



Maximum : 24°C
Minimum : 13°C
Humidity : 52%

SUNSET
Today 07:15 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 05:41 AM

OBSERVER

23rd year OF PUBLICATION

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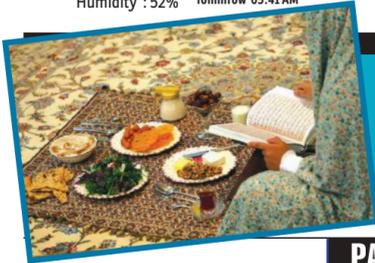
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HOW THE DEPRIVATION OF RAMAZAN HELPS CARE FOR THE SPIRIT

For Muslims, the afterlife guides much of our spirituality. Die before you die, the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) once said. As in: Let that ego go, divorce yourself from your earthly body, seek oneness with God and radiate kindness, humility and compassion. Rabia of Basra, a Muslim saint and Sufi mystic, (who was said to have greatly influenced Rumi, the great Persian Muslim poet) wrote: Ironic, but one of the most intimate acts of our body is death.....

.....PANORAMA
P5



News Digest

| 07 TH RAMAZAN | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| | IFTAR TODAY | SEHRI TOMMOROW |
| FIQAH JAFARIYA | 07:25 | 04:08 |
| FIQAH HANAFIYA | 07:17 | 04:10 |

BOSE Chairperson Gets 2 Month Extension

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday gave further extension of two months to chairperson of Board of School Education (BOSE), Prof. Veena Pandita. The government had last month given one month extension to Prof. Veena Pandita due to delay in appointing new head of the prestigious body. The government has constituted a high-level panel for appointment of BOSE head. (KNO)

Soldier Among 3 Killed In Indian Firing: Pak

Srinagar: A Pakistan Army soldier and two civilians were killed in Indian firing in the Kailer and Rakhchikri sectors in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, Geo TV quoting Pakistani military reported on Thursday. Quoting a statement from army's media wing ISPR, the report said that 34-year-old Lance Naik Ali Baz was killed when Indian army targeted Pakistani posts with automatic and heavy weapons in Kailer Sector. The report also claimed that two civilians, P-02

23 Booked For Lockdown Violation

Srinagar: Police on Thursday said that 23 people, including two shopkeepers were arrested while 25 vehicles were seized for defying government orders imposed to combat coronavirus spread. Five people were arrested and the same number of vehicles seized in Karan Nagar area of Srinagar for defying government orders, a police spokesperson said. In the adjacent Shaheed Gunj, P-02

3 Narcotics Smugglers Held In Rajouri

Jammu: Police on Thursday foiled a bid to smuggle narcotics with the arrest of three persons in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district and recovered three kilograms of cannabis, officials said. A police team headed by Deputy Superintendent of Police (Headquarter) Surinder Khadyar, which was on a routine check at Khandli Bridge Chowk in Rajouri, signalled a load carrier vehicle to stop but the driver along with two more associates P-02

PAGE 1 Anchor

Waiting For Evacuation: Stranded Kashmiris Ask - 'Is There Someone?'



JyotsnaBharti

JAISALMER, Rajasthan - Grappling with homecoming longing in the sweltering quarantine centre, Masooma Moosavi had never thought that her predicament will force her to put up an uncanny bio on her twitter handle: 'When you're stuck in a quarantine facility for more than 40 days, you end up signing in

anywhere possible! So here I am.' It's already been 47 days since the young girl was quarantined at Jaisalmer army accommodation after being evacuated from Iran along with 34 students and 12 pilgrims. And now, Masooma is among 14 girls asked to leave the quarantine facility and embark on 1135 km road journey to Kashmir on their own. "All they said they could do for us was arrange a local bus that would drop us to Srinagar," Masooma said. "By arranging a local bus I

mean they'll help us contact the driver, rest we've to pay ourselves. This is not what our parents were promised! More than a month has passed and we're still not home!"

The young girl has been sending SOS-tweets to India's Foreign Minister S Jaishanker as well as Srinagar Magistrate, Shahid Chowdhary. "Is there someone?" she wrote on her twitter handle, floated during her unending quarantine period to plead for her tribe's case. "Sometimes I wonder what special

material Allah used when he was creating us," she said. "Tested negative 4 times; completed 3 quarantine in Jaisalmer's scorching heat; were left behind without any logical reason and still here we're in search of a spark of hope!"

Her tweets lately caught attention of a young J&K congressman, who sought Sachin Pilot's intervention in the case. Responding to the growing outcry of stranded Kashmiris, J&K government spokesperson, Rohit

Kansal, said that people need to be patient, as "we are reaching out". But as Masooma's pleas have so far fallen on deaf ears, she's anticipating a long haul. "And the count is going to increase as I have complete faith in mis-managing skills of our higher officials," she rues.

The homecoming despondency is growing despite Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) allowing stranded pilgrims, students, labourers to take up P-02

SOMETIMES I WONDER WHAT SPECIAL MATERIAL ALLAH USED WHEN HE WAS creating us," she said. "Tested negative 4 times; completed 3 quarantine in Jaisalmer's scorching heat; were left behind without any logical reason and still here we're in search of a spark of hope!"

Govt Says Covid-19 Spread Slowing Down In J&K

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Claiming that the spread of coronavirus has significantly slowed down, the Jammu and Kashmir administration said Thursday that there was no room for complacency as the situation demands extra watchfulness. "We continue to have a number

of red zones and we need to be ever alert and watchful. Premature exuberance or celebration can cost us very dear", Kansal told reporters here at a press conference. "Our current position may appear comfortable but let me remind you that we are dealing with an unpredictable and dangerous enemy" he added.

Kansal was flanked by Commissioner Secretary Industries Manoj Kumar Dwivedi, Mission Director NHM Bhopinder Kumar and Director Information and Public Relations Dr. Syed Sehrish Asgar. The government spokesperson said that the UT has a good report card so far in the overall Covid-19 situation. He said a report of this morning has showed that the UT's testing rates continue to be among the highest while our percentage rise continues to be low resulting in a high doubling rate which is over 12 days. "The daily positivity rate has shown a downward trend and the doubling rate of positive cases has decidedly slowed down," Kansal said, adding "Our mortality is just above 1%, which is quite low given the number of cases. The most notable part is that over 92% of the cases can be traced. P-02



WE TOO HAVE A NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND LABOURERS stranded outside the UT who have started returning back home. Adequate precautions are being taken while allowing them inside the UT. There is no room for complacency,"

J&K Govt Issues SOP For Regulating Movement Of Stranded Persons

Those coming from red zones, hotspot areas to be put under administrative quarantine for 21 days, others to be home quarantined: Govt



Observer News Service

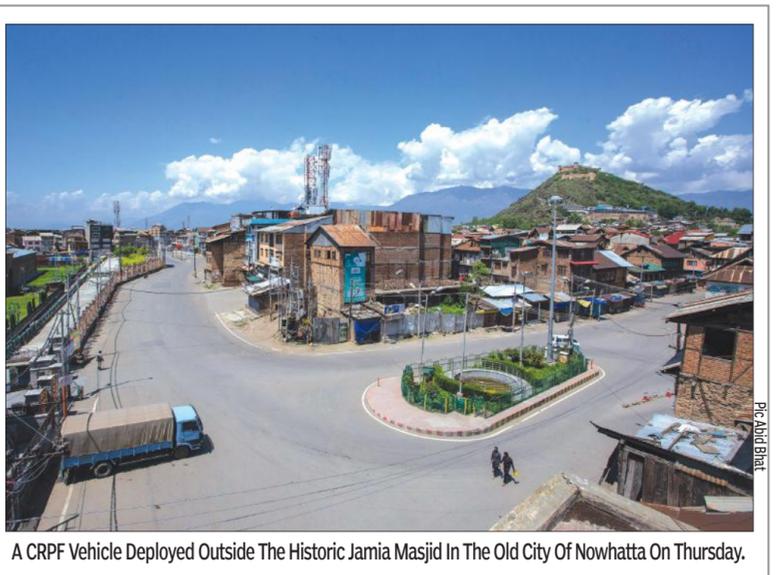
SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir government on Thursday issued Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for regulating the movement of stranded residents of J&K from outside the Union Territory.

In an order the government issued SOP to be followed by the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir for regulating the movement of stranded people, including migrant workers, students and others. As per the order the P-02

Covid-19 Cases Cross 600-Mark In J&K As 33 More Test Positive In Kashmir

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The number of coronavirus patients crossed 600-mark in Jammu and Kashmir as thirty three more people tested positive for the Pandemic in Valley on Thursday. "Thirty three new cases have been reported from Kashmir in the last 24 hours," the officials said, adding that equal twenty four more patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals. Among fresh cases, twelve are from Anantnag, eleven from Baramulla, four from Kulgam, two each from Srinagar and Pulwama and P-02



A CRPF Vehicle Deployed Outside The Historic Jamia Masjid In The Old City Of Nowhatta On Thursday.

J&K Govt Winds Up Vigilance Commission

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday issued a formal order announcing the winding up of Jammu and Kashmir Vigilance Commission that was constituted under the Jammu and Kashmir State Vigilance Commission Act 2011.

In the fresh order issued by General Administration Department, it has been mentioned that the Jammu and Kashmir Vigilance Commission is wound up pursuant to the repeal of Jammu and Kashmir State Vigilance Commission Act, 2011 in terms of Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Adaptation of state laws) order, 2020. The GAD further ordered that the staff of JKs Vigilance Commission drawn from various departments shall report to their concerned Ad-

ministrative department. The staff drawn from various corporations, PSUs, organizations and posted in Vigilance Commission have also been asked to report to the department and organisation concerned. Furthermore, a committee comprising of Financial Advisor / CAO and under-secretary posted in commission shall handover the record, electronic equipment, books and other miscellaneous items to Director Anti-Corruption Bureau of Jammu and Kashmir for safe custody afterwards. It has also been ordered that building of commission shall be handed over to Director Estates along with the furniture items and Genset facility. The above mentioned committed shall also handover the vehicles of commission to Director JK Motor Garages-(KNO)

IT HAS ALSO BEEN ORDERED THAT building of commission shall be handed over to Director Estates along with the furniture items and Genset facility.

NIA Arrests One More In DySP's Case

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested one person, alleged to be an arms dealer, in connection with the case pertaining to the arrest of now suspended Deputy Superintendent of Police Davinder Singh who was nabbed by police for driving militants out of the Kashmir Valley earlier this year. The arrested person has been identified as Tariq Mir and has been sent to six days of NIA custody by the court, they said. Mir, a resident of Shopian in South Kashmir, was arrested in Jammu and is alleged to have been indulging in arms supply to various militant groups. Earlier this year in January, the DySP was arrested along with two militants and an overground worker while he was driving them out of the Kashmir Valley to Chandigarh. He was suspended following his arrest.



US Says Remdesivir Shows 'Clear-Cut' Effect In Treating Coronavirus

Agencies

WASHINGTON: COVID-19 patients who took the antiviral remdesivir recovered about 30 percent faster than those on a placebo, the results of a major clinical trial showed Wednesday, as the top US epidemiologist hailed the drug's "clear-cut" benefit. The finding represents the first time any medication has been shown to improve outcomes against the COVID-19 illness, which has claimed more than 220,000 lives globally and ground the world economy to a halt.

The US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which oversaw the trial, said that patients on the drug made by Gilead Sciences had a 31 percent faster time to recovery than those on a placebo. "Specifically, the median time to recovery was 11 days for patients treated with remdesivir compared with 15 days for those who received placebo," it said.

For Anthony Fauci, who leads the NIAID and has been one of the government's point people during the crisis, "the data shows that remdesivir has a clear-cut, significant, positive effect in diminishing the time to recovery." "Although a 31 percent improvement doesn't seem like a knockout 100 percent, it is a very important P-02



Quiet Burials, Hidden Identity Features Of New SOP To Deal With Kashmir Militancy

Observer Monitoring Desk

Srinagar: Concealing identity of militants slain in gunfights and preventing their public funeral, besides keeping a close watch on social media users are some of the features of the newly introduced Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to tackle militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, media reports said Thursday. Under the new SOP, the identity of the militants killed in gun-battles with the army will not be made public and it will be ensured that the slain remain unidentified, India Today reported quoting official sources. The report also says that the security agencies won't name the outfit to stop publicity of the militants' and halt the recruitment of young boys. The aim, according to the report quoting senior police officer, was to "starve militants of publicity they seek"

Also, the report says that the credit of anti-militancy operations will be shared by all the security forces and such an operation will be termed "joint". The second most important feature of the new SOP is to prevent funeral procession of militants and their burial at local graveyards, India Today reported quoting official sources.

Teen Killed In Cross-LoC Shelling In Poonch

Agencies

SRINAGAR: A teenager on Thursday was killed after India and Pakistan troops traded gunfire along the line of control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir. 16-year-old Gulfaraz, son of Mohammad Rashid of Tain Mankote was hit by a shell when the two estranged armies were exchanging heavy P-02

EMI: JK Bank Continues To Debit Accounts Of Borrowers Amid Lockdown

Agencies

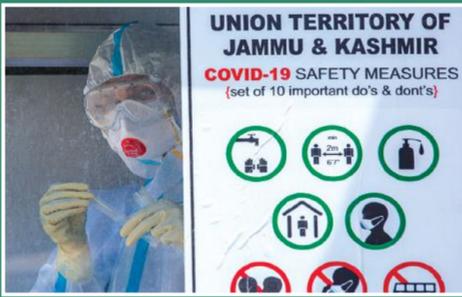
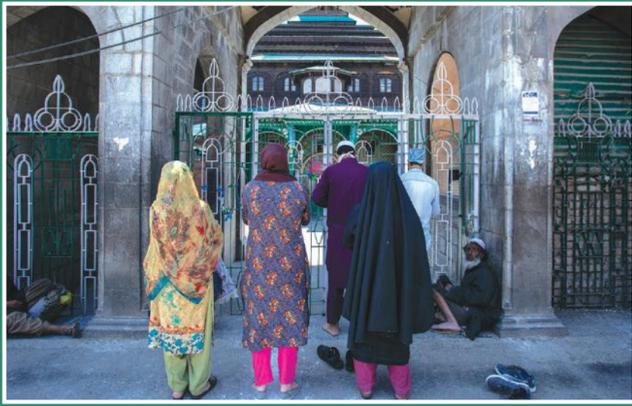
SRINAGAR: Bank borrowers, including small businesses, startups and individuals, who have sought EMI deferment, are finding that their accounts are getting debited. All borrowers from Jammu Kashmir Bank are complaining that RBI directions, the Bank continued to debit their accounts in times of harsh lockdown period. Muhammad Iqbal from Rajbagh, who is a contractor by profession, said that he like many others have not sought EMI deferment, but were hoping that their accounts will not get debited due to emerging crisis. "We were wrong, Jammu Kashmir Bank didn't show any courtesy and continued to debit the accounts of borrowers," he said.



An entrepreneur Adil Ahmed who employs over 12 people in his venture said that he had asked for a deferment of his monthly EMI, as early as April 1. However, the amount was debited from his account on April 29. Reyzah Ahmed said that he had taken a car loan and the monthly EMI is Rs 14,295. Despite requesting for deferment my account got debited." "I have an EMI debit of Rs 4,500 on the end of every month for P-02

From Front page...

KASHMIR OBSERVER Lensman Abid Bhat Captures Different Shades Of Life Amid Lockdown In Srinagar On Thursday.



Waiting For Evacuation...

interstate road journey and return to their homes. The government even floated the helpline numbers and appointed IAS officer Niraj Kumar as crisis manager. But while the move is likely to help over 40,000 J&K residents stranded across 18 Indian states, the union territory administration is following its separate relaxation schedule. It's likely to come up with guidelines and SOP on movement of the students and workers shortly. Already, the government has set up four quarantine centres in Kathua and Samba districts for people coming from outside. From last four days, said AjeetSahu, Commissioner Secretary, Jai Shakti department, a total of 6,355 labourers and students have been stranded. But given the magnitude of lockdown crisis and count of stranded people outside the valley, civil society members are coming in support of stranded Kashmiris, asking government to clear decks for their homecoming. Amid these advocacy measures, the distress calls seeking evacuation are continuously coming from different parts of India and the world. One such call recently came from Bangladesh. The caller was speaking from Benapole on the India-Bangladesh border, where about 80 students have been stranded. "We told them that they can't cross the border due to lockdown," said a government official. "We advised them [students] to go back to their hostels for a time being." But students tell some other story. "How can we go back to our hostels when we were asked to vacate the same by the college administration in Bangladesh," one of the students said. "We stuck at border, as we aren't being allowed to enter the Indian side. We're literally on the road. Please help us!" The similar desperate scenes for homecoming are being witnessed in other Indian cities. In Bhopal, for instance, 250 Kashmiri students are stuck and are demanding immediate evacuation. "We talked to District Development Commissioner Bhopal who in turn informed Government of India, but till date, nothing has been done to give us a respite," said a student Muzaffar Hussain. Most of these stranded students in Bhopal are hailing from Central Kashmir's Budgam district. "We don't know how long this lockdown will continue," Hussain said. "But we're already feeling a mental breakdown. Far from home, in this crisis, we are only getting anxious and fretful." Many of these stranded Kashmiris have grown unnerved after some of their brethren faced identity-based hate attacks in Jaipur. Earlier, a bunch of woeful Kashmiri girls running out of ration in Delhi's HauzKhas sought J&K government's support for immediate evacuation. Stuck in a hostel, these Kashmiri girls said they were ill-treated and harassed for rent, which they aren't able to pay amid pandemic lockdown. "There's no one for us here," a Kashmiri girl

said appealing for evacuation. "We're helpless. We want to go home. We're suffering from mental agony here." Clearly, as the issue is fast snowballing into an outcry despite what many say the "late and little" official response, many Kashmiri unionists have jumped on the bandwagon. "It's been frustrating to not do as much, as one would have liked for them [stranded Kashmiris]," said Omar Abdullah, former JK CM. Earlier, the former union minister SaifuddinSoz beseeched Raj Bhavan to come to the rescue of the 3000-odd stranded Kashmiri labourers in Kangra and other areas of Himachal Pradesh. "They want to return to their homes in Kupwara and other districts of Kashmir as they are unemployed and were exposed to hardships of life," Soz said after receiving distress calls from the stranded labourers on April 19, 2020. Even the Marxist leader, Mohammad Yousuf-Tarigami, in a letter to Lt Governor G C Murmu, said the lockdown imposed to prevent the spread of the disease has resulted in hundreds of Kashmiri labourers and students getting stuck in various states of the country, including Punjab, Harayana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, UP and other states. But despite these calls for help, the cries for homecoming are only getting loud and desperate. "In this lockdown, we're running out of money," Firdous Ahmad, a Kashmiri trader stuck in Delhi said. "Please evacuate us immediately." Only in New Delhi, 11,000 Kashmiris, as per the official figures, are stranded at the moment. Some of them even approached media agencies to help them to get evacuated. But when it didn't help, they decided to use social media to plead for their case. "There're around 2000 of us here," Gowher Mir, a Kashmiri trader stranded in Goa, said. "Some of us working in remote corners [of Goa] are running out of resources now. We want to go back home. Our families are getting worried for us, so are we in this crisis situation."

Govt Says Covid-19 Spread Slowing...

All these are positive factors," he added. Kansal said that many neighbouring states have learnt the hard way when they have seen their cases show a sudden jump when many of their returning citizens tested positive. "We too have a number of students and labourers stranded outside the UT who have started returning back home. Adequate precautions are being taken while allowing them inside the UT. There is no room for complacency," he added. He said the government was following an aggressive testing strategy and continues to be among the top few regions in the country in this regard. He said that the testing capacity has expanded from 1 lab to 4 labs, and the testing rate is now about 1500 per million, one of the highest in the country. "We have also been continuously ramping up our facilities- we started with less than 100 tests daily; a few days ago we broke the 1000 tests per day barrier," he said and added "Yesterday we

conducted 1800 tests and We will shortly break the 2000 tests/day barrier". He expressed gratitude to people for the excellent cooperation in restricting the movement and helping maintain an effective lockdown. "This has helped us to slow the spread of the virus and put in place a strong containment strategy" Kansal added.

J&K Govt Issues SOP For Regulating

government has nominated Shaleen Kabra, Principal Secretary, Home, government of Jammu and Kashmir as the Nodal Officer for the movement of stranded persons and he shall coordinate with nodal officers of other states. "All inward and outward movement will be undertaken only with the prior permission of the Nodal Officer of J&K or those designated by him. Any person arriving at borders without permission of the Nodal Officer will be put under administrative quarantine for 21 days at Lakhapur," reads the order. The order states that those coming from non-red zones will be medically screened and put under strict home quarantine for a period of 21 days. It also states that those persons coming from red zone and hotspot areas will be put under administrative quarantine for 21 days. The order states that all incoming persons either through regulated movement or otherwise will be tested for Covid-19 virus and health department will make necessary arrangements for lifting of samples at Lakhapur and various districts to meet the requirements and to do pool testing of these samples. "Based on the results of these tests, a decision on shifting persons from administrative quarantine to home quarantine will be taken by concerned DCs / Div Coms in consultation with concerned CMOs/DHSS," the order reads.

Covid-19 Cases Cross 600-Mark

one each from Shopian and Budgam districts. The total number of positive cases in Jammu and Kashmir has now risen to 614. Of the total number of cases reported so far, 556 are from Kashmir and 58 from Jammu. Eight people (seven in Kashmir and one in Jammu) have died and 216 patients (165 from Kashmir and 51 from Jammu) have recovered. The number of active cases stands at 390 (384 in Kashmir and 6 in Jammu). More than 70,000 people have been kept under surveillance including those who are either in government established quarantine facilities or in home isolation. Meanwhile, the media bulletin issued by the government today issued an advisory asking people not to use spray, bleach or any disinfectant into the body to prevent covid-19. "These substances can be poisonous if ingested and cause irritation and damage to your skin and eyes. Bleach and disinfectant should be used

carefully to disinfect inanimate surfaces only. Remember to keep chlorine (bleach) and other disinfectants out of the reach of children."

Us Says Remdesivir Shows 'Clear-Cut'

proof of concept because what it has proven is that a drug can block this virus," he told reporters at the White House. The results also suggested that people who were on the drug were less likely to die, although the difference was small. The mortality rate was 8.0 percent for the group receiving remdesivir versus 11.6 percent for the placebo group. The trial began on February 21 and involved 1,063 people across 68 locations in the United States, Europe and Asia. Neither the patients nor their physicians were aware of which group they belonged to, in order to eliminate unconscious bias. Peter Horby, an epidemiologist at the University of Oxford who was not involved in the study, said: "We need to see the full results, but if confirmed this would be a fantastic result and great news for the fight against COVID-19." President Donald Trump, who described the news as a "positive event," said he supported an emergency use authorization for the drug, which would allow doctors to prescribe it more widely. The CEO of Gilead Sciences, the US laboratory that manufactures remdesivir, Daniel O'Day, said the company plans to donate the 1.5 million doses they have in stock enough to treat at least 140,000 patients. The company would then sell the drug at an "affordable" price, he told the health news site Stat.

Quiet Burials, Hidden Identity..

report says. However, a decision to allow hand-family members to attend funeral in presence of cops has been approved. Besides it, the report says strict vigil on social media by cyber police is also the new feature of the SOP. And also intensified anti-militancy operations using of technology and human intelligence is also something the forces have been told to go ahead with. **Teen Killed In Cross-LoC Shelling** gunfire along the LoC in Mankote, reports said. A class 12 student, the teen died instantly after being hit by a shell. The incident occurred when the teenager was returning from nearby fields after grazing cattle. "The Pakistani troopers violated the ceasefire in the area by attacking Indian posts and the civilian population in the area. The teen was hit by a shell fired by Pakistani troops," SDPO Mendhar NeerajPadyar told news agency GNS.

He said that a police party was immediately deputed to the area.

EMI: JK Bank Continues To...

my LCD loan. I am jobless but somehow arrange the amount. I was hoping the bank will not debit my account this time, but I was wrong," Tanvir Ahmed said. An official from Jammu Kashmir Bank said that in wake of Covid-19 threat, Bank is operating under reduced staff strength and processing delays, say they are working on delaying debits so that they can attend to all the moratorium requests. (KNT)

Soldier Among 3 Killed In Indian ...

including a teenage girl were killed and two others injured in a ceasefire violation by Indian army in Rakchikri Sector. According to the report, the killings took place hours after Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited the LoC and took stock of the situation.

23 Booked For Lockdown Violation

two shopkeepers were arrested for breaking lockdown orders. "Nine persons were arrested and five vehicles were seized in the areas falling under the jurisdiction of police station Sadder. Besides a butcher was also arrested in Chanapora area for selling meat at exorbitant rates," the spokesperson said. He said cases under relevant sections of law have been registered and further investigation into the cases has been initiated. In Sopore, police seized 15 vehicles for violating government orders, while in Kulgam seven people were arrested for defying prohibitory orders, the police spokesperson added.

3 Narcotics Smugglers Held...

abandoned the vehicle on the road and tried to flee from the spot, they said. "Alert cops chased all three (persons) and managed to nab them at some distance and during frisking, a consignment of three kilograms of cannabis was recovered from the possession of these three persons," police further said. They have been identified as Deepak, Sonu Sharma and Shami Kumar, they said. The vehicle has also been seized whereas a case has been registered in Rajouri police station while an investigation into the matter is going on, they added.

SKIMS Medical College Faculty Accuse Principal Of Misleading Govt, Media

Agencies

Srinagar: The faculty of Sher-e-Kashmir institute of medical sciences (SKIMS) medical college (MC) Srinagar has accused principal of providing misinformation to the government and the media for his personal benefits.

In a representation the faculty of SKIMS medical college Bemina has stated that the vicinity can cater the flow of non-COVID patients who are made to suffer in absence of follow up check-ups and termed the mixing of pregnant non-COVID patients with COVID positive patients unfortunate.

In the representation the faculty has highlighted the failure, misinformation and misunderstanding created by principal SKIMS medical college by projecting the wrong picture of the institution to the higher authorities and media for personal reasons and demanded the mis-information campaign to be investigated.

The faculty has said that due to sudden closure of all specialities patient care including post-operative and other services of every department have been stopped as per the guidelines.

"The patients who have to come for follow up check-ups are moving from pillar to post because they are not allowed to visit the hospital because the hospital has been designated as COVID-19."

The representation reads that few days ago the principal took a unilateral decision to admit all COVID surgical emergencies in the hospital without go-

BoG recommends 50 additional PG seats for GMCs and SKIMS

Srinagar: In a significant development, the Board of Governors, formed in suppression of Medical Council of India, has recommended to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to increase 50 seats in PG courses in Government Medical Colleges and SKIMS Soura in J&K under the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota for 2020-21.

The recommendation, reveals that BOG has proposed to increase 25 seats in GMC Jammu, 19 in GMC Srinagar and six in SKIMS Soura. According to communicate, the total number of seats to be required for

implementation of 10 percent EWS quota in Jammu and Kashmir is 76.

Of which, 17 have been granted under section 10A and 50 to be granted under EWS quota. The move comes after Jammu & Kashmir government submitted a proposal for increasing seat intake capacity in PG courses in GMCs and SKIMS, Soura.

The MCI sought the proposal from J&K government after observing that the seats increased under 10A and /or after conversion of diplomas to degree for the annual year 2020-21 was less than the number of seats needed to be enhanced for implementing EWS quota—(KNO)

should be used to make them achieve a basic level of safety at least."

The representation says that the hospital has been designated to cater the level 2 and 3 COVID patients only. "However this hospital is currently full of patients which can be managed at level 1 centers. This unnecessarily complicates the issue.

As the government tries to restore normalcy, it is important to understand that the consistent admission of level 1 cases is delaying restoration of SKIMS MC to its designated medical college function."

The faculty has also stated that this is extremely stressful and distressing situation where a steady hand is needed and the principal SKIMS MC is proving to be a hindrance in the development of scientific guidelines.

It states that the circumstances and propaganda created by principal has resulted into the whole faculty and staff especially the Gynae department being branded as non-performers.

The faculty of SKIMS MC further recommended that the hospital should gradually open and resume work in phased manner with separate entry and exit to cater COVID and non-COVID patients.

They have demanded the administration to take cognizance of the actual facts on ground and let this institution continue its routine and dedicated work in whichever way the health authorities deem fit—(KNO)

ing into the scientific demerits of such a policy.

"This is mainly COVID committee has been reduced to signing papers under pressure and threats," it said.

"A Frank scientific decision is not allowed with the result some disastrous decisions are implement after 4 PM unilaterally. We are definitely desirous of conducting surgeries on COVID patients

but the medical superintendent has already declared the theatre as unsafe."

It furnished two points to back its surgeries idea saying that the, COVID positive patients needing surgeries should be shared amongst hospitals including SKIMS MC.

"This will ensure less Viral load. The scientific literature overwhelmingly supports this method and the theatres

Validity of ID cards for accredited journalists of Kashmir extended till June 30

Srinagar: In view of Covid-19 pandemic, the department of information and public relations has extended the validity of Identity cards of accredited journalists till June 30, this year.

In an order, the department stated that the validity of ID cards issued for the year 2019-20 has been extended. "Since the department could not issue fresh Identity Cards to the Accredited Journalists due to the lockdown restriction following outbreak of Covid-19, it is hereby ordered that validity of Identity Cards issued to the accredited Journalists for the year 2019-20 may be deemed to have been further extended up to 30.06.2020," reads the order

Police books 21 persons, 02 shopkeepers for defying Govt orders

Srinagar: Acting tough against the violators of Government prohibitory orders, Police in a series of actions have arrested 23 persons including 02 shopkeepers in Srinagar, Sopore and Kulgam besides, arrested a butcher for selling meat at exorbitant rates. Police have also seized 25 vehicles for defying govt orders over COVID-19.

In the jurisdiction of PS Karanagar Srinagar, Police have arrested five persons and seized five vehicles for defying government orders. Cases under relevant sections of law have been registered at PS Karanagar and further investigation into the cases has been initiated.

1.65 lac people covered in four days as COVID-19 health audit continues in Srinagar

SRINAGAR: Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary Thursday held an extensive tour of urban and rural areas across the district to inspect response mechanism put in place in view of the prevailing situation due to COVID-19 outbreak.

He inspected provision of essential services and supplies and the ongoing door-to-door COVID-19 health audit being held across the district.

The DC started his tour with an extensive visit of Downtown areas of the city inspecting response mechanism put in place in red zone areas there. He took a firsthand appraisal of containment efforts and surveillance activities as well as provision of essential supplies and services in these areas.

The visit was one of the many the DC has made in the last two weeks to red zone areas to inspect response mechanism. It is notable that over half of the total number of COVID-19 red zones are in Downtown area of the Srinagar city.

Some of the areas he visited and where he conducted an inspection during his tour there were Khanyar, Rainawari, Hazratbal and Lal Bazar among others.

During the tour Dr Shahid also held an extensive inspection of the health audit going on across the district to determine spread of COVID-19 in the district and decide the



course of action required to be taken to deal with it.

The inspection of the health audit was held in various rural areas some of which were Harwan, Dhara, Theed and Faqir Gujri among others. The DC's inspection of the health audit in rural areas today follows similar inspection in various urban areas in the last two days.

Dr Shahid while visiting various households interacted with the people. In all areas he visited he noted the grievances of the local representatives he interacted with on the occasion and assured them of their immediate redressal.

The residents appreciated the proactive role of the district administration in general and the DC in particular in their efforts to contain spread of the COVID-19 disease and putting in place a mechanism for availability of essential supplies and services in the district.

SMC carries sanitation works, installs 2 decontamination tunnels at Secretariat

SRINAGAR, APRIL 30: In accordance to the order issued by the General Administrative Department (GAD), the Srinagar Municipality Corporation (SMC) carried an extensive sanitation drive at Civil Secretariat, here today.

Besides sanitation works, Secretariat premises was also sanitized during which sanitization chemical mixture was sprayed in order to break the chain of transmission of COVID 19.

According to Commissioner SMC, Gazanfar Ali, SMC has also installed two decontamination tunnels at the entry point of secretariat to ensure visiting persons get sanitized instantly while entering or leaving the secretariat premises.

Furthermore, in compliance with the GAD order and the directions given by Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, P.K Pole in furtherance of the order, the SMC also sanitized the government residential colonies.

Commissioner said that the team of workers of SMC equipped with protective gears and specialized machines completed the sanitation works at government residential colonies.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS
Phone/Fax No: 0194-2443031/ 2443032 (Sgr)
0191-2459209/2459255(JMU)

J&K JAMMU
Website: www.jkpolice.gov.in
EMAIL: PHGUJ@NIC.IN

e-NIT No. 21 of 2020
dated: 29-04-2020

Online e-tenders in two cover system (Technical & Financial Bid) are hereby invited from original manufacturers/authorized dealers (having specific authorization from their original manufacturer/s to quote against this tender (as per format provided in Appendix-I) for finalization of rate contract for supply of **Batteries (Vehicular)** to various subordinate units of J&K Police as detailed in Annexure A to this NIT. (as indicated in the detailed SBD and BOQs). The download of NIT shall start on **29.04.2020 at 1300 hours**. Tenders shall be submitted online on J&K State e-Procurement Portal www.jktenders.gov.in before **29.05.2020 upto 1600 hours**. The samples shall be submitted at Police Central Store, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu before closing date of submission of e-tender. Samples received after the prescribed date or time shall not be accepted.

The tenders (technical bids only) will be opened online on **31.05.2020 at 1100 hours** at Police Headquarters J&K Jammu/Srinagar. In case of unforeseen circumstances, the date of opening will be next working day.

Detailed tender documents (SBD) with terms and conditions are available on J&K State e-Procurement Portal www.jktenders.gov.in.

(Rayees Mohammad Bhat - IPS
AIG (Provision/Transport)
For Director Genral Of Police J&K Jammu)

No: Prov-I/UE-03/2019-20/22301-20
DATED: 29-04-2020 DIPK-393/20

Government of UT of Jammu & Kashmir
Office of The Executive Engineer,
Mechanical Irrigation Construction Division, Gogji Bagh, Srinagar
Phone No. : 0194 - 2310876, Email: exenmicdsrinagar@ifckashmir.com

NOTICE INVITING SHORT TERM e-TENDER
e-NIT No. MICD/14 OF 2020-21 Dated: 27-04-2020.

For and on behalf of Lieutenant Governor UT of J&K, Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Construction Division, Srinagar, invites short term e-tenders valid for 90 days on item rate basis by e-tendering mode in two covers from the reputed, registered and experienced Mechanical SSI unit holders/contractors/fabricators/firms for the following items of work.

| S. No | Name of work. | Estimated Cost of work | Earnest money | Time for completion | Cost of Tender document | Tender receiving authority |
|-------|--|------------------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 1 | Fitting of spares and allied routine maintenance of Pumping Units at Tral Lift Irrigation Scheme Stage 2 nd . | Rs 3,50,000/- | Rs 7000/= | 07days | Rs 200/= | Executive Engineer Mechanical Irrigation Construction Division Srinagar |

Position of funds: Demanded Key/critical Dates:

| Date of Hosting In Website/ Publish date | 27/04/2020 (1600Hrs) |
|--|------------------------|
| Document download/sale start date | 27/04/2020 (1600 Hrs). |
| Bid submission start date | 27/04/2020 (1600Hrs) |
| Bid submission end date | 07/05/2020 (1600 Hrs) |
| Bid opening date | 08/05/2020 (1400 Hrs) |

- Bid documents can be assessed at and downloaded from the websites www.ifckashmir.com / <http://jktenders.gov.in>
- The Bids shall be deposited on the website <http://jktenders.gov.in>
- The complete bidding process will be online <http://jktenders.gov.in>.
- The Technical bid and Financial bid received shall be opened online in the office of Executive Engineer MICD Srinagar on the date given above.
- Bids must be accompanied by bid security and cost of Tender Document as specified above payable at Srinagar, pledged in favour of Executive Engineer MICD Srinagar. Bid security will have to be in form of CDR/FDR of any scheduled Bank and shall have to be valid for one year or more after last date of receipt of Bid. The cost of downloaded tender documents should be in form of DD/GR/TR in favour of Executive Engineer MICD Srinagar payable at Srinagar.
- The hard copies of cost of tender document in shape of DD/GR/TR, Earnest money in shape of CDR /FDR and other relevant documents must be delivered to the office of the Executive Engineer MICD Srinagar up to date and time specified above.
- Only the firms having sound experience in similar type of job can participate in the tendering process. The firm must necessarily possess and upload following documents
 - GST Registration certificate quoting GST No. thereina.
 - BST Clearance of the latest quarter.
 - Copy of DIC registration/ Govt. Contractor registration.
- The bid for the work shall remain open for acceptance for a period of 90 days from the date of opening of bids. If any bidder/tenderer withdraws his bid/tender before the said period or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid, the said earnest money shall stand forfeited.
- The tenderers should inspect the site of work.
- Other details can be seen in the bidding documents from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in>.
- Queries by email if any should be made at exenmicdsrinagar@ifckashmir.com

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Mech. Irri. Construction Division
Srinagar

No: MICD/170-73
Date: 27 -04-2020.

DIPK-393/20

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)

HIJRI CALENDAR
07 Ramazan 1441

PRAYERS

| | |
|--------|-------|
| FAJR | 4:12 |
| ZUHR | 12:28 |
| ASR | 5:17 |
| Magrib | 7:17 |
| ISHA | 8:47 |

This Day In History

- 1947 - Radar for commercial & private planes 1st demonstrated
- 1948 - North Korea proclaims itself Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- 1949 - Gerard Kuiper discovers Nereid, (2nd satellite of Neptune)
- 1951 - 600,000 march for peace & freedom in Germany
- 1956 - A doctor in Japan reports an "epidemic of an unknown disease of the central nervous system", marking the official discovery of Minamata disease.
- 1960 - India's Bombay state split into Gujarat & Maharashtra states
- 1962 - 1st French underground nuclear experiment in the Sahara
- 1965 - USSR launches Luna 5; later impacts on Moon
- 1965 - Battle of Dong-Yin, a naval conflict between ROC and PRC, takes place.
- 1966 - US troops shooting targets in Cambodia
- 1972 - North Vietnamese troops occupy Quang Tri Activities Committee
- 1977 - 36 people are killed in Taksim Square, Istanbul, during the Labour Day celebrations.
- 1978 - Naomi Uemura became 1st to reach North Pole overland alone
- 1984 - Great Britain performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site
- 1985 - US President Reagan ends embargo against Nicaragua
- 1986 - Russian news agency Tass reports Chernobyl nuclear power plant mishap
- 1991 - Angolan civil war ends
- 1991 - Last day of Test cricket for West Indian batsman Gordon Greenidge.
- 1993 - Bomb attack on Sri Lankan president (26 die)
- 1997 - Tony Blair elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
- 2000 - President of the Philippines Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declares existence of "a state of rebellion", after thousands of supporters of her arrested predecessor, Joseph Estrada, storm towards the presidential palace at height of EDSA III rebellion.
- 2003 - In what becomes known as the "Mission Accomplished" speech, U.S. President George W. Bush declares that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended" on board the USS Abraham Lincoln off the coast of California
- 2008 - The London Agreement on translation of European patents, concluded in 2000, enters into force in 14 of the 34 Contracting States to the European Patent Convention.
- 2011 - Pope John Paul II is beatified by his successor, Pope Benedict XVI
- 2012 - China and Russia sign \$15 billion dollar trade deal
- 2012 - Guggenheim Partners make the largest ever purchase of a sports franchise after buying the Los Angeles Dodgers for \$2.1 billion
- 2013 - 15 people are killed by multiple bomb attacks across Iraq
- 2013 - 16 people are killed in a flash flood in Saudi Arabia
- 2013 - A digital camera is created that can mimic insect compound eyes
- 2014 - Hundreds march through Nigerian capital calling for the release of schoolgirls abducted by Islamic militants, Boko Haram, who oppose Western education
- 2015 - Expo 2015 opens in Milan (thru till 31st October)

From KO Archives

Solving Kashmir key to better Indo-Pak ties: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD - Briefing top army commanders on the outcome of his India visit, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has said settlement of the Kashmir issue is the key to betterment of bilateral ties and the confidence building measures (CBMs) have to move in tandem with the progress on the dispute resolution.

"The key to Pak-India relations is die resolution of Kashmir dispute 6m- which Confidence Building Measures and dispute resolution will have to move at tandem," he told the officers at the 58th Formation Commanders conference here last night.

The Formation is regarded as the most influential body in the current power structure in Pakistan. The body meets once in a year to discuss a host of issues relating to policy as well as defence preparedness and promotions at top level.

Musharraf also elaborated on his assertions in New Delhi that the "era of conflict management is over and conflict resolution has to be done with sincerity," according to an official release. He dwelt at length on the prevailing environment encompassing international, regional and national issues, their impact on Pakistan, which preferred both challenges and opportunities and said the time has come for conflict resolution.

"These issues offer both challenges and opportunities to us," it quoted him as saying. With pragmatic policies and careful utilisation of the nation's potential, Pakistan could play an important role and become an important geo-strategic location. Pakistan will continue to play its role in contribute positively to towards' peace and harmony in the region," he said.

(Kashmir Observer, 01, May, 2005)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja
Switchboard: (0194) 2106304
Editorial: (0194) 2502327
Email editorial: editor@kashmirobsver.net

A Fundamental Right

The J&K administration has told the Supreme Court that the right to internet is not a fundamental right and that the degree of access for exercising free speech and for carrying on any trade or business can be curtailed. The administration was responding to the case filed in the court seeking restoration of 4G internet. The administration further told court that the protection of sovereignty and integrity of India and ensuring security of India are sound grounds to bar the access to the internet.

A plea before the Supreme Court by a not-for-profit organization Foundation for Media Professionals said the lack of 4G internet was causing difficulties for the general public during the Covid-19 outbreak. However, the government contended the plea was misconceived as all information related to Covid-19 could be accessed on fixed line internet not barred by speed restrictions. The government said the decision as to whether a controlled access to internet is still warranted depends on the ground situation.

Government's contention goes against the Supreme Court's judgement on January 10 where it termed the access to information and freedom of trade and commerce via internet as fundamental right under the constitution of India. Following this order, the government had eased the ban on internet. Ever since the government has begun a gradual easing of the internet ban. But as things have turned out, this isn't such an easing too.

And this is inflicting a terrible economic cost on Kashmir and almost wrecking education of the children, who neither can study online nor access online classes.

The government, therefore, needs to rethink the internet ban in its entirety. Six months ban is the longest denial of what the apex court has termed as a fundamental right. Kashmir has been largely calm during this period as acknowledged by the government itself. It is time that the government too decides to relax its stranglehold on the freedoms of the people. No matter what the government says, its security argument to keep 4G internet suspended isn't convincing enough. Truth is it has been months since the Valley has witnessed a protest or a stone-throwing incident. So, to say that 4G will pose threat to security doesn't hold water.

Also, government also needs to give people a free access to internet as part of the measures to fight ongoing health emergency. While on the one hand, government has locked the region down so that Covid-19 doesn't spread, it is restricting what should have been its main tool to spread awareness. More than preventive measures, it is how much people are informed about the disease that will help the government to control the disease. Hence the urgent need for a high speed internet.

OTHER OPINION

The Prickly State

In facing the coronavirus challenge, information and ideas are the only ammunition currently available, and should be welcomed and evaluated irrespective of their provenance, whether they originate from within the government or from the public. But a government which has, in better times, sought suggestions directly from the public over the web and through the Prime Minister's app, has become unduly sensitive at a time of grave crisis. When 50 young officers of the Indian Revenue Service forwarded, through their association, policy suggestions, in a report titled FORCE (Fiscal Options and Response to COVID-19 Epidemic) to the Central Board of Direct Taxes and shared them on social media, the Centre termed it as a position "contrary to current policies of government", read it as a breach of service rules and instituted an inquiry against three senior Income Tax officers. Some of the suggestions may be controversial, for instance, a hike in income tax rate to 40 per cent for those earning over Rs 1 crore a year for a limited period of time, but the response is repressive and excessively out of proportion. The officers never claimed that their document was official. Publicly dismissing the controversial suggestions would have sufficed if the government wanted to distance itself from the report.

Meanwhile, public questioning of the government's handling of the pandemic in Manipur has landed several citizens in trouble with the law — police have invoked sections of the Disaster Management Act and the Indian Penal Code, including sedition. In one case, it had merely been suggested that a proposed quarantine centre in Imphal should be moved from agricultural land to a disused airstrip. The deputy chief minister was stripped of all his portfolios, amid a controversy over rice allocation under the National Food Security Act during the coronavirus lockdown, apparently for being critical of the chief minister's assurances of adequate food supply. And in Port Blair, a journalist was booked for asking why the phone contacts of COVID-19 patients were being home quarantined. Instead of arresting him, the authorities could have simply explained that tracing call records is one way of discovering a patient's close contacts.

It is generally agreed that long after lockdowns are lifted, nations will have to remain in close cooperation, so that ideas that work in one place can be borrowed and deployed elsewhere. The principle applies domestically, too. Over-sensitive and prickly responses betray insecurity, precisely when governments must project confidence.

The Indian Express

Shifting Sands? Arab-India Ties In Strain

IT IS an old adage that building relationships and trust takes ages, while destroying them takes few seconds. Recently Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and several other Gulf countries raised red flags demonstrating concerns over instances of Muslims being targeted in India amid the COVID-19 crisis.

Calling on the Indian government to take steps to protect Muslim minorities who are being "negatively profiled," facing "discrimination and violence" amidst the COVID-19 crisis, the 57-member OIC criticised what it called "growing Islamophobia" in India. These remarks came amidst an unhealthy trend of attaching corona virus in India with Muslims and suffixing names like "Jama'ati Virus", "Corona Khan", "Corona Jihad" et al on social media platforms and associated media with rightwing leanings. These recent incidents of toxicity might go a long way in tearing apart the hard earned relationship of trust, faith and reliance that India and the Gulf countries have successful built brick by brick since many years.

Arab-India Ties

History bears testimony to the fact that the relations between India and Gulf have been at its best among all in recent few years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has put a considerable effort in building India's relations with the Arab World and all this started right away from his first tenure way back in 2014. He envisioned a new policy called "Link West" (west of India) which gives it a bigger geographical connotation but it precisely maintained its focus on the Middle East to catapult the relations between the two.

Quite early in his first tenure itself PM Modi deputed the then External Affairs Minister to make frequent trips to Gulf countries in order to cement India's relations with them. Even PM Modi himself made multiple trips to the region, including three visits to the UAE, a trip to Saudi Arabia, as well as the first ever visit to tiny kingdom of Bahrain by an Indian prime minister. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) grouping, as a region, is India's largest trading partner and has more than 7.5 million Indians work in the larger region, sending back over \$55 billion in remittances. PM Modi was also quite successful in balancing his relations with both Iran and Saudi Arabia despite they being at constant loggerheads with each other. This can be gauged by the fact that the day Iranian President was in Delhi meeting with the President of India, PM Modi's External Affairs Minister late Sushma Swaraj was in Saudi Arabia goes on to demonstrate the balancing act Modi Government has been able to achieve which is quite rare in present day diplomacy.

Another remarkable feature of Modi's diplomacy was de-hyphenating the relations with Israel and Palestine. Similarly Modi in 2016 visited Doha on a two-day visit which focused on giving a new push to the economic ties, particularly in the hydrocarbon sector since Qatar country is India's largest supplier of



PM Modi was conferred Saudi's highest civilian honour in 2016.

LNG requirements, accounting for 65 per cent of the country's total imports last financial year.

Relationship Dividends

Enormous amounts of benefits have been reaped by India in the past as a result of hard work that has been put up by the current dispensation in Delhi by cementing these vital ties. Keeping aside the economic benefits, Arab countries have been successful cushion to fall back upon whenever and wherever Pakistan has played its diplomatic ante against India. The personal equation that PM built with two powerful Arab princes like Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan known as MBZ and Prince Muhammad bin Salman aka MBS played a pivotal role when India went ahead to scrap Kashmir of its special status. When Pakistan upped the ante against India before the international community and countries like US, UK, France and European Union expressed concern on the alarming situations in Kashmir, Arabs by and large kept quiet. They rather went a step ahead and dismissed Pakistani pleas and extended direct support for Indian actions in Kashmir. Despite Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi visiting Riyadh after abrogation of Article 370 and seeking support for Pakistan, Saudi Arabia showed a cold shoulder. UAE on the other hand went even set a new precedent and defended India's position on Kashmir. Abu Dhabi declared August 5 move an internal matter of New Delhi which was aimed at "reducing regional disparity and improving efficiency". They also stated that reorganisation of states is not a unique incident in the history of independent India.

All this goes on to show the diplomatic capital India has built with the Gulf countries and the loyalty Gulf has reciprocated to India in times when it needed it the most.

Drifting Apart

But recent events of Muslim bashing and which hunt, especially after the outbreak of covid-19, it appears has shaken the Arab conscience. Amidst religious connotations being attributed to the spread of Corona Virus The trigger was a five-year old misogynistic/racial tweet of Bengaluru South BJP MP

Tejasvi Surya which had hurled slurs on Arab women. This upped the bitterness in an already toxic environment. Surya hurriedly deleted his offensive tweet but the damage had already been done. A screenshot of his tweet was picked up by activists like Abdur Rahman Nassar from Kuwait, who has a large following on social media, and circulated. Nassar then went on to tag the PMO and Modi's personal account and tweeted, 'Prime Minister...An Indian Member of Parliament accuses Arab women, and we Arabs are asking for his membership to be dropped!!'

Thankfully the de facto head of the nation was spontaneous enough to brush aside this brewing animosity and hate by a tweet which urged unity and brotherhood in the response towards Covid-19. Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted....

"COVID-19 does not see race, religion, colour, caste, creed, language or borders before striking. Our response and conduct thereafter should attach primacy to unity and brotherhood. We are in this together"

Even though there was a little delay, but this message can be taken as a big assurance by the global community that this hysteria of mixing religion with a spreading pandemic wasn't a government policy but an idea propagated by rabid fringe and devoid of any political patronage. Furthermore it's also expected of a PM with a large following, elected with a massive mandate to be more proactive in sticking to the ideals of dharma and snub any such activity that has the tendency to breed venom between communities integral to the edifice of idea of India. More importantly, he is also duty bound to communicate to the citizenry that the toil and labour invested in building good diplomatic relations cannot be squandered on the whims and fancies of right wing fringe. As Barack Obama once opined that in a world of complex threats, our security and leadership depends on all elements of our power — including strong and principled diplomacy, we too must adhere to the principles of a principled diplomacy for a successful and vibrant democracy.

Author practices law at the J&K High Court and can be reached at: Makhdoomi13@gmail.com

BASIT AMIN MAKHDOOMI

Keeping aside the economic benefits, Arab countries have been successful cushion to fall back upon whenever and wherever Pakistan has played its diplomatic ante against India. The personal equation that PM built with two powerful Arab princes like Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan known as MBZ and Prince Muhammad bin Salman aka MBS played a pivotal role when India went ahead to scrap Kashmir of its special status.

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

MAIL YOUR LETTERS

P.O. Box # 337, GPO, Srinagar-190 001
email: editpage.ko@gmail.com

Ramazan: Controlling Desires And Suppressing Greed

Ramazan — for Muslims, the month long celebration which commemorates Allah giving the first verses of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad in the year 610 A.D. During the Fast of Ramazan strict restraints are placed on the daily lives of Muslims. They are not allowed to eat or drink during the daylight hours. Smoking and sexual relations are also forbidden during fasting. At the end of the day the fast is broken with prayer and a meal called the Iftar. In the evening following the iftar it is customary for Muslims to go out visiting family and friends. The fast is resumed the next morning.

It is said that the Five Pillars of Islam are the framework of Islamic life. First — Shahada, A Muslim must have faith in Allah and believe that there is only one Allah and Muhammad is his messenger. Next Salah — A Muslim has the duty to pray five times each day, which is considered to be a direct link

between him and Allah. Third Zakat, A Muslim must distribute alms and help the needy. Fourth, Sawan — A Muslim is responsible to keep the fast of Ramazan. Lastly Hajj, A Muslim is obligated to make a pilgrimage to Mecca in his lifetime.

The observance of Ramazan is very personal and individual and is a time for "sacrifice and renunciation as well as a period of reflection and spiritual growth. Fasting is a spiritual practice that makes you closer to God/Allah. Fasting is more than remaining hungry and thirsty for the sake of Allah. Keeping a fast is an integral part of the Indian culture and tradition. It basically connotes willingly abstaining oneself from eating certain or any kind of food, drink or both. Fasting is an exercise in self-restraint. It is seen as a way to physically and spiritually detoxify by kicking impulses like morning coffee, smoking and midday snacking. In Ramazan people are more

generous and give from their pockets and hearts to those less fortunate. There is an aura of love and compassion surrounding every individual as the self-centredness is refocused to those around them. Materialism is about getting rather than giving.

The motivation should be centered on God/Allah and a relationship with Him, not on our body or our relationship to others. The word Ramazan or Ramazan is Persian, against Ramadan which has Arab roots. It comes from ramad, denoting an object intensely heated by the sun. Linguistic scholars say this holy month was named Ramazan because it burns the sins of the faithful. Ramazan is a time to detach from worldly pleasures and focus on one's prayers. The spiritual significance of fasting is being forgotten today as man is losing contact with his inner being. Nevertheless the science of fasting, as preserved in the Vedas, Shastras & Quran, is a method of

purification which can aid man in his mundane and spiritual life. Prophet Muhammad, said: When one of you is fasting, he should abstain from indecent acts and unnecessary talk, and if someone begins an obscene conversation or tries to pick an argument, he should simply tell him, I am fasting. Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God/Allah and to ourselves that we are serious about our relationship with Him. At the same time, fasting without the right attitude does not touch the heart of God/Allah. There is no doubt that Ramazan allows all Muslims to gain Self Discipline, concentrate on things that are most important in life, worship Allah and become closer to Him, have a great change in their diet, and the most important is gain mindfulness.

Vinod Chandrashekar Dixit
dixitpatrakar@yahoo.in
Ahmedabad

How The Deprivation Of Ramazan Helps Care For The Spirit

FARIHA ROISIN

Ramazan is a time for fostering this kind of intimacy. And it's done through a kind of inverted regimen of self-care. The fasting and prayer of Ramazan are, in part, undertaken to be awakened. But they require rigor. This practice teaches me community and humility, both of which are the antithesis of ego, as Huda Hassan, a writer and researcher, put it to me in an email.

For Muslims, the afterlife guides much of our spirituality. Die before you die, the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) once said. As in: Let that ego go, divorce yourself from your earthly body, seek oneness with God and radiate kindness, humility and compassion. Rabia of Basra, a Muslim saint and Sufi mystic, (who was said to have greatly influenced Rumi, the great Persian Muslim poet) wrote: Ironic, but one of the most intimate acts of our body is death.

Ramazan is a time for fostering this kind of intimacy. And it's done through a kind of inverted regimen of self-care. The fasting and prayer of Ramazan are, in part, undertaken to be awakened. But they require rigor. This practice teaches me community and humility, both of which are the antithesis of ego, as Huda Hassan, a writer and researcher, put it to me in an email.

This is an idea the current iteration of the self-care movement has tapped into coming back to oneself but its often without a holistic, reverent or spiritual, perspective. Detoxing has become popular among wellness gurus for supposed health benefits, commodified and stripped of religious ritual and ceremony.

Detox has become a broken word. Cleansing starts with confronting mortality

Cleanses and radical diets are focused entirely on the impact of detoxification on the physical body. But in Islam, the physical body is merely a vessel. It's the soul, and the exaltation of the mind that is paramount. Purifying the body, which is a large part of the practice of Ramazan, cannot happen without detoxing the mind. The latter journey is much harder.

Fasting

The annual occurrence of Ramazan, which is based on the lunar calendar, officially begins with the sighting of the new moon on the ninth month. Fasting starts then, and it lasts for thirty days: During those days, Muslims traditionally abstain from food from dawn till dusk. Between suhoor (the meal at dawn) and iftar (the meal at dusk), nothing, not even water, is consumed.

Being hungry is clarifying. It forces a kind of focus. (Or, to paraphrase Simone Weil, when the body is hungry, we can truly hear the soul's calling.) I ingest we all do so much of what we don't need, so much excess and waste, said Kima Jones, writer, poet and founder of Jack Jones Literary Arts. Ramazan is my annual opportunity to deliberately and purposefully treat myself the way Allah intended for me to treat myself. It's back to basics.

Fariba Salma Alam, a visual artist based in Brooklyn, described it as an exploration that ranges from: "Am I really hungry? What does it feel like to not eat? To why am I angry right now? Can I temper it? Can I manage my incessant thoughts about food? Can I forgive? Can I find solace where I once hurt? Can I follow the light? Why am I doing this? Of the final stage, she wrote: I surrender."

That the act of fasting untethers people from selfishness is paradoxical; it's impossible not to fixate, in some part, on physical need. But the abstention is followed by a ritualized and often communal meal there is an end to hunger and it is shared which creates a deeper bond with the experience, and the bigger picture.

"I am amazed at what a powerful channel I become



when I am not eating or drinking," Ameena Meer, 50, a writer based between Los Angeles and New York, wrote in an email. "My sixth sense becomes remarkably clear."

Her regime is a focus on caring for herself through being still and reading more. "I speak less, I listen more," she wrote. "I catch myself, letting go of small irritations, forgiving quickly, being as honest as possible." This Ramazan, she is also reading about Unani medicine, an Islamic naturopathy based on ancient Greek medicine from Hippocrates and Galen. All this heightens her senses, she wrote: Hearing birds and the rustling of trees from great distances, sharper scents, the sun or the breeze on my skin, the vividness of the colors and sights around me, give me so much more pleasure.

But, mostly importantly, through this, she added: "I am almost able to step away from all the attachments," she said.

Prayer

In Islam, prayer is done through meditation and zikr, a form of rhythmic devotion that consists of the repetition of Quranic verse. Prayer during Ramazan is an act of coming back to oneself five times a day in order to minimize the self. Again, the act of returning to oneself to leave oneself sounds paradoxical. But when it is undertaken with the care it deserves, the meditative mantras of Muslim surahs takes us outside the friction of everyday life. In our day to day, the stresses of the world including the Islamophobia keeps us alert but bothered, consumed with the physical, and less in touch with the spiritual.

"I understand the meaning of worship as a way to reconnect with the Source of All Wisdom, Love, and Energy and feel drawn to it," Ms. Meer wrote.

Prayer, and any deep reflection, really, unlocks us from our mind's prison. It's an incarnation of death, too a fundamental reminder to seek greater purpose in our individual lives. Even if it's just every Ramazan, it's a start. It's meant to be a month of actualized

self-care for Muslims.

Refuge

It's an angry world we live in or at least, there are many things that incite anger, and can lead to deep sorrow.

After the mosque shootings in New Zealand I was awe-struck. When the pain subsided, I felt enraged. My anger was, and still is, about the injustice that comes with the rampant dismissal and demonization of Muslims, without considering what that does to our psychology. On top of that, it's about the constant deaths of Muslims around the world via the hands of other Muslims, too whether in Mali or Pakistan. Or about hearing the story of a 17-year-old Bangladeshi girl, Nusrat Jahan Rafi, who was burned alive for speaking out about sexual assault at the hands of her Muslim principal.

The onslaught feels never-ending. During Ramazan, we are asked to contend with these feelings and let go. The result, in one Arabic word, is jihad which actually means a spiritual battle with oneself. But how can one accept the horrors of the world and radiate kindness and transcend?

These acts of discipline that Ramazan necessitates, in prayer and fasting, help create a boundary, a division from anger. And it's energizing, somehow.

"Islam teaches me commitment and discipline, and whenever I am successfully fasting, that energy carries me through the month and thereafter," Ms. Hassan pointed out.

The purpose of Ramazan is to energize the orientation of the soul and activate what has been lost throughout the lunar year: to re-remember how we, our selves, fit into the greater spiritual community. In ritual, we focus not on the lack, but the abundance of the world, and how lucky we are to live in this time, in this space, to honor its transience, and make use of the vital years that we are here. The practice brings us back to a state that Hafiz, the Muslim poet, described as the divine crazed soul.

Irrfan Khan: Ever the Actor, Never the Star

KO WEB DESK

ALWAYS the actor, never the star, Irrfan Khan shone bright in a cinematic universe that unspooled from the Hindi film industry across the seas to Hollywood and one he made his very own with powerhouse performances in films as diverse as 'The Namesake' and 'Maqbool'.

Understated and self-effacing, Irrfan was the man with a difference in the tinsel world of showbiz, transitioning from TV soaps to the big screen and then from Indian films to world cinema with so little fanfare and so smoothly that no one really noticed – an actor was born.

And when he died on Wednesday, losing a two-year battle with neuroendocrine tumour, a rare form of cancer that targets various organs of the body, he left behind an Irrfan shaped hole that no one will ever quite fill.

He was just 54, packing into his three decades in cinema a variety of roles he stamped with his own deft touch, sometimes frothy and light as in his role of a never-can-get-it-right suitor in 'Life in a Metro', sometimes intense like in 'Maqbool', a retelling of 'Macbeth', and other times introspective as in the much acclaimed 'The Life of Pi'.

Tall and gangly, and not conventionally good looking, Irrfan, his directors said, portrayed it all with his eyes and chameleon like ability to slip into layered characters of bewildering variety, a rare actor at home both in the west and in India.

The performative intensity was seen early in his career with 'Haasil', where he played the role of a student leader with negative overtones. It continued through a remarkable filmography that saw him playing melancholic immigrant Ashoke Ganguly in Mira Nair's 'The Namesake', an athlete-turned-dacoit in the biopic 'Paan Singh Tomar', the quizzical Rana watching a father-daughter dynamic in 'Piku' or the loner striking a tentative relationship with a woman he has never met in 'The Lunchbox'. And yes, though he appeared in mainstream



He was just 54, packing into his three decades in cinema a variety of roles he stamped with his own deft touch.

films as well, Irrfan probably never shook a leg or sang in his films.

"I suppose in the end, the whole of life becomes an act of letting go. But what always hurts the most is not taking a moment to say goodbye."

The remarkable career in acting almost didn't happen. Born to a Muslim Pashtun family in Jaipur in 1966, Irrfan initially wanted to become a cricketer. But his parents – his mother had a royal lineage and his father was a businessman – were not too keen and he tried his hand at business. That didn't work too and the young Irrfan found himself drawn to local theatre. But his dream seemed too far-fetched for him to share with anyone.

"I was not cut out to be an actor. I was the last person who could become an actor. If I told people I wanted to be an actor, they would have killed me. I

couldn't even share it," Irrfan said in an interview in 2017. Hearing about greats like Naseeruddin Shah and Om Puri, he applied at the National School of Drama (NSD) in 1984. And the rest, as they say, is Irrfan's history.

It is during his NSD years that he met his wife Sutapa Sikdar and formed long-lasting friendships with directors such as Tigmanshu Dhulia. It is a measure of how intensely private a person Irrfan was that when he died, few could recall his wife's name. Or that he has two sons, Babil and Ayaan.

In one interview, he recalled his relationship with his mother Saeda Begum, who died just four days ago in Jaipur. It was an equation where he was constantly seeking approval and they would argue a lot. He moved to Mumbai after his NSD de-

gree and the acting journey took off in 1985 with the TV show 'Shrikant', based on Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya's novel. Then came shows like 'Darr', 'Banegi Apni Baat' and roles in Doordarshan serials like 'Bharat Ek Khoj', 'Kalkashan', 'Chanakya' and 'Chandrakanta'.

Television kept him occupied until acclaimed filmmaker Mira Nair offered him a cameo in her 1988 movie 'Salaam Bombay!'. But his role was edited out in the final cut of the movie. Irrfan promised to cast Irrfan in the lead in a film and 16 years later gave him 'The Namesake', one of his most memorable roles.

Irrfan's break in world cinema came with London-based director Asif Kapadia giving him the lead in 'The Warrior', making him a known face and showcasing his range and ability to those in Hollywood. His big international films include 'A Mighty Heart', 'Darjeeling Express', 'Partition', 'The Slumdog Millionaire', 'The Amazing Spider-Man', 'The Life of Pi' and 'Jurassic World'.

The last Hollywood project was with Tom Hanks in 2016's 'Inferno', where the Hollywood actor said he was struck by Irrfan's "beguiling eyes".

In the deeply philosophical 'The Life of Pi', Irrfan's character, Pi or Piscine Molitor Patel, says, "I suppose in the end, the whole of life becomes an act of letting go. But what always hurts the most is not taking a moment to say goodbye."

Irrfan bids adieu to a multi-splendoured innings in celluloid with 'Angezi Medium', which released in the theatres last month, just before the India-wide lockdown began on March 25. He shot the film while still under treatment for his cancer but could not make it for the promotions. And left behind a message instead. "Hello brothers and sister... This is me Irrfan. Today I'm with you but also not with you," he begins.

"There is a saying... 'When life gives you lemons, you make lemonades out of it. It sounds good. But when life actually puts lemon in your hands, it becomes really tough to make lemonade... Enjoy the trailer and be kind to each other... And yes wait for me," he says. The words echo in the silence of a promise never to be kept.

HELLO, SOCIAL DISTANCING. Goodbye, Handshakes? Changing Etiquettes In The Times Of A Pandemic

Agencies

It started centuries ago as a symbol of peace, a gesture to prove you weren't holding a weapon, and over time it became part of almost every social, religious, professional, business and sporting exchange. But the new coronavirus has forced a rethink of the handshake. No matter how friendly, it is an exchange of potentially infectious microorganisms.

"Hands are like a busy intersection, constantly connecting our microbiome to the microbiomes of other people, places, and things," a group of scientists wrote in the Journal of Dermatological Science. Hands, they said, are the "critical vector" for transmitting microorganisms including viruses.

But if it is no longer automatically acceptable, what will replace the handshake as a fixture of post-coronavirus social etiquette? A fist or elbow bump? Maybe a traditional Japanese bow or hat doff? How about Spock's Vulcan salute from Star Trek?

We are social beings. When we meet one another, we press flesh. We take our largest organ, skin, and mash it together with someone else's - naked. In the middle of the coronavirus it has become clear just how intimate such a gesture is.

The human hand is fecund. We have hundreds of species of bacteria and viruses on our palms.

"Think about it," says Charles Gerba, a microbiologist and public health researcher at the University of Arizona, who also answers to Dr Germ. "Every time you touch a surface, you may be picking up up to 50 percent of the organisms on that surface."

Our hands can carry Salmonella, E. coli, norovirus and respiratory infections like adenovirus and hand-foot-mouth disease. And, given how frequently scientists find poop on our fingers and palms, our hygiene habits are far less fastidious than we think.

BACTERIAL EFFERVESCENCE
We can't see any of this with the naked eye.

And so we rely on scientists with agar plates to make visible the arching, spiraling, exploding patterns of bacterial effervescence that show just what our intermingling of fingers risks, something so simple as a handshake rendered in terrifying technicolor.

Scientists can also show us viruses. Those must be studied in animal cells, in a mosaic of tiny semi-circles that scientists often stain purple or red.

The cells are lovely, says Gerba, "and then when they die, they become colorless."

Gerba studies the movement

of viruses. He'll put a virus on an office doorknob or in a hotel room or someone's home.

He says it takes just four hours for a virus on an office doorknob to reach half the hands and half the surfaces in an office building, or about 90 percent of the surfaces in someone's home. A virus in a hotel often moves from room to room and sometimes to nearby conferences.

Gerba says he himself stopped shaking hands during the first SARS outbreak, in 2003. "I always say I have a cold," he says. "That way I don't have to shake their hand."

Top U.S. infectious diseases expert Dr Anthony Fauci sees it the same way since the pandemic hit.

"You don't ever shake anybody's hands," Fauci said this month. "That's clear."

LONG, HARD SQUEEZE
Handshakes have long been a way for humans to signal one another, and part of the ritual of seeking common ground.

"The handshake is what gets photographed at the time of any agreement," says Dorothy Noyes, a professor of folklore at Ohio State University.

The long, hard squeeze of U.S. President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron in 2018 was a classic display of two males seeking dominance. Some handshakes,



like the bouncing clasp of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, take months to negotiate.

Awkward or smooth, handshakes are a hard habit to break, even if we want to. Minutes after announcing a ban on shaking hands to com-

bat COVID-19, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte enthusiastically pumped the hand of Jaap Van Dissel, the head of the Dutch Centre for Infec-

tious Disease Control. "Sorry, sorry! No, that's not allowed! Let's do that again," Rutte said, breaking into a laugh.

Men Are More Than Twice As Likely To Die From Covid-19

Agencies

Men and women are equally likely to contract the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19), but men are more than twice as likely to die from the disease as compared to women, warn researchers.

The results, published in the journal Frontiers in Public Health, suggest that additional care may be required for older men or those with underlying conditions.

So far, researchers have confirmed that older COVID-19 patients and those with certain underlying conditions, such as heart disease and respiratory conditions, are at greater risk of severe disease and death.

However, Dr Jin-Kui Yang, a physician at Beijing Tongren Hospital in China, noticed a trend among COVID-19 patients who died.

"Early in January we noticed that the number of men dying from COVID-19 appeared to be higher than the number of women," said Yang.

"This raised a question: are men more susceptible to getting or dying from COVID-19? We found that no one had measured gender differences in COVID-19 patients, and so began investigating," Yang added.

For the findings, the research team analysed several patient datasets to see if there were differences in how men and women respond to COVID-19.

This included data on 43 patients who the doctors had treated themselves and a publicly available dataset on 1,056 COVID-19 patients.

The virus responsible for COVID-19 is similar to the virus behind the 2003 SARS outbreak, and it attaches to the same protein, called ACE2, on cells it attacks. Given this similarity, the doctors also analysed a dataset of 524 SARS patients from 2003.

Among the COVID-19 patients, the researchers confirmed that older people and those with specific underlying conditions tended

to have more severe disease and were more likely to die. The age and numbers of infected men and women were similar, but men tended to have more severe disease.

Strikingly, in the largest COVID-19 dataset, over 70 per cent of the patients who died were men, meaning that men had almost 2.5 times the death rate of women.

And interestingly, being male was a significant risk factor for worse disease severity, regardless of age, the study said.

In the SARS dataset from 2003, the researchers found a similar trend, with a significantly higher mortality rate amongst males compared with females.

Interestingly, levels of ACE2, the protein involved in the viral attack in both SARS and COVID-19, tends to be present in higher levels in men, and also patients with cardiovascular disease and diabetes, all of whom have worse outcomes in COVID-19.

However, further research is needed to determine exactly why men with COVID-19 tend to fare worse than women.

While the current findings have a small sample size, and larger studies are needed to confirm the results, this is the first preliminary indication that male gender is a significant risk factor for COVID-19 severity and death, the researchers noted.

Earlier this month, another study, published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, found that males over 50 with non-communicable chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and coronary heart disease are at greater risk of death from coronavirus.

Meanwhile in India, the total number of COVID-19 cases in the country climbed to 31,332 on Wednesday morning. Of the total cases, 22,629 are active, 7,695 people have recovered, and 1,007 people have succumbed to the disease, the Union Health Ministry said.

Airlines Borrow \$31 Billion To Weather Pandemic Blow To Travel

Bloomberg

Lenders worldwide have pledged more than \$31 billion of loans to major airlines scrambling to line up funding as the coronavirus pandemic forces them to ground their fleets.

Companies from the Americas account for bulk of the borrowings with almost \$20 billion in total, according to data collated by Bloomberg. In the dash to secure financing, airlines have either been drawing down from an existing credit lines or taking on new loans.

The pandemic poses an unprecedented challenge to aviation and tourism with airports around the world shuttered by governments seeking to stem

the spread of the virus.

The response from airlines has been a stampede to borrow from governments and banks. As well as the loans to U.S. carriers, European airlines have raised 6.83 billion euros (\$7.4 billion) since March 9, while Asian firms have lined up \$4.1 billion.

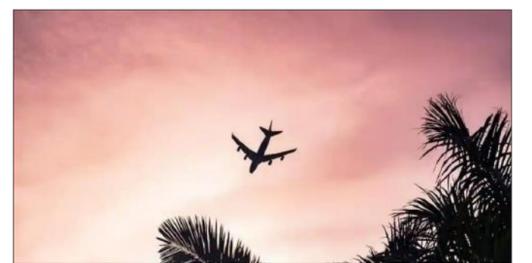
The International Air Transport Association has repeatedly warned the health crisis could bankrupt half the world's airlines, pushing countries such as France and the Netherlands to prepare state bailouts.

Air France-KLM, the largest borrower from the sector, got a 4 billion-euro loan from six banks with the French state guaranteeing to up to 90%. In addition,

the airline arranged a 3 billion-euro loan from the government, which is a direct shareholder. The company had previously drawn down on an existing 1.1 billion-euro credit line.

The U.K.'s EasyJet Plc also raised 600 million pounds (\$744 million) from the government's Covid Corporate Finance Facility in addition to a roughly 400 million-pound bank loan. The carrier has also drawn down on an existing \$500 million revolving facility.

In Asia, borrowers have been tapping funds from domestic lenders. Bank of Taiwan provided NT\$20 billion (\$666 million) of direct loans each to China Airlines Ltd. and Eva Airways Corp., while Singapore Airlines



Ltd. arranged a \$4 billion (\$2.8 billion) loan with DBS Bank Ltd.

Meanwhile, at least \$5 billion of deals are still in the pipeline, including loans for Emirates Airline, Japan's ANA Holdings and Iberia, the Spanish unit of Brit-

ish Airways owner IAG SA. Below is a table of some of the largest borrowers from the sector. Click here for full list of drawdowns and new loans by companies in Americas, and click here for Europe and Asia.

Oncologists Fear Delayed Cancer Diagnosis, Stage Migration Amid COVID-19 Crisis

Press Trust Of India

With people fearing about visits to hospitals amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, delayed diagnosis of cancer and its stage migration could be a fallout of the current crisis, according to senior oncologists.

While many medical treatments can be put off amid the COVID-19 crisis, "cancer does not wait", oncologists feel.

Cancer treatment in times of coronavirus has been challenging as the pandemic is impacting both cancer diagnostics and treatment, with doctors having to balance risks versus benefits on a daily basis.

Dr. Bhawna Sirohi, director of Medical Oncology at Max Healthcare, said cancer is "not going to wait" and the threat from it is "now and real".

"I feel patients, scared because of COVID-19, are not coming to hospitals and that is pushing them from early cancer to late stages," she told the PTI.

Ms. Sirohi urged patients not to be scared to come to hospitals and if they have a warning sign like a lump, they should not delay treatment.

She said she recently had a patient who ignored symptoms for three weeks and delayed con-



sulting a doctor, but was later detected with cancer.

COVID-19 is here to stay and one just has to get used to the precautions and make it a new normal, she said.

"Stage 1 and 2 (of cancer) can become 3 and 4, it can become incurable, if you don't act upon it," Ms. Sirohi said.

Talking about cancer treatment in times of COVID-19, she said a balance has to be maintained between risks and benefits.

"If the benefit is very small then one should avoid chemotherapy. But if you have a patient with lymphoma or blood cancer then the cure rates are very high, so you would want to go for the benefits," she said.

Dr. Akshay Tiwari, Associate Director and Head, Musculoskeletal Oncology, Max Healthcare, said as a bone cancer surgeon he is facing challenges at multiple levels.

Patients are finding it very difficult to travel and even those who have the wherewithal to travel, are scared of coming to

the hospital for the fear of contracting coronavirus, he said.

This means that patients who should have been seeking treatment are not doing so and that would lead to stage migration of cancer, Mr. Tiwari said.

"Some cases may even become incurable because of the delay. We are fearing this as patients are not coming to us. Similar fears have been voiced by cancer specialists across the world," he told the PTI.

The message should go to the public that cancer does not wait and it is even deadlier than COVID-19, the senior oncologist said.

"Diagnosis may also be delayed and that is what is unfortunate. The message needs to go out that we should not ignore symptoms which are remotely linked to cancer for example a lump or swelling," he said.

Dr. Rajender Kumar, Additional Director and Head of Oncology at Fortis Hospital, Shalimar Bagh, said the COVID-19 crisis is definitely posing a challenge to cancer treatment as many patients with malignancy in the head and neck area or having lung cancer have symptoms similar to COVID-19.

"We are using all the precautions and the staff is using PPEs as cancer treatment is essential," he told the PTI.

Fight Between Parents Creates Cracks In Children's Psychological Well Being

Press Trust Of India

When parents fight it creates cracks in their children's psychological well being which is a harsh reality, the Delhi High Court said on Wednesday while delivering verdict in a custody battle between an army officer and his estranged wife who was given the custody their kids.

The officer had in 2015 taken away his two kids -- a girl and a boy -- to Gulmarg, where he was posted, after accusing his wife of having an affair with a fellow officer.

The woman had, thereafter, moved a plea in the Family Court seeking custody of the children and it had ruled in her favour in 2016 by directing the officer to hand over the kids to her once their 2017-18 academic session was over.

He challenged the 2016 order in the high court which on Wednesday upheld the Family Court's decision and directed him to handover custody to the woman once the COVID-19 lockdown is lifted.

In his order directing the children's custody be handed over to the mother, Jus-

tice Navin Chawla said, "...parental love is the only love that is truly selfless, unconditional and forgiving. However, when the parents fight, they not only fight amongst themselves but create cracks in their children's psychological well being."

"This can be totally unintended, but is a harsh reality of life. The present case represents a similar circumstance." The court asked the man to also handover all the academic certificates of the kids to the mother so that she can try to get the kids admitted in a school in Delhi.

However, if she is unable to secure the kids admission in any school here within two weeks of reopening of schools after the coronavirus lockdown, then the children will go back to their father in Mathura where they are studying presently so that their studies are not affected, it said.

The court further said that if custody remains with the mother, she shall be bound by her statement that the officer shall be allowed unrestricted visitation rights, including overnight custody of the children, during their vacations and during his holidays.

UN Uncovers Surprise Tools Needed To Beat Virus

Agencies
WASHINGTON: How countries cope with the new coronavirus depends on more than hospital beds and income levels, the United Nations said on Wednesday, highlighting forgotten factors like internet access and reliance on tourism.

The UN Development Programme's (UNDP) analysis of countries' vulnerability to pandemics produced some surprising results, said its chief statistician Milorad Kovacevic.

Small island developing states, such as Jamaica and Haiti, are among the most at risk economically due to their reliance on remittances, tourism and aid, UNDP found, despite the fact they have recorded only a handful of deaths from coronavirus.

"This may ruin the development achievements that some of these countries had over the last 30 years," Kovacevic said.

The global economy is collapsing at a pace not seen since World War Two, with many countries under lockdowns to curb the spread of an outbreak which has infected some three million people.

As governments and central banks scramble to provide unprecedented support to combat recession and unemployment, there are concerns over developing countries' limited firepower to fund health

and economic rescue efforts. This does not mean that the poorest countries will suffer most. More important than income level are health and education systems, inequality and social services, according to UNDP.

Inequality in developed countries is often associated with weaker social cohesion and lower trust in government, which could make it harder to beat the disease, said Kovacevic, while more than 40 per cent of the world's people have no social safety net.

One of the most important factors that may be overlooked is connectivity, since internet access determines whether people can continue their education and jobs at home, Kovacevic said.

"The digital divide has become more significant than ever at this moment," he said.

Some 6.5 billion people — 86 per cent of the global population — do not have access to reliable broadband internet, UNDP said.

Croatia also emerged as an other unexpected result. While it is well-prepared based on health and development measures, 20 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) comes from tourism, which means it could be hard hit by travel bans and lockdowns.

Experts have warned that the 2030 deadline to meet the UN's development goals is at risk as economies suffer in the fight against the virus, public financing dries



US Decides Against Extending Social Distancing Guidelines

Press Trust Of India

Washington: US president Donald Trump on Wednesday said that the federal government will not be extending its coronavirus social distancing guidelines once they expire Thursday, and his son-in-law and adviser, Jared Kushner, predicted that by July the country will be really rocking again.

To underscore his confidence, Trump said he plans to resume out-of-state travel after spending more than a month mostly cooped up in the White House, starting with a trip to Arizona next week.

And he said he's hoping to hold mass campaign rallies in the coming months with thousands of supporters, even though medical experts have said there is little hope of having a vaccine by then.

Putting a positive face on the latest grim numbers, the U.S. death toll has now surpassed American lives lost in the Vietnam War. Trump delivered his daily upbeat update and Kushner described the administration's much-criticized response to the pandemic as "a great success story."

Trump also talked up the good news the day provided: hopeful results for possible COVID-19 treatment. But the government announced dismal new economic numbers as the

pandemic took hold and shut down much of the country.

The U.S. economy shrank at a 4.8% annual rate in the first quarter of the year, a precursor to far grimmer reports that are expected this summer from the severe recession triggered by the pandemic.

The White House has been trying to pivot to a new stage of the crisis, focused on efforts to reopen the nation's economy state-by-state amid concerns that lifting restrictions too quickly and without sufficient testing and contact tracing will spur a resurgence.

"We're heartened that the worst of the pain and suffering is going to be behind us," Trump said as he led a roundtable with executives from companies like Hilton and Toyota.

Trump laid out a vision of a return to pre-coronavirus normalcy with or without a vaccine with packed restaurants and filled stadiums. That vision flies in the face of sober assessments from doctors who say the country will need to embrace a new normal that includes extended social distancing and mask-wearing.

"I don't want people to get used to this," Trump told reporters.

White House spokesman Judd Deere tweeted that Trump would visit a Honeywell facility in Phoenix on

Tuesday to highlight the production of critical medical equipment production and the addition of 500 manufacturing jobs in the state.

Trump also said he was considering making a trip to Ohio, even as much of the country remains under effective lockdown with all but essential travel banned.

"We're going to start to move around and hopefully in the not-too-distant future, we'll have some massive rallies and people will be sitting next to each other," he said, adding that having people spaced out in accordance with social distancing guidelines wouldn't look too good.

He didn't say exactly when he envisioned such rallies returning, but said the timing would depend, in part, on the states, since some have had far fewer cases than others. The federal government and most states have urged residents to avoid mass gatherings and to remain at least six feet apart.

The announcement came after Trump said he will not be extending the White House's 30 Days to Slow the Spread guidelines when they expire Thursday.

"They'll be fading out because now the governors are doing it," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office as he met with John Bel Edwards, the Democratic governor of Louisiana.

China's battle against coronavirus major strategic

Agencies

Beijing: Chinese President Xi Jinping has termed China's battle against COVID-19 as a major strategic achievement, as the ruling Communist Party is all set to hold the postponed Parliament session on May 22 amid a steady decline in the coronavirus cases.

China's National Health Commission (NHC) on Thursday said the country reported only four new confirmed COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, taking the total number to 82,862, while no death due to the disease was registered. The virus has claimed 4,633 lives in the country.

China's arduous efforts to contain the coronavirus have brought a decisive outcome to the fight of defending Hubei and its capital city Wuhan, Xi told a high-powered Central Committee meeting of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) on Wednesday.

The nationwide battle against the epidemic has gained major strategic achievements, the state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Xi as saying.

Xi said Hubei, including Wuhan, should continue strengthening community-level epidemic prevention and control.

He asked officials to make efforts to contain the virus case at Heilongjiang Province bordering Russia, where a large number of Chinese returning

from Russian cities were tested positive for coronavirus.

The meeting emphasised the need to accelerate work resumption and business reopening, help companies especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises address difficul-



ties, and promote the recovery of pillar industries such as auto manufacturing, electronic information, new materials and bio-medicine, the report said.

The meeting stressed accelerating farm production and expanding sales channels for agricultural products to boost income for farmers.

The Hubei province and its capital Wuhan—where the COVID-19 first emerged in December last year—were the epicentres of the deadly virus, which later turned into a pandemic, bringing the world to a standstill.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues its explosive growth overseas, Xi said, noting the mounting pressure to prevent imported infections and the growing complexity of stemming domestic epidemic resurgence.

Joe Biden To Keep US Embassy In Jerusalem If Elected President

Agencies

WASHINGTON: Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden said Wednesday that he would keep the US embassy in Israel in Jerusalem if elected - even though he disagrees with Donald Trump's controversial 2017 decision to move it out of Tel Aviv.

The former vice president said the embassy should never have been moved without that decision being part of a wider Middle East peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians.

"But now that it's done, I would not move the embassy back to Tel Aviv," Biden told a virtual fundraising event.

The location of the US embassy is a hot-button issue: the status of Jerusalem is one of the most hotly contested issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel seized control of the east of the city in 1967 and later annexed it in moves never recognized by the international community.

Israel considers the city its undivided capital, but Palestinians believe the east is illegally occupied and see it as the capital of their future state.

Trump shattered the status quo when he recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and announced his decision to shift the US embassy to the holy city in December 2017.

He has repeatedly boasted that he is the most pro-Israeli US president in history, and has slashed aid to the Palestinians while making big concessions to the Israelis.

Biden said he would reopen the consulate in Jerusalem "to en-

gage the Palestinians and my administration will urge both sides to take steps to keep the prospect of a two-state solution alive."

In January this year, Trump's son-in-law and senior aide Jared Kushner unveiled his Middle East peace plan.

It proposes the establishment of a Palestinian capital in Abu Dis, a suburb of Jerusalem, and gives consent for the annexation of Is-



raeli settlements as well as the Jordan Valley - Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

The Palestinians - backed by the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the African Union - have rejected the plan.

Biden, who during his time as vice president had an uneasy relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has said previously that "we can't be afraid to tell the truth to our closest friends."

"The two-state solution is the best, if not the only, way to secure a peaceful future for a Jewish, democratic state of Israel," he said in October last year.

Ramadan In Quarantine Turks Fast Solo After Mass Repatriation

Agencies

Istanbul: As the coronavirus epidemic took hold, Duygu Yucelen - like thousands of her fellow Turks - made the decision to fly home to be with her family for Ramadan rather than spend the Muslim fasting month locked down abroad.

But the conditions of her return mean she is now fasting alone in a student dormitory, still far from her loved ones.

"I learned to be happy by myself in a room. There will be times that we will remember this year and this unique experience I am living right now," she said from quarantine in Bingol, 900 km (560 miles) east of her family home in Ankara.



Selin Duygu Yucelen poses for a selfie in her room at a student dormitory where she is under a mandatory 14-day quarantine after returning from abroad, as part of the measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in Bingol, Turkey

Yucelen, a chemical engineer who had been conducting postgraduate research in Budapest, is one of up to 25,000 being flown back from about 70 countries in Turkey's biggest ever repatriation. All of them must spend their first 14 days after arrival in isolation in one of 77 cities.

Yucelen, 28 has been billeted in a student dormitory with four single beds and four small desks.

During Ramadan, which began on Friday, Muslims traditionally join family and friends when breaking their fast at sunset and go to mosques to pray. But the government curbs on large public gatherings imposed to contain the coronavirus mean priorities have changed. Yucelen now joins her parents each evening for food via video link. "I felt sad that my parents are breaking their fast alone," said Yucelen, who has seven more days of monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19 before she can take a state-funded bus home. Turkey has recorded nearly 115,000 cases, the seventh highest tally in the world.

Informal workers risk livelihoods being 'destroyed' by COVID-19: ILO

Agencies

Geneva: Three-quarters of workers in the informal economy - some 1.6 billion people - risk having their livelihoods ruined by the coronavirus pandemic, the International Labour Organisation said Wednesday.

The ILO said an expected further sharp decline in working hours in the second quarter of 2020, due to the COVID-19 crisis, meant that those workers were in "immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed".

In its third report on the coronavirus crisis and the world of work, the UN agency warned of the impact on the most vulnerable in the labour market, who are often in the hardest-hit sectors.

The 1.6 billion people stand in line to suffer "massive damage to their ability to earn a living," said ILO director-general Guy Ryder.

"We all have to think of the human suffering, the human need that stands behind that extraordinary figure." The ILO said the crisis was causing an unprecedented reduction in economic activity and working time.

It estimates that global working hours declined by 4.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2020, compared with the last three months of 2019.

Global working hours in the second quarter of 2020 are expected to be 10.5 per cent lower than in the last pre-crisis quarter, due to the extension of lockdowns.

The ILO said this was the equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs, representing a major deterioration on a previous second-quarter estimate of 195 million.

It said the Americas (down 12.4 percent), followed by Europe and central Asia (down 11.8 percent each) would be the regions losing the most working hours over the second quarter.

No income, no food

The ILO said the hardest-hit sectors would be accommodation and food services, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and real estate and business activities.

"As the pandemic and the jobs crisis evolve, the need to protect the most vulnerable becomes even more urgent," said Ryder.

NEWS MAKERS

Coronavirus: 32,000 Indians in the UAE register to fly home

DUBAI: More than 32,000 Indians in the UAE wishing to fly home during the COVID-19 pandemic registered their details on day one after the launch of the e-registration by the Indian missions here.

"As of 5pm on Thursday, we received more than 32,000 registrations," Consul General of India in Dubai Vipul told Gulf News.

Meanwhile, the government of Kerala on Thursday said the total number of registrations it received from Malayalis living in 201 countries has reached 3,53,468.

"The highest among them, 1,53,660 registrations, were from the UAE," the Norka department said in a statement.

The Consul General urged Keralites in the UAE, who have

already registered with Norka, to also register with the missions since it would help the central government to make arrangements for flight operations.

The Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the Indian Consulate in Dubai on Wednesday night announced they were accepting the registration through the link https://cgidubai.gov.in/covid_register/

Within minutes of announcing the launch of the registration process, the site faced technical issues prompting the missions to delete the tweet about it and repost it hours later.

In a tweet posted in the wee hours of Thursday, the Indian Consulate asked applicants "to bear with it if it takes time for the page to load due to high traffic."

When contacted later, the

Consul General of India in Dubai Vipul told Gulf News that the technical issues took place because of the huge rush of people trying to access the webpage on the consulate's site for registration.

Though the mission is yet to analyse the data to know the "compelling reasons" for the applicants to travel home, Vipul said applications comprise various emergency cases including that of pregnant women.

"We understand that people want to go home for various reasons. People should be ready for travel by keeping in mind the overall restrictions on travel given the pandemic situation. Those who wish to go urgently should keep trying to register on the website in the next few days."

How dogs are being trained to sniff out COVID-19

Pennsylvania: As the world is struggling to contain the coronavirus pandemic, could canines "revolutionize" the COVID-19 response by emerging as a "new diagnostic tool"? Experts believe so. Dogs are being trained in the US and the UK to sniff out the coronavirus.

According to the Washington Post, eight Labrador retrievers are being trained under a University of Pennsylvania research project to determine whether canines have the capability to detect an odour associated with the coronavirus.

Similar efforts are being made at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, where researchers previously demonstrated that dogs could identify malaria infections in humans.

If the training is successful, then dogs might eventually be used in a sort of "canine surveillance" corps. They can screen people in airports, businesses or hospitals.

It will not be surprising if the dogs pass the test of detecting SARS-CoV-2. Besides drugs, explosives, and contraband food items, dogs



are able to sniff out malaria, cancers, and even a bacterium ravaging Florida's citrus groves.

Researchers have found viruses have specific odours, said Cynthia M. Otto, director of the Working Dog Center at Penn's School of Veterinary Medicine.

"We don't know that this will be the odour of the virus, per se, or the response to the virus, or a combination," said Otto, who is leading the project. "But the dogs don't care what the odour is. ... What they learn is that there's something different about this sample than there is about that sample."

White House clarifies 'unfollowing' Modi on Twitter

WASHINGTON: The White House Wednesday explained that its Twitter handle typically "follows" the accounts of officials from host countries for a brief period during a presidential trip to retweet their messages in support of the visit.

During President Donald Trump's visit to India in the last week of February, the official Twitter handle of the White House - @WhiteHouse - had started "following" the accounts of President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister's office, the Indian Embassy in the US, the US Embassy in India and the US Ambassador to India, Ken Juster.

Early this week, the White House "unfollowed" all these six Twitter handles.

"The White House Twitter account normally follows senior US government Twitter accounts, and others as appropriate. For example, during the time of a presidential visit, the account typically follows for a short time, the host country's officials to retweet their messages in support of the visit," a senior administration official told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

COVID-19 Death Toll Rises To 1,074; Cases 33,050

The death toll due to the novel coronavirus pandemic rose to 1,074 after 66 more fatalities and the number of cases climbed to 33,050 in the country on Thursday, according to the Union Health Ministry.

The number of active COVID-19 cases stood at 23,651, while 8,324 people have recovered and one patient has migrated. The total number of cases include 111 foreign nationals, the ministry said.

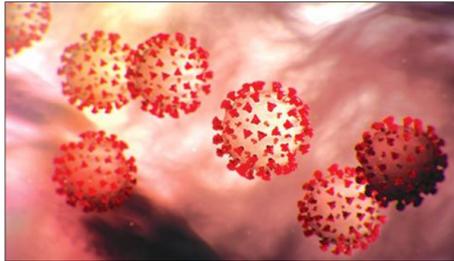
Out of the 66 deaths reported since Wednesday evening, 32 were from Maharashtra, 16 from Gujarat, 10 from Madhya Pradesh, three from Uttar Pradesh, two each from Tamil Nadu and Delhi, and one from Kar-

fatality each, according to the ministry data.

According to the ministry data updated in the morning, the highest number of confirmed cases in the country are from Maharashtra with 9,915 infections, followed by Gujarat with 4,082, Delhi with 3,439, Madhya Pradesh with 2,561.

Rajasthan has 2,438 cases, Tamil Nadu has 2,162 and Uttar Pradesh has 2,134 cases. The COVID-19 cases has gone up to 1,332 in Andhra Pradesh and 1,012 in Telangana.

The number of infections has risen to 758 in West Bengal, 581 in Jammu and Kashmir, 535 in Karnataka, 495 in Kerala, 392 in Bihar and 357 in Punjab.



nataka.

Maharashtra now tops the tally with 432 fatalities, followed by Gujarat at 197, Madhya Pradesh at 129, Delhi at 56, Rajasthan at 51, Uttar Pradesh at 39 and Andhra Pradesh at 31.

The toll reached 27 in Tamil Nadu, 26 in Telangana, 22 in West Bengal while Karnataka has reported 21 deaths and Punjab 19.

The pathogen has claimed eight lives in Jammu and Kashmir, four in Kerala, while Jharkhand and Haryana have recorded three COVID-19 deaths each.

Bihar has reported two deaths, while Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Assam have reported a

Haryana has reported 310 coronavirus cases, while Odisha has 125. A total 107 people have been infected with the virus in Jharkhand and 55 in Uttarakhand.

Chandigarh have reported 56 cases, Himachal Pradesh has 40 while Assam and Chhattisgarh have registered 38 infections each so far.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands has 33 COVID-19 cases, while Ladakh has reported 22 infections so far.

Meghalaya has reported 12 cases, Puducherry has eight cases, while Goa has seven COVID-19 cases. Manipur and Tripura have two cases each, while Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have reported a case each.

Virtual Meetups Online Dates Replace Coffee Shop Meetings For Matrimonial Prospects

NEW DELHI: "Mujhe rishta pasand hai" (I agree with this alliance) is more likely to be heard over virtual meetings and online dates than in coffee shops and restaurants as more people are now engaging in conversations with their prospective partners via video and voice calls amid the nationwide lockdown.

According to a survey by Jeevansathi.com, 46 per cent respondents said they would like to meet their prospective partners for the first time over a video call. Out of these, 39 per cent acknowledged that virtual is the only option available at the moment, while 32 per cent felt it is more convenient in general.

Users are engaging three times more with video and voice calling on the matrimony platform, while the average duration per-call has increased two-folds as the coronavirus pandemic has forced people to stay indoors and practice social distancing.

Almost half the respondents (44 per cent) agreed that their first ideal video call meeting would be a heart-to-heart conversation about

the things that truly matter, while 29 per cent said a "light chat over coffee" is the best for a first virtual date.

People also showed preference for watching a movie or a series together, playing online games, and even chilling over dinner and drinks virtually.

"Social-distancing has resulted in numerous consumer behavioral changes, and the process of finding a soulmate is being taken over by virtual meet-ups. The platform has witnessed a 60 per cent hike in the number of voice and video calls in this lockdown period (as compared to the 11-week prior average)," Rohan Mathur, Business Head at Jeevansathi.com, said.

He added that 52 per cent of the survey respondents confirmed that they will continue to meet prospective partners over video calls even in a post coronavirus world, indicating a new normal for online matrimony portals.

Post lockdown, the total time spent by users on voice and video calls has increased three times.



Raghuram Rajan Wants The Lockdown In India To Be Lifted

NEW DELHI: India should be "clever" in lifting the lockdown and should open up its economy in a "measured way" soon to save jobs, former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan said on Thursday, underlining that Rs 65,000 crore should be spent to support the poor amid the crisis.

In a first of its kind dialogue broadcast on the Congress's social media handles this morning, Rajan, who was in the US, deliberated on the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

The interaction through video conference lasted for about 30 minutes.

"We have to be clever about opening up... We need to open up in a measured way but as fast as possible so that people start having jobs. We don't have the capacity to support people across the spectrum for too long. Being a relatively poor country, people start out with significantly lower reserves," Rajan said.

"It is all too easy to have a lockdown forever, but obviously that is unsustainable for the economy," he said.

To Gandhi's query on how much money is required to help the poor by way of subsidies, food and cash, the former RBI chief said India needs Rs 65,000 crore to help them in times of pandemic and considering its total GDP, it can afford to do that.

"Our GDP is 200 lakh crores, and out of that 65,000 crore is not a huge amount. So, we can do it. If this is for the poor and to save their lives and livelihood, we

must do it," the economist said.

India has been in lockdown since March 24 midnight to curb the spread of coronavirus.

Rajan felt that there will be a rethink on everything in the global economy once the world is out of this pandemic and India could use this opportunity to make its voice heard in the global arena and help make the dialogue multi-polar from being single or bipolar currently.

He said India can also find opportunity for its industry and supply chain in the new order.

Gandhi said infrastructure connects people and that gives opportunity, but if there is division and hatred, that disconnects people.

There is an infrastructure of division and hatred and that causes a big problem, the Congress leader said.

Agreeing with Gandhi, Rajan said, "Social harmony is a public good. Having everyone believe that they are a part of this system, an equal part of the system, is essential. We cannot afford to be a house divided especially in these times when our challenges are so big."

Those who wrote the Constitution realised that there were some issues that one were to put on a shelf and not touch because if "we got into those issues, we would spend a lot of time fighting each other", Rajan said.

Responding to Gandhi's question on whether there was a crisis of centralisation, the ex-RBI governor said

he believes that decentralisation is important both for bringing more local information to work and also empowering people.

Asked about the authoritarian model, which is questioning the liberal model, being on the rise in more and more places, Rajan said the central authoritarian model -- the strong figure -- in a world where one is powerless, is sometimes appealing.

"Especially if you can develop a personal rapport with that figure," he added.

"The problem with that is that the authoritarian figure can develop their own sense of 'I am the power of the people' and therefore whatever I say goes. My rules apply and not checks and balances, not institutions, not the decentralised structure. Everything should go through me," Rajan said.

Historically, what has happened is that it has put too much weight on that centre and eventually it collapses, the economist said.

During the session, Rajan also posed a few questions to Gandhi, asking him his views on panchayati raj to which the former Congress chief said, "It has had a huge effect, but I'm sorry to say it is in retreat."

However, he said the southern states are doing a better job because they are more decentralised.

The northern states are centralising power, the MP from Wayanad, Kerala, said.

Consider Online Exams And Cut Duration From 3 Hours To 2, UGC Tells Colleges

Universities may conduct semester exams in July either online or offline depending upon feasibility and the COVID-19 situation and reduce the exam duration from three hours to two hours, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has recommended.

Detailing the guidelines for examinations and academic calendar for universities in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, the UGC has said the exams for final semester students may be conducted in July.

It has recommended that intermediate semester students may either be evaluated on the basis of internal assessment or in states where the COVID-19 situation has normalised, exams be conducted in July only.

The varsities may decide whether to conduct exams online or offline keeping in view the support system available with them and ensuring fair opportunity to all students.

"Universities may adopt alternative and simplified modes and methods of examinations to complete the process

in shorter period of time. They may reduce the time from three hours to two hours," the UGC has said.

"They may conduct examinations in offline or online mode, as per their ordinances or rules and regulations, scheme of examinations, and must observe the guidelines of social distancing besides keeping in view the support system available with them and ensuring fair opportunity to all students," it added.

The UGC has said in case the situation does not appear to be normal in view of COVID-19, the safety and health of students be prioritised and their grading could be a composite of 50 per cent marks on the basis of internal evaluation and the remaining 50 per cent marks can be awarded on the basis of performance in the previous semester.

"The situation where previous semester or previous year marks are not available, particularly in the first year of annual pattern of examinations, 100 per cent evaluation may be done on the basis of internal assessments. The internal evaluation

can be continuous evaluation, prelims, mid-semester, internal evaluation or whatever name is given for student progression."

The UGC has said if the student wishes to improve the grades, he or she may appear in special exams for such subjects during the next semester.

Universities and schools across the country have been closed since March 16 when the Central government announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as one of the measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

Later, a nationwide lockdown was announced on March 24, which has now been extended till May 3.

The UGC had formed two committees to deliberate on issues arising due to the lockdown to avoid academic loss and take appropriate measures for the future of students.

One of the committees, led by Haryana University Vice-Chancellor R.C. Kuhad, was formed to look into the ways of conducting exams in universities amid the lockdown and work on an alternate academic calendar.

States Prepare Migrant Movement Plans Centre Says COVID-19 Recovery Rate Up At Over 25

NEW DELHI: Authorities across states on Thursday began preparations to help lakhs of migrant workers and students reach their homes from different parts of the country where they are stranded for over a month due to the COVID-19 lockdown, even as the deadly virus infection spread further to take the nationwide tally of positive cases to over 33,600 and the death toll near 1,100.

The Union Home Ministry, however, said the recovery rate of COVID-19 patients has also improved to nearly 25.2 per cent, from about 13 per cent a fortnight ago.

As people waited for further clarity on the government's next move on the nationwide lockdown, whose second phase ends this Sunday, former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan said India should open up its economy in a measured way soon to save jobs and estimated that Rs 65,000 crore would need to be spent to support the poor amid the crisis.

Interacting with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi through video conferencing, Rajan said it is "all too easy to have a lockdown forever", but that is not sustainable for the economy and India does not have the capacity to support people across the spectrum for too long.

A nationwide lockdown has been in place since March 25. First it was announced for 21 days till April 14, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi later extended it till May 3 to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

In its evening update, the Union Health Ministry said 1,075 people have died due to COVID-19 so far across the country after 67 deaths were reported since Wednesday evening. The number of cases has increased to 33,610, including 1,823 new cases detected in the last 24 hours.

However, a PTI tally of the death toll reported by vari-

ous states and union territories, as of 6.45 PM, showed at least 1,093 people have lost their lives.

There are more than 24,000 active patients across the country, while more than 8,300 people have recovered and one patient has migrated. The total number of cases include 111 foreign nationals.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said India is doing better compared to other countries on all parameters in its fight against COVID-19 and should be able to win this decisive war in the coming few weeks.

About 60,000 foreign nationals have also been evacuated from India, while the issue of evacuation of Indians stranded abroad is also under discussion, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

Among states, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Karnataka and West Bengal have reported new cases, while more people have died in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, among other places since Wednesday evening.

At a press briefing on the COVID-19 situation, Health Ministry's Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said that the current fatality rate among detected is 3.2 per cent, with 65 per cent being males and 35 per cent females.

"If we divide it on the basis of age, then 14 per cent fatality has been seen in those aged below 45 years, 34.8 per cent between 45-60 years and 51.2 per cent in those above 60 years," he said.

Agarwal further said that the recovery rate for COVID-19 has improved from 13.06 per cent to over 25 per cent in the past 14 days.

Agarwal also said the doubling rate for COVID-19 cases has improved to 11 days as against 3.4 days before the lockdown was imposed.

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Reliance Cuts Employees' Salary By 10-50%; Ambani To Forgo Entire Salary

With the coronavirus lockdown hitting businesses hard, India's largest company Reliance Industries has decided to cut the salary of most of its employees by 10 to 50 per cent with firm's chairman and richest Indian Mukesh Ambani agreeing to forgo all his remuneration.

Also, the oil-to-technology conglomerate has deferred annual cash bonus and performance-linked incentives that are normally paid in the first quarter, according to an employee communication.

The nationwide lockdown that began on March 25 had led to evaporation of demand as factories shut down, offices closed, air flights suspended, trains stopped and restrictions on the movement of people and goods placed.

Reliance's hydrocarbon business was adversely impacted due to a reduction in demand for refined products and petrochemicals.

The company's different vertical heads wrote to their employees about the salary cut decision.

This has, of course, put pressure on our hydrocarbons business necessitating optimisation and cost reduction across all fronts," it said. "The situation demands that we maintain a razor-sharp focus on operating costs and fixed costs and all of us need to contribute to making this happen."

While Ambani will forgo his entire Rs 15 crore compensation, Reliance board of directors including executive directors, Executive Committee (EC) members, and senior leaders will forgo 30 to 50 per cent of their compensation.

Employees with compensation of less than Rs 15 lakh will have no reduction in compensation but those earning higher than that could see a 10 per cent reduction in fixed pay.



NEWS MAKER

Legendary Bollywood Actor Rishi Kapoor Passes Away At 67



MUMBAI: Bollywood actor Rishi Kapoor passed away on Thursday in Mumbai, following a long battle with cancer. He was 67.

Randhir Kapoor confirmed the news of Rishi's demise to indianexpress.com. Randhir said, "He passed away just now."

Amitabh Bachchan also took to Twitter to share the news. He tweeted, "T 3517 - He's GONE ..! Rishi Kapoor .. gone .. just passed away .. I am destroyed!"

Rishi Kapoor was admitted to Sir H N Reliance Foundation Hospital on April 29.

Rishi Kapoor was diagnosed with cancer in 2018 and had then traveled to New York for treatment. He stayed there with his wife, actor Neetu Kapoor for almost a year and returned to Mumbai in September 2019.

Rishi Kapoor was the son of legendary

actor Raj Kapoor and Krishna Kapoor. He made his first appearance in movies at the tender age of 3 in Shree 420. His debut role was in Raj Kapoor directorial Mera Naam Joker. He then became a heartthrob with RK Films' Bobby.

Rishi Kapoor was a popular actor through the 1970s to the 1990s when he worked in movies like Amar Akbar Anthony, Coolie, Karz and Chandni among more.

In his later years, he was known for his character roles in movies like Hum Tum, Agneepath and Kapoor & Sons among more. He was last seen in The Body alongside Emraan Hashmi. Rishi Kapoor is survived by his wife Neetu Kapoor, and children Ranbir Kapoor and Riddhima Kapoor.

Rishi Kapoor a powerhouse of talent: PM

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday condoled the death of veteran actor Rishi Kapoor, describing him as a "powerhouse" of talent.

"Multifaceted, endearing and lively... this was Rishi Kapoor Ji. He was a powerhouse of talent. I will always recall our interactions, even on social media," the prime minister wrote on Twitter.

Kapoor was passionate about films and India's progress. "Anguished by his demise. Condolences to his family and fans. Om Shanti," Modi said.

Naidu recalled that the talented actor essayed many roles with aplomb and was popular for his romantic films.

"In his passing away, the nation lost a beloved son and film industry lost a gem," Naidu's office tweeted.

Rishi Kapoor Cremated At Chandanwadi Crematorium; 'Strongest Warrior', Writes Daughter Riddhima

MUMBAI: Veteran actor Rishi Kapoor, who died on Thursday after a two-year battle with cancer, was cremated at the Chandanwadi crematorium in south Mumbai in the presence of close family.

Kapoor died at H N Reliance hospital in south Mumbai on Thursday at 8.45 am at the age of 67.

His body was brought to the crematorium in an ambulance at around 3.45 pm directly from the hospital amid tight police security due to the coronavirus lockdown.

His daughter Riddhima Kapoor Sahni could not be



there at the funeral as she is travelling from Delhi.

Family members including wife Neetu Singh, son Ranbir, Kapoor's elder brother Randhir, Kareena Kapoor Khan, along with husband Saif Ali Khan and actor Abhishek Bachchan and Ranbir's girlfriend Alia Bhatt and Anil Ambani were among the few present at the funeral.

Keeping in mind the coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown rules laid by the government, family members and friends present at the crematorium were seen wearing gloves and masks.

Meanwhile, Rishi's daughter Riddhima has been permitted to travel by road to Mumbai for his funeral amid the nationwide coronavirus lockdown. Riddhima sought a movement pass from South-East Delhi DCP to be able to attend her father's last rites.