12 to 18 months to develop a new vaccine.

UK: People of Indian origin among ethnic groups worst affected by COVID-19

Agencies

Washington: People of Indian origin in the UK have emerged as the worst-affected ethnic group from the coronavirus pandemic, according to official data on COVID-19 deaths in hospitals across England.

death toll disparity among the BAME population.

"We have seen, both across the population as a whole but in those who work in the NHS, a much higher proportion who've died from minority backgrounds and that really worries me," said UK health



Figures released this week by the National Health Service (NHS) show that of the 13,918 patients who died in hospitals till April 17 after testing positive for the novel coronavirus, 16.2 per cent were of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background and those identifying with Indian ethnicity made up 3 per cent of that.

This was followed by Caribbeans as the second-largest ethnic group affected in the COVID-19 death toll at 2.9 per cent, followed by Pakistanis at 2.1 per cent. The data, only a limited snapshot of the UK-wide COVID-19 tests, follows the British government's announcement of a review into the coronavirus

secretary Matt Hancock while launching the review last week.

The proportion of deaths among BAME groups is much higher compared with their roughly 13 per cent make-up of the total population.

A further breakup shows COVID-19 deaths among those identifying with white ethnicity at 73.6 per cent and mixed ethnicity at 0.7 per cent.

Of the 16.2 per cent BAME figures, those of Bangladeshi ethnicity are at 0.6 per cent, any other Asian background 1.6 per cent, African 1.9 per cent, any other black background 0.9 per cent, Chinese 0.4 per cent and any other ethnic group 2.8 per cent.

US vaccine expert says he was removed for opposing Trump-backed chloroquine

The head of the US agency in charge of developing a vaccine against coronavirus said on Wednesday that he was removed from his job for opposing the chloroquine treatment promoted by US President Donald Trump.

Dr Rick Bright said he was removed on Tuesday as director of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, the government agency for developing and procuring treatments and vaccines, and moved to a lesser position in the National Institutes of Health.

"I believe this transfer was in response to my insistence that the government invest the billions of dollars allocated by Congress to address the Co-



vid-19 pandemic into safe and scientifically vetted solutions, and not in drugs, vaccines and other technologies that lack scientific merit," he said in a statement to US media.

He said the move was a

direct response to his resistance to "misguided directives" to support the use of malaria treatments chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine for coronavirus.

Those treatments, he said,

were "promoted by the administration as a panacea," but "clearly lack scientific merit".

"While I am prepared to look at all options and to think 'outside the box' for effective treatments, I rightly resisted efforts to provide an unproven drug on demand to the American public."

Since mid-March Trump, backed by the conservative Fox News channel, has advocated for the use of chloroquine to treat Covid-19 infections, with scant evidence from studies of its safety or effectiveness.

Despite his own science advisors suggesting more study is needed, Trump repeatedly pushed for the drugs' use, claiming the treatment could be a "gift from God" to counter the coronavirus pandemic.

Two pet cats test positive for Covid19 in New York



positive," the two agencies said in a joint statement.

The agencies said that both pets had mild respiratory illness and are expected to make a full recovery. COVID19 infections have been reported in very few animals worldwide and mostly in those that had close contact with a person with COVID-19.

Even as public health officials are still learning about

the virus, there is no evidence that pets play a role in spreading coronavirus to humans in the United States.

Therefore, there is no justification in taking measures against companion animals that may compromise their welfare. Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals, including pets, could be affected, the statement said.

Routine testing of animals is not recommended at this time, it said, adding that if other animals are confirmed positive for coronavirus in the country, the USDA will post the findings.

State animal health and public health officials will take the lead in making de-

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