



Maximum : 23°C
Minimum : 13°C
Humidity : 66%

SUNSET
Today 07:16 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 05:40 AM

Contact: -0194-2502327
FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS &
YOUR COPY OF



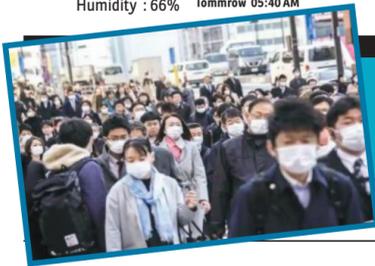
08 Ramazan-ul-Mubarak | 1441 Hijri | Vol: 23 | Issue: 93 | Pages: 08 | Price: ₹3

www.kashmirobserver.net • twitter.com / kashmirobserver • facebook.com/kashmirobserver • Postal Regn: L/159/KO/SK/2014-2016

COVID-19 THE SILVER LINING, POSITIVITY AND OPTIMISM

CORONA –Fear is OK, Panic is Not. Many people across the globe are finding it increasingly difficult to deal with the stress created by the pandemic and fortified by the lockdown. The case is of even more concern in Kashmir valley given that it is not the first or the only lockdown, the inhabitants are going through. Likewise cases of domestic violence have spiked globally. It is important to keep ones mind calm to fight a disaster of the magnitude at hand.....

.....OPINION
P4



News Digest

08 TH RAMAZAN		
IFTAR	SEHRI	
TODAY	TOMMORROW	
FIQAH HANAFIYA	07:17	04:08
FIQAH JAFARIYA	07:27	04:06

Ban On Public Entry In Gurez Lifted

Srinagar: The administration in north Kashmir's Bandipora district on Friday announced to lift the ban on entry of public in the picturesque Gurez valley from May 6. According to an order issued by the District Magistrate, Bandipora, Shahbaz Ahmad Mirza, all government employees, except from the education department, posted in Sub Division Gurez have been asked to report to Gurez from May 03 to May 05, while ● P-02

Night Ops At Parimpora Mandi Banned

Srinagar: The district administration on Friday banned night operation at the wholesale Parimpora market and restricted the business timing for just four hours in a day. According to an official spokesperson, night operations of the mandi have been banned altogether and that all new operational guidelines will remain valid until further orders. The decision in this regard has been taken after Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary's visit to the mandi today. ● P-02

Body Retrieved From River Jhelum

Srinagar: The body of a 46-year-old man, who had jumped into river Jhelum four days ago, was retrieved on Friday in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. The deceased identified as Imtiyaz Ahmad Hundo, son of Mohammad Abdullah Hundo (46), resident of Maharaj Gunj Srinagar, had jumped into river Jhelum almost four days back at Aalikadal Srinagar following which the rescue operation ● P-02

Rs 3000 Fine Slapped On Gas Agency

Srinagar: The administration in north Kashmir's Kupwara on Friday slapped a fine of Rs 3000 on a gas agency for providing LPG cylinders to consumers at exorbitant rates. Reports said that sub-district magistrate Lolab, Ejaz Ahmad Bhat on Friday caught the employees of Madina Gas Service on the spot when they were selling LPG cylinders for Rs 869 instead of government approved rate of Rs 660. The load carrier of the gas agency ● P-02

Lockdown Extended For 14 More Days, Till May 17

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The government on Friday announced that a "limited" lockdown, including suspension of inter-state travel, air and train services, will continue to remain in force for another two weeks throughout the country from May 4 but some activities would be allowed after classifying areas into Red, Orange and Green zones.

The government order, which announced extension of the lockdown invoking the Disaster Management Act, said a limited number of activities will remain prohibited throughout the country, irrespective of the zone.

These prohibited activities include travel by air, rail, metro and inter-state movement by road, running of schools, colleges, and other educational and training hospital-ity services, cinema halls, malls, gymnasiums, sports complexes.

All social, political, cultural and other kinds of gatherings and religious places or places of worship for public will also remain shut, the order said but added that movement of persons by air, rail and road is allowed for select purposes, and for purposes as permitted by MHA.

The home ministry also issued new guidelines to regulate different activities in this period, based on the risk profiling of the districts of the country into new zones with 'Red' signifying a hotspot.

The statement said that the Union Health Ministry would be sharing classification of districts into zones to the states and union territories on weekly basis.

The statement said that out-



side the containment zone falling within Red zones, certain activities are prohibited in addition to those prohibited throughout the country which includes plying of cycle rickshaws and auto-rickshaws, running of taxis and cab aggregators; intra-district and inter-district plying of buses; and, barber shops, spas and saloons.

However, some activities have been allowed in the Red Zones with restrictions that includes movement of individuals and vehicles is allowed only for permitted activities, with a maximum of two persons (besides the driver) in four-wheeler vehicles, and with no pillion rider in the case of two-wheelers. ● PAGE 02

What's Allowed & What's Not

What activities will be allowed in green zone:

All activities are permitted except the activities which are prohibited throughout the country, irrespective of zones.

Buses have been allowed to operate with 50% seating capacity. Bus depots too can operate with 50% capacity.

Movement of people is allowed for essential requirement and health purposes.

All goods traffic is to be permitted, including those to neighbouring countries.

Travel by air, rail, metro and inter-state movement by road.

Running of schools, colleges, and other educational and training/coaching institutions ● P-02

Special Trains To Ferry Stranded Students, Migrants

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Friday allowed the use of trains for ferrying people stranded due to the nationwide lockdown to their respective states, an official said.

Addressing a press conference, Joint Secretary in the MHA Punya Salila Srivastava said stranded people such as migrant workers, tourists, pilgrims and students can now be transported using trains.

"States and the Railway Board will make the necessary arrangements for the same," she said.

Underlining that some problems are cropping up in the

movement of trucks and load carriers, Srivastava said the MHA has again written to the states, reiterating that no separate pass is needed for trucks and load carriers. ● PAGE 02

J&K Govt Starts Registration For Stranded Residents

A day after centre gave its nod to the return of migrant workers, students and other persons to their respective destinations; the Jammu and Kashmir administration Friday issued helpline numbers and started online registration to facilitate return of the stranded residents of the Union Territory. The administration appointed seven officers ● P-02

From Delhi To Lakhanpur: The Unending Agony Of Kashmiri 'SOS' Girls



Jyotsna Bharti

NEW DELHI: Seven stranded Kashmiri girls who earlier posted a SOS-video on social media for evacuation from their Delhi hostel have now landed themselves in another trouble after they were stopped at Lakhanpur area of Jammu for "violating the SOP" on their way to home.

The fretful girls told Kashmir Observer from Lakhanpur border that they had left for home on Thursday morning and were cut short after their bus reached the gateway of Jammu and Kashmir on Friday afternoon. Citing the security concerns, the girls didn't share further details and cut the call.

Earlier, in the video, these girls had appealed UT officials for immediate evacuation, saying, "We don't have anyone here. Please

evacuate us. We are running out of ration and can't afford rent as demanded by our landlord."

These girls were evacuated from their hostel by a person named Aslam Chaudhry.

"After I watched their video, I approached them and gave them foods and medicines as their hostel owner was very cruel and inhuman to them," Aslam told Kashmir Observer over phone from Delhi.

"I offered them my house to stay with my family during the holy month of Ramzan," he added. "But all they asked me to evacuate them."

Aslam said that he wasn't allowed to enter the hostel area because of his "Muslim identity". "But somehow I managed to get through and helped them," he said.

Earlier, many videos went viral on social media where Muslim vegetable vendors and ● PAGE 02

J&K Students Stuck In MP Wait For Return Home

A large number of Kashmiri students stranded in parts of Madhya Pradesh due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown have been waiting for their safe return to the native places.

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh recently wrote a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, requesting him to make necessary arrangements for the nearly 400 Kashmiri students stuck in Madhya Pradesh. Singh said that as Jammu and Kashmir is under the central rule, it is the Centre's duty to help the people from that region stranded in different parts of the country.

An assistant professor at a private college in Indore, Javid Ahmad Mir, is running a campaign for the return of the students from Jammu and Kashmir. "In Indore alone, nearly 55 students from Jammu and Kashmir have been stranded since over a month ● P-02

4 Children, 5 Members Of Family Among 25 New Covid Cases

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Four children and five members of a family of an ISM pharmacist were among 25 more people who tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Kashmir Valley on Friday, taking the number of COVID-19 infected persons in J&K to 639.

The youngest among the children is an 8-year-old girl from Anantnag while three others are aged between 12 and 16.

Officials told GNS that besides new cases, there have been 31 recoveries also, taking the number of patients who have recovered 247. "Recoveries overtake ● P-02

Centre Declares 4 Kashmir Districts As Red Zones

Observer Web Desk

SRINAGAR: Ahead of the end of the extended lockdown, the Union Health Ministry has listed four districts of Kashmir Valley among 130 districts in the country in red zone.

The Union Health Ministry Friday listed has 130 districts in the country in red zone, 284 in orange zone and 319 in green zone on the basis of incidence of cases of COVID-19, doubling rate, extent of testing and surveillance feedback.

This classification of districts is to be followed by states and UTs till a week post May 3, when the second phase of lockdown will end, for containment operations. The list will be revised on a weekly

basis or earlier and communicated to states for further follow-up action.

As per the list, four districts of Kashmir- Srinagar, Bandipora, Anantnag and Shopian have been included in red zone.

The twelve other districts have been classified as orange zones which include Baramulla, Kupwara, Ganderbal, Jammu, Udhampur, Kulgam, Budgam, Samba, Kathua, Rajouri, Ramban and Reasi while four districts have been classified as Green Zones which include Pulwama, Kishtwar, Doda and Poonch.

The total number of positive cases in Jammu and Kashmir is 639. Of the total number of cases, 581 are from Kashmir and 58 from Jammu. The new classification ● PAGE 02

LoC Flare Up: 3 Soldiers Among 7 Injured In Cross-LoC Shelling

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Three soldiers and two minors were among seven people injured on Friday as India and Pakistan troops traded heavy gunfire along the line of control (LoC) in Uri sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

The exchange of fire between the two estranged enemies started around 10:00 am along the LoC in Hajipore sector of Uri, witnesses told Kashmir Observer. However, as the day approached, firing and cross-LoC shelling intensified and the

deafening explosions created panic in Charunda, Batgran, Hathlanga, Mothal, Sahoora, Silikote, Balakote, Nambra, Garkote and other areas of the border town, they said.

In Charunda, a village worst hit over these years in the Indo-Pak border skirmishes, three people, including two minors were injured when a mortar shell exploded near their house before exploding with a bang.

The injured have been identified as four-year-old Touseef Ahmad Khatana, 12-year-old Shanaza Bano and ● PAGE 02

CASO Launched In North Kashmir's Handwara

KO Web Desk

SRINAGAR: Government forces on Friday launched a search operation in dense Rajwar and Mawar forest areas of north Kashmir's Kupwara district. According to reports, army, special operations group (SOG) of police started a ● P-02

18-Year-Old Girl Dies In Baramulla GMC Baramulla Orders Burial As Per Covid-19 Protocol

SRINAGAR: An 18-year-old girl with symptoms of novel coronavirus died "on arrival" to GMC hospital Baramulla on Friday.

While doctors have taken her sample for coronavirus, her body was handed over to the family but asked to strictly follow protocol for Covid-19 patient.

Medical Superintendent GMC Baramulla Dr Syed Masood Bukhari said that the 18-year-old from Khuroo Langate Handwara died of a heart attack.

"She died on arrival," he said. On inquiring, he said, "the girl as per the family had high fever and breathlessness from last

ten days and she was taken to Handwara hospital. However, the family thought to take her to GMC Baramulla."

The swab sample of the teenager for coronavirus has been taken and sent for test, he said.

"We have handed over the body and all measures are taken for a COVID-19 patient would have to be adhered to," he said, adding, "We counseled the family for the importance of conducting last rites strictly as per Covid-19 protocol. We have also informed deputy commissioner Kupwara, as well as BMO, concerned regarding the last rites as per the Covid-19 protocol." (GNS)

The Scholar In Dungeon: 'A Gem Of A Person, A True Intellectual'

Mrinal Pathak

NEW DELHI: Before arrested by Delhi Police on the night of April 11, 2020 for her alleged role in Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) campus flare-up, Safoora Zargar, 27, was living a scholar's dream.

She was assertive, articulate, and academic to a core.

As an art and culture enthusiast, this Kashmiri girl hailing from the Chenab Valley of Jammu and Kashmir was keenly reading history and sharing laughter with her friends, before a certain situation made her an emergency media face of the student community.

Her batchmates describe Safoora,

a final year student of Masters in Philosophy, JMI, as a "no nonsense girl who couldn't take injustice".

"As an upright individual," Safoora's friend from her Faculty of Natural Sciences told Kashmir Observer, "she was always at the forefront to plead the students' case. But we never knew that she would face a witch-hunt for her pro-student activism."

As a "kind-hearted" girl, said a former JMI student, Safoora was a strong advocate of women's rights in the varsity.

"She led various campaigns against the assault of female students in the university," the girl student said. "She could never make peace with any kind of injustice."



When protests against the controversial National Register of Citizens (NRC) and Citizenship Amendment

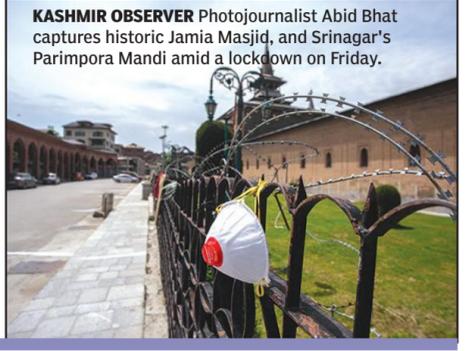
Act (CAA) broke out in Delhi earlier this year, Safoora's campus felt ripples too.

But unlike other universities in Delhi, as JMI does not have a students' union, students and alumni of the institute formed an unofficial Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), with Safoora its Media Coordinator.

"She's being targeted with false cases by the Delhi Police," said a JCC member. "Her role was only limited to give press releases to various media outlets. She doesn't deserve to be hounded for that!"

The pregnant scholar was taken into custody on April 11, 2020, and was subsequently locked in the Tihar Jail on April 16.

Terminating her arrest as an inhuman act, a student of the Sociology Department, while fighting ● PAGE 02



KASHMIR OBSERVER Photojournalist Abid Bhat captures historic Jamia Masjid, and Srinagar's Parimpora Mandi amid a lockdown on Friday.

Lockdown Extended For 14 More Days...

Industrial establishments in urban areas including Special Economic Zones (SEZs), Export Oriented Units (EOUs), industrial estates and industrial townships with access control have been permitted.

Construction activities in urban areas have been limited to in-situ construction (where workers are available on site and no workers are required to be brought in from outside) and construction of renewable energy projects.

Shops in urban areas, for non-essential goods, are not allowed in malls, markets and market complexes. However, all standalone (single) shops, neighbourhood (colony) shops and shops in residential complexes are permitted to remain open in urban areas, without any distinction of essential and non-essential.

E-Commerce activities in the Red Zones are permitted only in respect of essential goods, and private offices can operate with up to 33 per cent strength as per requirement, with the remaining persons working from home.

All government offices shall function with senior officers of the level of Deputy Secretary and above at full strength, and the remaining staff attending up to 33 per cent as per requirement.

Most of the commercial and private establishments have been allowed in the Red Zones which includes print and electronic media, IT and IT enabled services, data and call centres, cold storage and warehousing services, private security and facility management services, and services provided by self-employed persons except for barbers.

The statement said that the Orange Zones, in addition to activities permitted in Red Zone, taxis and cab aggregators will be permitted with one driver and one passenger only. Inter-district movement of individuals and vehicles will be allowed for permitted activities only.

Four-wheeler vehicles will have maximum two passengers besides the driver and pillion riding will be allowed on two-wheelers.

In the Green Zones, all activities are permitted except the limited number of activities which are prohibited throughout the country, irrespective of the Zone. However buses can operate with up to 50 per cent seating capacity and bus depots can operate with up to 50 per cent capacity.

What's Allowed & What's Not...

Cinema halls, malls, gyms and sports complexes, socia, political or religious gatherings

Movement of individuals for non-essential purposes shall remain restricted between 7pm - 7am

Movement of persons above 65 years, those with history of co-morbidities, pregnant women and children below 10 years

Special Trains To Ferry Stranded...

including the empty vehicles.

Exercising the powers conferred under the Disaster Management Act, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said the movement of migrant workers, pilgrims, tourists, students and other persons stranded at different places is allowed by special trains to be operated by the Ministry of Railways (MoR).

The MoR will designate nodal officers for coordinating with the states and Union territories for their movement, he added. "The MoR will issue detailed guidelines for sale of tickets, and social distancing and other safety measures to be observed at train stations, platforms and within the trains," the home secretary said.

J&K Govt Starts Registration For Stranded...

to coordinate and monitor the movement of J&K residents in different states and Union Territories due to lockdown imposed to prevent spread of Covid-19, an official spokesperson said today.

A SOP has been issued on 30th of April 2020, differentiating between regulated and non-regulated movement and quarantine procedures.

According to the official spokesperson, migrant workers can fill the form by accessing website <https://forms.gle/W48hL26Ew2eBv4mt5>, while the students have to fill form on http://its.uok.edu.in/Main/UserForm.aspx?Form=Students_Outside#top, while other stranded persons can fill details on <https://forms.gle/fmMZDCVR2MAVEGCK9>

These links are hosted on website www.jktpo.in & <http://its.uok.edu.in/>.

"Persons desirous of returning are required to fill in the relevant forms with the details and after due process, the movement pass will be provided," the spokesperson said. The administration has also provided numbers of officials for registration and queries.

From Delhi To Lakhapur: The Unending Agony

hawkers were barred from entering the Hindu-dominated neighbourhoods in Delhi.

After Aslam, the girls were contacted by the team of Shaheel-ur-Rahman, a social activist. Rehman, Aslam said, was set in motion by ex-J&K minister Altaf Bukhari and Assam MP Badruddin Ajmal.

"The girls were helped by the ex-minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Altaf Bukhari, who promised to take them home after securing their valid travel passes," Aslam said.

The distressed girls had accepted the help and left Delhi on Thursday morning at 8:30 am in a tourist van.

"Before leaving, I went to say goodbye to them, and gave them food and water," Aslam, who's in constant contact with girls, said.

"But alas," he added, "they have been stopped at Lakhapur border today. They weren't treated well for posting their video on the internet and have been made to sit in the van."

When contacted, Kashmir's Divisional Commissioner, PK

Pole told Kashmir Observer that the girls have "violated the SOP" by not informing the designated nodal officer about their homecoming.

"And now, they have to spend 21 days in quarantine," Div-Com Pole said.

On Thursday, as #BringThemHome campaign overtook social media, the Jammu and Kashmir government issued Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for regulating the movement of stranded residents of J&K from outside the Union Territory.

As per the order the 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.

Apparently, both Aslam Chaudhry and Altaf Bukhari-led help group have failed to take the UT officials in confidence and ended up landing these girls into another agonizing period.

J&K Students Stuck In MP Wait For Return...

due to the lockdown," Mir told PTI.

Apart from college students and PhD scholars, an 80-year-old woman from Kashmir is also stuck in Indore, he said.

In his letter, Digvijaya Singh said that 32 students from Jammu and Kashmir are stranded in Bhopal and 17 others in Gwalior.

He said they should be taken back to Jammu and Kashmir and quarantined as per the protocol.

So far, 1,485 COVID-19 positive patients have been found in Indore, of whom 68 have died during treatment, officials have said.

On March 24, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced a 21-day lockdown, which was later extended till May 3.

4 Children, 5 Members Of Family Among 25...

new cases- 25 New Cases, 31 Recoveries; Total Cases now 639. Active Cases-384 (Jammu-6 Kashmir -378)," Rohit Kansal, principal secretary information and a government spokesman said.

Among the fresh cases, 11 were confirmed at Viral Diagnostic Lab of SKIMS Saura and include six from Kupwara, two from Shopian and one each from Baramulla, Bandipora and Budgam districts.

However, most of the cases, 14, were confirmed at the COVID-19 testing laboratory at Chest Disease hospital Dalgate and include 12 from Anantnag and two from Srinagar districts.

The cases from Anantnag include five members of a family comprising wife (52), two daughters (22 and 25) besides a 16-year-old son and brother (in 30s) of an ISM pharmacist from Tailwani Achabal. The 56-year-old pharmacist, posted at PHC Achabal, had tested positive for the disease on April 26.

The other cases include 8-year-old girl, 12-year-old boy besides two men-aged 60 and 80 besides a 48-year-old woman from Larnoo and a 55-year-old woman from Sangam area.

Six cases from Kupwara are from Gonipora Handwara, all men with three of the aged 60 while as many others are 40, 41 and 50 respectively.

Cases includes 17-year-old female and 46-year-old women from Bemina area, sources said.

The Shopian cases include 12-year-old boy and a 55-year-old woman from Heerpora, one of the most affected areas in the southern Kashmir district.

The cases from Bandipora, Baramulla and Budgam districts include a 23-year-old woman from Gundjahangir, a 28-year-old man from Hardchilloo and a 39-year-old man from Char-e-Sharief respectively.

According to Prof Farooq Jan, Medical Superintendent SKIMS Saura man from Budgam has travel history to New Delhi. Others, he said, are contacts of previous patients.

Meanwhile, according to the daily Media Bulletin on novel coronavirus (Covid-19), out of 639 positive cases, 384 are Active Positive, 247 have recovered and 08 have died.

Moreover, 31 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and discharged from various hospitals, of Kashmir Division.

It said that out of 21695 test results available, 21056 samples have tested as negative till May 01, 2020.

Furthermore, till date 71837 travellers and persons in contact with suspected cases have been enlisted for surveillance which includes 8109 persons in-home quarantine including facilities operated by government, 185 in Hospital Quarantine, 384 in hospital isolation and 8430 under home surveillance. Besides, 54721 persons have completed their surveillance period.

Centre Declares 4 Kashmir Districts...

of districts was announced following a video conference chaired by the Cabinet Secretary on April 30 with chief secretaries and health secretaries of states.

In a letter to chief secretaries of all states and UTs, Union Health Ministry Secretary Preeti Sudan said, "It is important to ensure that we identify pockets of critical interventions for a focused management of COVID -19 at the field level".

She said the districts were earlier designated as hotspots/red-zones, orange zones and green zones primarily based on cumulative cases reported and the doubling rate.

"Since recovery rates have gone up, the districts are now being designated across various zones duly broad-basing the criteria. This classification is multi-factorial and takes into consideration incidence of cases, doubling rate, extent of testing and surveillance feedback to classify the districts," Sudan said in her letter.

A district will be considered under green zone if there has been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 so far or there is no reported case since last 21 days in the district, according to the letter.

Till now any red or orange zone districts could become a green zone if no fresh case of coronavirus was reported for 28 and 14 consecutive days respectively.

Metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Pune, Bengaluru and Ahmedabad have been designated as red

zones in the new classification.

In the list, all the 11 districts in Delhi have been classified under red zone (hotspots).

Maharashtra has 14 districts in the red zone, 16 in orange and six in green zone, while Gujarat has nine districts in the red zone, 19 in orange and five in green zone.

In Madhya Pradesh, there are nine districts in the red zone, 19 in orange and 24 in the green zone, while Rajasthan has eight, 19 and six districts in the red, orange and green zones respectively.

Uttar Pradesh has 19 districts in the red zone, 36 in orange and 20 in green while Tamil Nadu has 12 districts in the red zone, 24 in the orange and one district in the green zone.

Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram fall under the green zone.

Telangana has six districts in the red zone, 18 in the orange and nine in the green zone. Andhra Pradesh has five districts in red zone, seven in orange and one in green zone while West Bengal has 10, 5 and 8 districts in the red, orange, green zones respectively.

Some states like Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Meghalaya, Puducherry and Tripura have no red zone districts. Noting that some states "have raised issues on inclusion of certain districts in red-zone", the secretary highlighted that this is a dynamic list.

The Secretary said based on field feedback and additional analysis at state level, states may designate additional red or orange zones as appropriate.

"However, states may not relax the zonal classification of districts classified as red/orange as communicated by the ministry," Sudan said.

For districts having one or more municipal corporations, the corporations and other areas of districts may be treated as separate units.

If one or more of these units have reported no cases for last 21 days, they can be considered as one level lower in zonal classification, in case the district is in red/orange zone.

District authorities should, however, exercise caution in such areas so that they remain free from COVID-19 cases, she said.

"It is critical to ensure that necessary action for containment so as to break the chain of transmission of virus is initiated in both red and orange zone districts reporting confirmed cases," she said.

The containment zones in these districts have to be delineated based on mapping of cases and contacts, geographical dispersion of cases and contacts.

A buffer zone around containment zone has to be demarcated.

Necessary action should then be initiated in these areas as part of the

Containment Action Plans include stringent perimeter control, establishing clear entry and exit points, no movement except for medical emergencies and essential goods and services, no unchecked influx of population, active search for cases through house to house surveillance by special teams, testing of all cases as per sampling guidelines and contact tracing.

Similarly, in buffer zones, extensive surveillance for cases through monitoring of ILI/SARI cases in health facilities has to be taken up.

"All states are accordingly requested to delineate containment zones and buffer zones in the identified red and orange zone districts and notify the same," she said.

The death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 1,147 and the number of cases climbed to 35,043 in the country on Friday, according to the Union Health Ministry.

(With PTI Inputs)

LoC Flare Up: 3 Soldiers Among 7...

Tahira Bano, 20, wife of Liyaqat Ali. Another woman identified as Hassan Bibi, wife of Husan Din Koli suffered injuries while trying to run towards safer place.

"Intermittent shelling started around 10 in the morning. However, after 2:00 pm, the exchange of fire between the two sides intensified," Sarpanch Charunda Lal Din told Kashmir Observer over phone.

Din said that all the three injured had to travel by foot to board an ambulance to reach Health Sub Centre Uri as the exchange of fire was going on.

He said the skirmishes were so intense that several shells landed in main town and other parts of the border town.

"I had witnesses such a frightening clash after 20 years. It was in 90's when the two armies would trade fire so heavily," he said, adding "Many residential houses in the village suffered damages due to the shelling.

Srinagar based army spokesperson Col Rajesh Kalia said that three soldiers were injured in unprovoked ceasefire violation by Pakistan troops along the LoC in Rampur sector today.

"Indian Army is retaliating befittingly," Kalia added.

A local news agency GNS quoting sources said that the injured soldiers have been evacuated to a military hospital where condition of two of them is critical.

The report also quoted Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Uri Reyaz Ahmad Malik as saying that a team of health officials with an ambulance could not make it to the village due to the continuous shelling.

"If shelling continues with heavy intensity, the residents of the affected areas will be moved to safety," Malik said.

Pertinently, today's clash at the LoC comes a day after a teenager was killed in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan had also claimed that a soldier and two civilians were killed in the cross-LoC shelling that took place in Mankote sector of Poonch on Thursday.

CASO Launched In North Kashmir's Handwara...

combing operation in the Rajwar forest area of Handwara this afternoon amid reports that a group of militants were hiding in the woods. The search team fired several warning shots expecting response from the militants. However, no retaliation was reported.

According to reports, additional reinforcements, including elite 9 Para have been rushed to the spot to prevent militants from fleeing.

"The operation was launched following suspicious movement of about 4 to 5 militants in the forest area," a police officer told news agency GNS.

Meanwhile, army and SOG have also started a search op-

eration in Mawar forest area to stop militants from using the route to reach Baramulla.

The Scholar In Dungeon: 'A Gem Of A Person...

his tears, said, "Safoora is a gem of a person, a true intellectual."

To defend the incarcerated scholar, currently, a group of 11 lawyers are handling the case. They've made her pregnancy as a ground for her bail, but the government has said that it's able to provide Safoora with adequate medical assistance in dungeon.

"This is completely illegal," one of her lawyers told Kashmir Observer on the condition of anonymity.

"You cannot arrest a woman post 6PM as per the Supreme Court's orders. The police declared her arrest the next morning under First Information Report (FIR) Number 440/20 filed and she was later presented in Jaffrabad District court in Northeast Delhi."

The sections filed under the primary FIR consisted of only one non-bailable warrant, however, another FIR numbered 59/220 was filed against her by the police in Tihar Court.

According to Safoora's lawyer, the second FIR consists of very stringent non-bailable sections such as 124A (Sedition), 124B, 302 and, 307 (Attempt to Murder).

The scholar's lawyers allege that her bail was rejected due to the cryptic reply filed by the police, which eventually booked Safoora under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The amended UAPA allows the government to proscribe individuals as terrorists and empowers more officers of the National Investigation Agency to probe cases. A person charged under the act can be jailed for up to seven years.

Back home, her heartbroken family is living in quarantined locality and are unable to make sense of the sudden turn of events in their life. Safoora's terrified husband is not willing to talk to anyone except his jailed wife's lawyers.

Meanwhile, as Safoora's case has become a new rallying cry for justice, with netizens calling for her immediate release, All India Congress Committee member and former student leader, Fairoz Khan has requested the Ministry of Women and Child Development and Women Commission India and Delhi to take cognizance of this issue.

"She has been booked under the undemocratic UAPA, which is inhumane," Khan said. "This BJP led government fear dissent and criticism and thus make sure they use and abuse all the powers to crack down on all and any voice of dissent."

Ban On Public Entry In Gurez Lifted...

the general public of Gurez can travel to Gurez from May 06, an official spokesperson said today.

As per the guidelines issued today, employees will be allowed to move on production of their Identity Cards while ARTO, Bandipora has been asked to make transport available for the employees.

The official spokesperson said that no vehicle will be allowed without valid permission to travel on road.

"Persons from Red Zones shall not be allowed to move to Gurez till the Red zone is declared Green zone. All the vehicles moving towards Gurez will be fumigated and medical checkup of the travellers will be conducted at LalQjilaMorh, Pethkoot," he said.

The official spokesperson further said that any symptomatic person shall not be allowed to move to Gurez and will be immediately referred to the hospital for follow up.

At Gurez, he said fresh screening will be conducted at Koragbal and 15 days Administrative or Home Quarantine to the passengers depending on their health status will be advised, while the vehicles will also be fumigated at the place.

"No movement from Gurez to Bandipora will be allowed for the time being except for medical emergencies and other emergencies on permission, to be issued by the Sub Divisional Magistrate, Gurez," the official spokesperson added.

Pertinently, a ban on the entry of people into Gurez valley was imposed by the district administration on April 6 in a bid to prevent spread of coronavirus.

Night Ops At Parimpora Mandi Banned...

"It should be noted that it has been decided that the mandi will now remain closed except from 8 am to 12 noon during which time it will operate strictly as per social distancing guidelines and under the watch of law enforcement officials," the official spokesperson said.

Meanwhile the district administration has taken 230 samples taken from people working at and visiting the Parimpora mandi. The samples will be tested for COVID-19, the official spokesperson said.

Body Retrieved From River Jhelum...

was launched, officials told news agency KNO.

He said that the police spotted the body lying in River Jhelum at LatiRabitatar and later handed it over to police post Urdu Bazar Srinagar.

Rs 3000 Fine Slapped On Gas Agency...

bearing registration number JK09B-3229 was also seized. "We had received a complaint that the gas agency was overcharging consumers for the LPG cylinders. I visited the spot and realized a fine of Rs 3000 from them" SDM Lolab told news agency GNS.

He said that the vehicle was let off only after the fine was realized from the gas agency staffers.

Bhat further said that he has written a letter to the assistant director, food and supplies department, Kupwara seeking action against the gas agency owner for selling cylinders at exorbitant rates. He said he has also recommended cancellation of the gas agency's license.

Industries resume operation during lockdown- come forward in support of fight against COVID-19

JAMMU, MAY 01: In order to mitigate the hardship to the public in the backdrop of COVID-19, the Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (State Executive Committee) Government of Jammu and Kashmir notified Standard Operating Procedure for regulating activities of industries / industrial / commercial / private establishments in pursuance to measures being taken up during lockdown.

As per the order, the Industries & Commerce Department has been vested with the authority for issuance of orders to permit operation of industrial units. The SOP has specified the categories of industry to be permitted to operate during the period of lockdown which included Essential Commodities comprising Basic Food processing activities, Packaged processed food items, Pharmaceuticals, Soaps, disinfectant and detergents, Agro products, Packaging Material, Cold Storages, Packaged Drinking water and Cotton Masks.

In addition, some activities have also been permitted on case to case basis like Repair of transformers and Parts thereof, production of cardboard/ wooden boxes for apple/ fruit packing, Industries operating in rural areas, Brick Kilns in rural areas and production units requiring continuous manufacturing process. Besides, manufacturing activities within the Industrial Estates have been allowed on case to case basis where the arrangement for stay of workers is possible within the premises or an adjacent building.

Besides, the units manufacturing Medical/Health infrastructure items, Sanitization Tunnels/ fumigation Tunnels are also to be permitted to operate on case to case basis if existing within the Industrial Estates. Specific manufacturing activities, if essential, for meeting requirement of the Government and projects like development/construction and other works of industrial estates are also to be permitted.

Likewise, services including Print and electronic media, IT & ITES, Data and Call Centres for Government activities only, CSCs, e-com companies, Courier Services, Cold Storage & warehousing, Private Security Services, Hotels & Home Stays accommodating persons stranded due to lockdown and establishments used for quarantine facilities would be permitted to operate.

The Department of Industries & Commerce under the guidance of Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce, has permitted 1007 industrial units to operate during the lockdown period in Jammu while as 468 units have been permitted in Kashmir as per provisions of the Standard Operating Procedure. Corresponding to the above 786 units have resumed their operation in Jammu whereas 455 units have become operational in Kashmir.

The Department has facilitated operation of all Pharmaceuticals and Oxygen gas bottling units. Other category of units which have been permitted to operate included Flour Mills, Rice Mills, Oil Mills, Packaging Material, Dal & Besan, Animal/ Poultry Feed, Surgical bandage, Disposal Syringes, Cotton and Dental material, Packaged Drinking Water, Iodized Salt, Agro-chemicals, Spices, Cold Storage Facilities, Milk Processing, Soap Detergents, Sanitization Tunnels, Food Processing, Steel Rolling Mills/ Furnaces, Plaster of Paris, Cement, Paints, PVC Granules, Mosquito Coils, Briquettes, Mattresses, Textiles, Cotton Masks etc.

The Industries & Commerce Department in unison with the Department of Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs has been able to ensure availability of essential commodities across J&K with effective maintenance of supply chain with no shortage of any item been reported from any part of J&K. The department has also facilitated operation of some warehouses where the material was to be supplied for construction of Government projects like Steel Author-

ity of India Ltd.

However, permission for operating these units has been granted on the condition of following Social distancing norms as specified by the government under the notified SOP. The commuting of workers has to be done with only 30% capacity of the mode of transport used. The owners are required to keep the premises properly sanitized. The workers have to undergo thermal screening twice a day and wear masks. Medical insurance of the workers has been made mandatory besides strict ban on use of Gutka and Tobacco inside the unit premises and provision of hand wash and Sanitizer at sufficient number of places inside the unit premises observed.

It has been stipulated that the units shall operate with not more than one third of the staff and management to ensure maintenance of Social Distancing at the work place. Smaller units with strength of less than 20 persons and units where the labour resides within the unit premises are kept out of the purview of this stipulation. Pharmaceutical units have been permitted to work with 60% of the workforce.

The officers of the Industries & Commerce Department, have been asked to inspect such units on weekly basis to monitor the observance of norms of social distancing and related measures, inspected 221 units in Jammu Division upon which on observation of discrepancy permission in respect of 01 unit has been withdrawn by the Director Industries & Commerce, Jammu.

On the directions of Commissioner Secretary Industries & Commerce, the J&K Handloom Development Corporation and Khadi & Village Industries Board (KVIB) have also mobilized their units to augment mask production for meeting the demand from various district authorities. About 8 Lakh masks have been manufactured by 28 units of the said Corporations after their operation during lockdown.

J&K SIDCO and J&K SICOP are

regularly carrying out fumigation and sanitation drives in all their estates on regular basis to ensure proper hygiene in the estates.

The Industries & Commerce department has also mobilized the Industrial units to come forward in CSR Activities. The Industrial Units have distributed sanitizer, masks and gloves. The activities also included making arrangements of food for workers and labourers in the industrial areas. Some units have also made monetary contribution towards J&K Relief Fund and PM CARES to the tune of Rs 50 lakh besides a Quarantine facility has been setup in Industrial Estate Lassipora by the concerned Industrial Association. Likewise, 4 COVID Sample collection booths have been donated to Health Department along with installation of Sanitization tunnels.

The staff of Industries & Commerce Department including various Corporations has also come forward in fight against COVID Pandemic by making contribution to J&K Relief Fund from their salary amounting Rs. 58.132 Lakh.

Meanwhile, Director Industries and Commerce, Jammu on 27-04-2020, conducted surprise inspection of Industrial units at Industrial Growth Centre Samba and Industrial Estate Kathua to ascertain whether the units are following the guidelines prescribed under the Standard Operating Procedure issued by the Government, to ensure that the units are complying with the social distancing norms, maintaining proper hygiene in the unit premise and wearing of face masks by the employees.

The unit holders were advised to highlight guidelines and good hygienic practices in the shape of posters within the unit premises so that the workers are reminded of the same more frequently and in case they face hardship in getting the posters printed, the Federation of Industries, Jammu and other Associations have assured help to such units by getting the material printed

Miscreants chopped off over 160 apple trees in Budgam over electricity dispute

Budgam: Unknown miscreants chopped off over 160 apple trees in the middle of the night in Central Kashmir's Budgam district sending shock waves among orchardists of the district.

Police sources said that an orchardist identified as Ghulam Qadir Bhat son of Ali Muhammad, a resident of Lassipora virtually tried to end his life after he found his 160 apple trees flatly lying on ground.

The incident sent shock waves among people who demanded stern punishment for culprits. "Hang them in broad day light who are responsible for this dastardly act," locals said.

"I don't know who has done it. Whosoever has done it is a culprit and God will never forgive him. Over 160 apple trees have been cut by unknown men. I am finished," victim said.

A couple of locals said that there is tussle over power supply going on between the villagers of Churmujroo and Lassipora. A couple of days back people of Lassipora uprooted few electric poles and took away the electric HT wire that was going towards Churmujroo when a PDD team tried to visit the area.

Village Charmajroo is without electricity since November 2019. Few villages including Lassipora object to the move of PDD and stop it from providing electricity supply to Charmajroo from Receiving Station Watheril.

They told Kashmir News Trust on condition of anonymity that the orchardist Ghulam Qadir Bhat whose apple trees were chopped off is from Lassipora, but he was supporting the cause of Churmujroo people. "May be, some people didn't like his actions and were hurt. They may be feeling that despite being a resident of Lassipora, he is supporting Churmujroo. This may be the reason behind this chopping off incident," they said.

Police have already lodged a couple of FIR's against the unknown goons of Lassipora for assaulting a PDD team and even damaging their official vehicle. "Now again we have registered a case with regard to the chopping off incident. Stern action will be taken against culprits who cut down these trees," Station House Officer Budgam Police Station, Nazir Ahmed said.

KNT

Bandipora admin to allow entry of general public into Gurez Valley from May 06

BANDIPORA, MAY 01: The Bandipora District administration has issued fresh guidelines today, for movement of traffic on Bandipora-Gurez road to allow stranded passengers and employees to return to their homes or join their duties in Gurez. The guidelines will come into effect from May 06.

Pertinently, the District Magistrate (DM), Bandipora imposed ban on entry of people into Gurez valley, On April 06, On April 06, as a precautionary measure to prevent spread of COVID-19.

According to the fresh or-

der issued by the District Magistrate, Bandipora, Shahbaz Ahmad Mirza, all Government employees except of Education Department, posted in Sub Division Gurez have been asked to report to Gurez from May 03 to May 05, while the general public of Gurez can travel to Gurez from May 06.

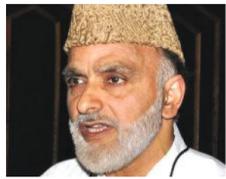
As per the guidelines issued today, employees will be allowed to move on production of their Identity Cards while ARTO, Bandipora has been asked to make transport available for the employees. No vehicle will be allowed without valid permission to travel on road.

HC directs govt to produce detention record of Sagar

Srinagar: The Jammu & Kashmir High Court on Friday granted three weeks' time to government to file its counter affidavit on a plea challenging detention of NC general secretary and five-time MLA Ali Muhammad Sagar under the Public Safety Act (PSA).

Appearing on behalf of government, Additional Advocate General, B. A. Dar sought three weeks' time to file counter affidavit. Justice Sindhu Sharma while granting the time to Additional Advocate General (AAG), BA Dar, directed him to bring the detention record by May 20.

"Detention record be kept available on the next date of



hearing before the bench," the court directed. The case is listed for hearing on May 20.

The veteran NC lawmaker is in detention from August 5 last year when BJP-led central government abrogated Article 370 and downgraded the erstwhile state into two Union Territories. After remaining in prevention

detention under the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) for six months, the government booked Sagar under Public Safety Act in February this year.

The counsel representing Sagar had submitted before the Court that he is an old-aged person and is suffering from many ailments like hypertension and cardiovascular diseases which he developed during his detention.

The counsel had also pointed out that as the COVID-19 pandemic is spreading and since the NC leader has pre-existing medical conditions, he is most susceptible to the infection of the deadly virus—(KNO)

COVID-19 lockdown hits livelihood of thousands associated with Handicraft

Agencies

Srinagar: The continuous lockdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus has severely hit the livelihood of hundreds of persons in Jammu and Kashmir associated with handicraft sector.

Thousands of persons who make different types of handicraft products with items and materials traditionally said that due to clampdown after August 05 and lockdown to stop spread of covid-19, they suffered huge losses as they are unable to sell their products.

Talking to news agency, they said that they are unable to get the required raw material for making products of Pashmina, Shawl, Carpet, Silverware, Woodwork, Crewel embroidery, Phool kari, Kashmiri rug and Papier-mache and they are going through tough times.

"We are not sure how long will this lockdown continue and after failing to earn our livelihoods we are living in panic situation," said Arif Ahmad, a weaver hailing from Chaar-e-Sharief area of Budgam district.

He said that he was not being able to travel outside his villages and was not able to bring items like threads of dif-

ferent colours to carry on with his work on the carpet that he is working on presently.

His views were echoed by some other weavers who said that with each passing day the panic among the weavers and artisans is increasing as they already have gone through tough times after August 05 last year when the Union government announced abrogation of article 370.

"Since very little tourists visited Kashmir after August 05 lockdown, we were not able to sell our products and we have been sitting idle at home," they said.

"We are unable to sell our exquisite shawls manufactured locally to the visiting tourists or send them to markets outside Kashmir," said Shakeel Ahmad from Pulwama district.

He said that people engage themselves with the handicrafts sector in winter and all products that were made during the previous months are lying at his home as nobody is purchasing these products amid lockdown.

"I was providing work to over 100 people in my area but due to lockdown and non-availability of raw material no one is in a position to work," said Mushtaq Ahmad, another artisan who helps others to be part of the working group of artisans.

DM Pulwama declares five more villages red zones

PULWAMA: Five more villages in Pulwama district were declared red zones and surrounding villages buffer zones to prevent the spread of Corona virus after two persons from these villages were declared COVID positive.

As there is every likelihood of mass contact by these persons in their native village District Authorities today declared Drabgam Bala, Drabgam Payeen, Shairbagh, Dardpora and Gori-check villages of Tehsil Rajpora Red zones while Checki Badri Nath, Pachar, Qasba Yaar along with Tailwani Check were declared buffer zones to break the further transmission chain of Covid-19.

District Authorities said that it has become imperative to initiate restrictive measures under section 144 CrPC for immediate prevention of danger to human life, health and safety in view of two positive cases reported from Drabgam.

Invoking prohibitory orders under Epidemic Diseases Act 1897, Section 144 of the CrPC and Disaster Management Act, 2005, there would be no inward and outward movement of any person from the villages declared Red zone and the people have to stay indoors to ensure complete lockdown.

DIAL-EMMA

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BUBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI CALENDAR
08 Ramazan
1441

PRAYERS

FAJR	4: 10
ZUHR	12: 28
ASR	5: 17
Magrib	7: 17
ISHA	8: 48

This Day In History

- 1335 - Otto the Merry, Duke of Austria, becomes Duke of Carinthia.
- 1345 - "Quaden Maendach" in Ghent: battles between fullers & weavers
- 1497 - John Cabot's expedition departs Bristol searching for new lands across the Atlantic
- 1526 - German evangelical monarchy joins Schmalkaldische League
- 1598 - France & Spain sign Peace of Vervins
- 1776 - France & Spain agreed to give weapons to American rebels
- 1808 - Uprising against French occupation begins in Madrid
- 1833 - Russian Tsar Nicolas I bans public sale of serfs
- 1889 - Abyssinian Emperor Menelik II and Italy sign Treaty of Wichale
- 1905 - French newspapers publish lists of Jules Verne unpublished work
- 1906 - Tsar Nicolas II of Russia dismisses his moderate Prime Minister Witte and appoints Ivan Goremykin, a conservative bureaucrat
- 1911 - French troops occupy Fès El Bali Morocco
- 1924 - Netherlands refuses to recognize USSR
- 1926 - US military intervenes in Nicaragua
- 1927 - Intl Economic Conference (52 countries including USSR) opens
- 1933 - In Germany, Adolf Hitler bans trade unions
- 1942 - Japanese troops occupy Mandalay, Burma
- 1945 - Allies occupy Wismar, Northern Germany
- 1945 - WWII: Battle of Berlin ends as Soviet army takes Berlin and General Weidling surrenders
- 1945 - Yugoslav troops occupy Trieste
- 1946 - The "Battle of Alcatraz" takes place, killing two guards and three inmates
- 1953 - Hussein I installed as king of Jordan
- 1955 - India proposal to discrimination against Dalits or "Untouchables" punishable
- 1956 - US Lab detects high-temperature microwave radiation from Venus
- 1975 - Apple records closes down
- 1997 - Mercury Mail announces its 1 millionth internet subscriber
- 1999 - Panamanian election, 1999: Mireya

From KO Archives

Mirwaiz Dials Salahudin

Hizb Supremo Offered Seat At Hurriyat

ISLAMABAD - Moderate Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq has sought support of Pakistan-based militant group Hizbul Mujahideen's leader Sayeed Salahuiddin for persuading hardline Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani to agree for a unification of the conglomerate.

Pakistani newspaper Daily Times reported that Mirwaiz Farooq called up Salahuiddin who is also the Chairman of the Muttahida Jihad Council (MJC) a conglomerate of militant groups, and asked him to help unify the Hurriyat factions.

Umer Farooq offered the MJC leader a post in the Hurriyat Conference and requested him to persuade Geelani, to agree for unification, Salahuiddin told Mirwaiz that a decision to join the Hurriyat Conference would be taken after consulting the MJC leadership, the newspaper said.

Salahuiddin's spokesman Saleem Hashmi has confirmed the telephone contact, the daily said.

Following the contact, Salahuiddin has begun consultations with other Council leaders and is likely to convene a meeting next week to discuss developments on the Kashmir issue, it said.

There would be a series of meetings in Islamabad in the next 15 days to discuss the Kashmir issue.

President Pervez Musharraf was himself likely to meet the Kashmiri leaders, the report said. It said a close aide of Musharraf had a meeting with the Hurriyat's 'azad' Jammu and Kashmir chapter and discussed developments on the Kashmir issue, including the President's visit to New Delhi.

The President's aide asked Kashmiri leaders to speed up efforts for unification of Hurriyat Conference. Earlier in the backdrop of Pakistan's unhappiness at his posturings on Kashmir issue, Syed Ali Shah Geelani appeared to have softened his stand seeking to reach out to the moderate faction saving it favoured coordination among parties which view Kashmir as a "dispute".

"There is a need to have co-ordination at all levels among the parties which consider Kashmir as a dispute and demand right of self-determination for Kashmiris." Geelani who had split the Hurriyat in 2003, said in his address at the opening of the district office of his Tehreek-e-Hurriyat here.

He said the coordination would be with organisations which accept the constitution of his Hurriyat Conference.

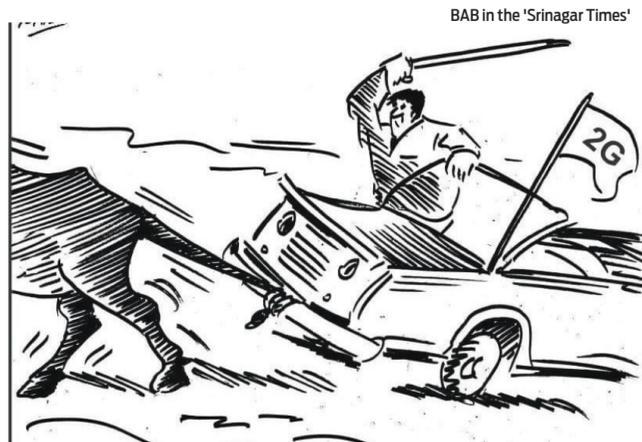
Without naming any outfit, Geelani said "I am extending an invitation to the organisations with open heart to have coordination." Geelani had stayed away from a function of Pakistan national day in Delhi and I had attacked that country's decision to reciprocate India's confidence building measures to enhance people-to-people contact accusing Islamabad of helping to deflect from the main issue.

(Kashmir Observer, 02 May, 2005)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of the Kashmir Observer LLP
Published from: # 5- Boulevard, Srinagar-190001
Printed at: KT Press Pvt. Ltd, Rangreth Ind Area, Srinagar.
RNI Registration No: 69503/98
Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16
Editor-in-Chief: Sajjad Haider
Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja
Switchboard: (0194) 2106304
Editorial: (0194) 2502327
Email editorial: editor@kashmirobsvserver.net

NO HOLDS BARRED



A tiny microscopic entity has halted our daily life. It has forced us to stay indoors, quarantined and isolated. It has curbed our movement and made us hostages in our own homes. It has even separated us from our loved ones. We are terrified at shaking hands, hugging and touching each other. All this reveals our susceptible existence on the planet. It has reminded us that despite our massive developments in science and technology we remain fragile, weak and vulnerable.

COVID19 -The Silver Lining, Positivity and Optimism



RAFIQ LONE

Many people are worried 'what after lockdown is over?' Firstly let's hope that we are able to execute a successful lockdown. Once that is over, some Epidemiologists believe that even if Corona virus remains, herd immunity shall take over.

CORONA -Fear is OK, Panic is Not. Many people across the globe are finding it increasingly difficult to deal with the stress created by the pandemic and fortified by the lockdown. The case is of even more concern in Kashmir valley given that it is not the first or the only lockdown, the inhabitants are going through. Likewise cases of domestic violence have spiked globally. It is important to keep ones mind calm to fight a disaster of the magnitude at hand.

Being cautious is one thing, getting panicked is another. There is need for absolute caution, prevention and safeguard but no scope for panic. Panic cannot be a positive contributor under the circumstances. Unfortunately some love to share half baked truths, myths and thus end up spreading misinformation. This may badly affect the mental health and thereby reduce the coping strength of an individual. Not allowing dead to be buried in graveyards is the result of misinformation and panic that has been created among people.

Do you know how many people died of TB in India last year? How many died of FLI (flu like illness) in USA last year? Not just thousands, but millions. Corona is not more dangerous yes it is by far the most contagious.

There are many positive developments to feel good about. Do you know how many people died of TB in India last year? How many died of FLI (flu like illness) in USA last year? Not just thousands, but millions. Corona is not more dangerous yes it is by far the most contagious. Statistical analysis may have a subjective interpretation and depends hugely on the method of data collection, the sample and the sample size. Significant statistical interpretations are more on our side than the novel Corona. Number of infections might be higher, much higher, but the death toll won't be very high, unless age is not by the side of the person or he/she has an underlying medical condition or that oneself is exposing to high levels of risk without taking any precaution. It is a virus with low mortality rate, though varies from country to country. There shall be no mass graves Insha'Allah! The death rates of India and US are 7.309 and 8.590 respectively. The death rate at the end of the year will be plus/minus the same figure, may be marginally more, not exponentially. So why panic?

This but does not mean that we should lower our guard. Not at any cost. Corona is highly communicable.

Some researchers believe that in India and in the subcontinent as a whole, inhabitants have better immunities compared to those in the west, the reason that accounts for lower casualties here. Having larger



younger population unlike Italy may also be a positive contributor. Some medical researchers are also of the view that BCG being administered as a vaccine her may also have contributed positively against the novel germ.

As you begin to feel comfortable then again, you are made to hear, "this virus is going to live with us forever" "already cured patients are testing positive again," "There is going to be another cycle via animals" and so on. Then the fear actually never goes out of your heart and mind. Even if the virus is to stay for a longer duration, it will not in its' present form, either we may adapt or the germ can lose its virulence as the epidemic progresses.

Plasma therapy, vaccine making and other options have reached a testing stage and we shall expect a breakthrough sooner than later. Latest Research has shown the virus to have shorter life when exposed to hot sunlight. Governments and media in many countries, including India and China, have not lost the opportunity to promote their indigenous systems of medicine. Interestingly both focus on better immunity being the biggest deterrent against the infection. Moreover India has done a significantly good job in flattening the curve. At the start of the forced lockdown, expected casualties, by mid April were expected to be in lakhs. We are almost in May; things seem to be in control. Preventive measures

taken have helped a lot.

On a lighter note, if nothing soothes, you may go through some so-called conspiracy theories; if you wish to believe them. The theories propose there is more of a 'Deep state-Economic' angle to the corona story than that of a health emergency one. Some people in America are out open in the New York city streets demanding the lockdown to be lifted and even calling the pandemic as 'Plandemic' (Plan-demic)! Some theories making rounds in the media claim this to be Biological warfare, and if it really is so, there has to be a control measure for sure. Only a matter of time, in that case.

Remember even Trump, Anthony Fauci & Bill Gates are not on the same page. The world has perhaps never seen such an uncoordinated effort against a pandemic, where even WHO has been questioned. The US president going on to a length to say that WHO has been on the side of China! Trump has referred to the 'deep state' even in an official press briefing, which made Dr Fauci to cover his face. Sarcastically said or whatever, God knows, but he did say it.

Many people are worried 'what after lockdown is over?' Firstly let's hope that we are able to execute a successful lockdown. Once that is over, some Epidemiologists believe that even if Corona virus remains, herd immunity shall take over. Herd immunity is said to be the resistance

to the spread of a contagious disease within a population that results if a sufficiently high proportion of individuals are immune to the disease, as looks like the case in India at least. More than eighty percent are asymptomatic. There are countries like Sweden and Brazil which never went for a total lockdown, believing herd immunity to take care of the threat. Few countries like the New Zealand have already announced their win in the war against SARS-CoV-2. Recovery rate is encouraging. A hundred and one year old has survived in South Korea.

There is light at the end of the tunnel. Why experts are tight lipped to say that, is possibly because people may take it overconfidently and end up doing more harm. Corona is not going to shut us for life. Relax. Take a deep breath. We shall pray in congregations again, have Wazwaan, visit Dal Lake and the Connaught place! Don't lose hope.

Till then be indoors, follow physical distancing and more importantly stay positive. This too will pass. Better safe than sorry!

Author is All India Management Association certified Management faculty at the Islamia College of Science and Commerce, Srinagar.

THE pandemic Covid-19 has stunned the world. It has terrified all in an equal manner. The mighty nations seem as helpless as the weaker ones. Though it has rendered us helpless yet it has unraveled certain realities that we may not have discovered under normal circumstances.

A tiny microscopic entity has halted our daily life. It has forced us to stay indoors, quarantined and isolated. It has curbed our movement and made us hostages in our own homes. It has even separated us from our loved ones. We are terrified at shaking hands, hugging and touching each other. All this reveals our susceptible existence on the planet. It has reminded us that despite our massive developments in science and technology we remain fragile, weak and vulnerable.

This virus has prompted us to think and realise that we are not the undisputed masters of the world. If we could conquer the highest peaks, dive into the deep seas, kill the mighty animals, uproot tall trees, the nature can also avenge in her own ways. It just

unleashed an invisible minute creature and we are trembling with fear. But do we realise the power of nature yet? Isn't it time to shun our arrogance and complex of superiority? Isn't it time to behave and be responsible, judicious, and humble?

The pandemic besides teaching us humility has many other wider implications for us humans. It teaches us that sufferings are common to us. We should never ignore the suffering and misery of our fellow human beings and other creation. Today when we are collectively facing the shortage of food and medicines, we are reminded of the sufferings of our poor brethren living in under-developing countries or countries ravaged by wars, conflicts, famine and droughts. They are facing shortage of such essentialities for ages yet world remained

Brighter Side of COVID-19

ASHRAF AMIN



Blue skies, clean air: The coronavirus lockdown is rejuvenating our environment

unmoved. The current pandemic must invoke in us the feeling of compassion, sympathy and goodwill. We must also realise that a single human suffering in any corner of the world is the suffering of all of us. We should mobilise to alleviate that distress.

The pandemic reminds us of the unity in purpose. Today we see that a single mistake of one leads to the misery of multitude. It teaches us that we should be committed to the welfare of general masses. We should never inflict pain on others through our activities. It instructs us that we should never breach the order, stability and discipline in a society. Else it teaches us that our greatest asset is our own people, the human community; not wealth, not technology, not tall buildings, not profits, not luxurious palaces and cars. It makes us to realise that a smile, a good gesture, a good word, the spirit of sharing and caring, and compassion are our true characteristics that we should never abandon.

Author is Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, BGSB University, Rajouri he can be reached at ashrafamin121@gmail.com

Faith In Lockdown: Not The Same Ramzan In Kashmir

SWATI JOSHI | ABID BHAT

For Hilal Bhat, the holy month of Ramzan would mean beseeching time in mosque, and an evening-time hangout with friends to explore the special market.

But with novel coronavirus majorly holding people hostage in their homes this time around, this 23-year-old commerce graduate from Srinagar's Eidgarh area is spending his time wondering about the pervasive desolation, deserting even the faith centers acting as liberating spaces for masses.

"We may be sailing in the same boat right now, but it feels like a curse," Bhat says, in a subdued voice.

"For the violence-marred society, faith has been the ultimate solace. It acts as a refuge for conflict-torn hearts. It's sad how this virus has severed that soulful connection now."

In absence of the congregational prayers in mosques, the likes of Bhat are today silently grieving over the viral transition in their lives.



As a vibrant community faith centre, Jamia Masjid in Srinagar would always lead in congregational prayers by hosting the special Ramzan gatherings from different parts of the valley.

One of the grandest mosques of Kashmir, the Jamia Masjid is always bustling with people in the evening discussing religion, politics, and life.

But now, the mosque is quiet amidst the onslaught of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I used to visit Jamia Masjid every year during the holy month to offer prayers with my family but this time the ritual has been broken," sighs Wasif Khan, a martial arts instructor from Soura, Srinagar.

Already, from last one month, religious places are closed, with clerics advising people to maintain social distancing norms and offer prayers in their homes.

Earlier, a statement in this regard was released by Jamia Masjid's management, "In view of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic Anjuman Auqaf Jamia Masjid Srinagar keeping in view the strict medical advisories of maintaining social



The vibrant mosques and markets during Ramzan in Kashmir have become subdued in pandemic. Absence of festive community spirit and congregational entreaty has further reduced the revered month for Muslims as an act of individual veneration.

distance by health experts will continue with the suspension of Friday congregations and Taraweeh prayers in Jamia Masjid, till the situation returns



to normal, In Sha Allah."

It's a tough time for everyone, Khan continues. "We're passing through unprecedented times when we've to even lock down our faith centres, otherwise known for their divine blessings and spiritual healings, and that too, in the month of great blessings," Khan sighs.

With no cure available for the disease caused by rampaging germ, many are now skeptical about the Eid al-Fitr celebrations that mark the end of the holy month of Ramzan.

Even as people are mindful of the fact that extraordinary times need extraordinary measures, Maksud Ali, a business analyst from Lal Bazaar, says the present times is a sad commentary of the invincibility of the human race.

"It just took one invisible entity to show us our true worth and place in this world," Ali says.

"It has altered our social as well as religious

order. Ramzan used to be the time when a festive feeling and community spirit would make it a different experience. But now, it's no longer the same."



Like others, the business analyst is staying at home and offering Tarawih alone these days.

Tarawih is the additional prayer offered by Muslims after Isha Namaz (night-time daily prayer) during the holy month of Ramzan.

"Last year, we would gather together in mosques for Iftar, and then some of us would go to explore the special Ramzan evening market in Srinagar's Exhibition Ground and elsewhere," says Ali, reminiscing the time when the month was meekly celebrated with gaiety.

But with the fear of the pandemic this year, even handshakes and hugs are replaced by video calls.

Many Ramzan special food stalls and stores flooded with people during the holy month are closed and the streets are saturnine.



"People with job or other means of survival can sustain their life, but what about smalltime shopkeepers relying on Ramzan market," says Arif Sheikh, a Srinagar-based trader.

"We may be fighting this virus by maintaining social distancing, but it's badly going to hit those living hand to mouth."

Sheikh believes that festivals are meant to bring people together and create a vibrant environment where everyone forgets their problems.

"Some of us might be striving to improve our self-discipline in this month, but we need to help the needy around us, like never before," Sheikh says.

As the important aspects of Ramzan, Muslims give Zakaat (alms) to indigent people. "However, due to lockdown," the trader says, "many people are unable to reach out to the needy, and perform the obligation."



Even the charity vans and paupers are missing from the scene. As the pandemic has become all pervasive, the deserted look of mosques and markets is evident to suggest how Ramzan has changed for the valley this year.

But during this subdued time, Sheikh says, it's the responsibility of the people to maintain the community spirit by helping others in need, and spending quality time with the family.

Tech: Here Is What To Expect Beyond 2020

What is coming in the next few years might be a lot better than expected

KARA SWISHER

And rather than accept that poor pay and poor protections for gig workers are inevitable and that the pressures of a global work force are too hard to push back, tech companies should figure out how to creatively and humanely deploy talent across the world to show that they are interested in dealing with the consequences of their inventions.

What is coming in the next few years might be a lot better than you expect, especially now that our outside expectations for tech have been levelled and fanboy tendencies toward technology companies have been tamped down.

We haven't quite dealt with all of the repercussions of tech's domination of the past decade — there will be regulations, a lot of tech is still addictive, and digital hate will continue to travel halfway around the world before the truth gets out of bed — but there are some big, positive ideas that I think you will hear a lot more about in the coming years.

With all due respect to Greta Thunberg and the efforts of young people across the globe to bring attention to climate change, governments may never agree on how to properly address our lurch toward environmental suicide.

I am going to predict that carrying around a device in our hand and staring at it will be a thing of the past in ten years. And like the electrical grid we rely on daily, most tech will become invisible.

Which is why it is critically important that tech turn its focus toward creating products that will save us. The amount of investment in green technology remains stubbornly low compared with other tech sectors.

Bill Gates and Elon Musk have been making more investments in this area, but they remain the only big names doing so. That's too bad, since I think the world's first trillionaire will be a green-tech entrepreneur.

There are many areas to explore, including battery storage, renewables, software and artificial intelligence to help us understand climate data, the food ecosystem and even the way we construct our buildings.

The most important challenge is finding a way to keep carbon in the ground — and figuring out the best way to do that provides a golden opportunity for entrepreneurs.

There has been a lot of discussion about the job-killing potential of tech, including how an unholy combination of automation, robotics and artificial intelligence will be the death of employment.

Re-imagining employment and education

Many jobs will, in fact, be replaced by tech, especially ones that are rote and also many that are high paying in medicine, law and more. But this is also an opportunity to rethink the entire way we imagine



employment and education.

The smartest minds in tech should be thinking about reformulating and recalibrating the workplace and the structure of businesses.

And rather than accept that poor pay and poor protections for gig workers are inevitable and that the pressures of a global work force are too hard to push back, tech companies should figure out how to creatively and humanely deploy talent across the world to show that they are interested in dealing with the consequences of their inventions.

I get that the forces of cynicism, manipulation and hate are forever on the digital march, but I am convinced that there is money to be made in appealing to our weariness with how our tech lives have been shaped. There are ways to foster digital interaction that do not have to incite rage.

The reason much of social media feels so toxic is it has been built for speed, vitality and attention grabbing rather than for context and accuracy.

While it seems impossible to imagine a new kind of social-network product in the shadow of Facebook, TikTok, for all its controversy as a Chinese-owned company, has been a runaway success (the first big social success since Snapchat arrived in 2011), and there is room for more.

Advantage for users

There are opportunities to create new forms of communication that give the advantage to users — by strictly enforcing behaviour standards and eliminating anonymity, and most of all, with advertising-based business plans that are not predicated on taking advantage of our personal data.

There has been a lot of gnashing and wailing about screen addiction, "sharenting" and the myriad other negative effects of all the devices we have come to rely on. (I am guilty as charged.) These gadgets have been designed to hook you, not unlike sugar or cigarettes or gambling or opiates.

The well known techie Tristan Harris calls it "human downgrading" — and he's right. But there is yet another opportunity here to push for design ethics, a movement that I think will gain traction as we all assess what our dives into digital have done to humanity.

While our tech devices have, on the whole, been good for most people, there is a true business opportunity in making them work more efficiently and without a reliance on addiction.

Whether we move toward more intuitively created tech that surrounds us or that incorporates into our bodies (yes, that's coming), I am going to predict that carrying around a device in our hand and staring at it will be a thing of the past in ten years. And like the electrical grid we rely on daily, most tech will become invisible.

That's right, I am calling it now: There will be an internet in the future that stops screaming at us. Added bonus: President Trump's tweets will probably be gone, too.

Gulf News

“MARCH WAS A DISASTROUS MONTH for aviation. Airlines progressively felt the growing impact of the COVID-19 related border closings and restrictions on mobility, including in domestic markets,”



AIR PASSENGER DEMAND Plunges As Travel Restrictions Take Hold: IATA

Agencies

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has announced global passenger traffic results for March showing that demand measured in total revenue passenger kilometres dived 52.9 per cent compared to the year-ago period.

This was the biggest decline in recent history, reflecting the impact of government actions to slow the spread of COVID-19. In seasonally adjusted terms, global passenger volumes re-

turned to levels last seen in 2006.

March capacity available seat kilometres fell by 36.2 per cent and load factor plummeted 21.4 percentage points to 60.6 per cent.

“March was a disastrous month for aviation. Airlines progressively felt the growing impact of the COVID-19 related border closings and restrictions on mobility, including in domestic markets,” said IATA’s Director General and CEO Alexandre de Juniac.

“Demand was at the same level it was in 2006 but we have the fleets and employees

for double that. Worse, we know that the situation deteriorated even more in April and most signs point to a slow recovery,” he said in a statement.

March international passenger demand shrank 55.8 per cent compared to March 2019. That is much worse than the 10.3 per cent year-to-year decline in February. All regions recorded double-digit percentage of traffic declines. Capacity tumbled 42.8 per cent, and load factor plunged 18.4 percentage points to 62.5 per cent. Asia Pacific airlines led the de-

cliners as March traffic dropped 65.5 per cent compared to the year-ago period, which was more than double the 30.7 per cent decline in February. Capacity fell 51.4 per cent and load factor collapsed 23.4 percentage points to 57.1 per cent. Demand for domestic travel shrank 47.8 per cent in March compared to March 2019 with double-digit percentage declines in all markets. This compared to a 21.3 per cent year-to-year decline in February. Capacity fell 24.5 per cent and load factor plunged 26 percentage points to 58.1 per cent.

Alexa Can Help Reduce Fear Of Public Speaking, Says Study



Agencies

Researchers, including one of Indian-origin, have developed a public-speaking tutor on the Amazon Alexa platform which can be helpful for individuals who fear to talk in front of a crowd.

The tutor enables users to engage in cognitive restructuring exercise - a psychological technique that helps anxious individuals recognise and modify negative thinking behaviours.

When users deployed the tutor in a recent study, their pre-speech anxiety was relieved, according to the researchers.

“This study represents a significant shift in our use of smart speakers, from a tool that answers questions to one that acts as a helper or coach,” said study researcher S Shyam Sundar from Penn State University in the US.

According to the study lead author Jinping Wang, users’ interactions with Alexa not only helped to ease their speech anxiety, but their feedback suggests that the tutor could be a viable alternative to person-to-person coaching sessions.

“There is often a concern of being judged by human tutors or human therapists,” said Wang. “If we can use a machine like Alexa to provide such training to individuals with speech anxiety or social anxiety, we can help them get rid of their concern about being judged by a human,” Wang added.

In the study, participants were guided to interact with an Amazon Echo smart speaker and were randomly assigned to interact with ei-

ther a highly social Alexa or one that was less social in its greetings and expressions.

he participants were then encouraged to use what they learned to prepare and present a short speech through a virtual reality application that simulated a room with a 20-person audience.

According to the researchers, who released their findings in the Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, participants completed a questionnaire about their experience after their speech.

They found that the high-social condition - through which Alexa adopted a more personal conversation style - provided a better user experience by establishing a sense of interpersonal closeness with the user.

“If you think about the usual interactions with Alexa, they’re quite dry and very functional but providing some sort of social cues seems to result in positive outcomes for users,” said researcher Saeed Abdullah.

“People are not simply anthropomorphizing the machine, but are responding to increased sociability by feeling a sense of closeness with the machine, which is associated with lowered speech anxiety,” Sundar said.

The approach has the potential to assist individuals who are anxious about public speaking, from the comfort of their own homes.

Smart speakers could be utilised similarly in future work to explore aiding individuals with other forms of anxiety, the researchers noted.

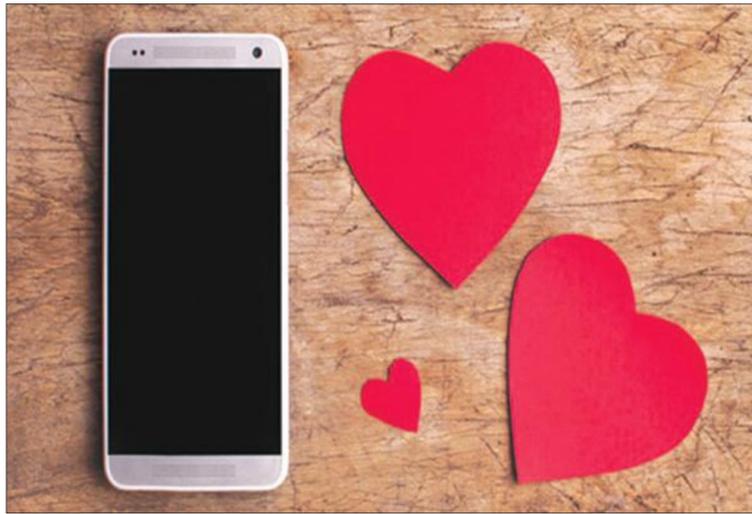
Virtual Meetups Replace Coffee Shop Meetings For Matrimonial Prospects

Press Trust Of India

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 din-

ner 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 meetups. 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.

The survey found video calling with a prospect is more about quality conversations than visual appearances on camera. About 33 per cent respondents said they pen down conversational cues as a key preparation, whereas 18 per cent respondents said they make sure they look camera-ready when asked about how they prepare themselves for a video call with their prospective match.

While meeting for the first time with their prospective partner over a video call, 47 per cent respondents said they focus on discussions while 28 per cent said they notice the aesthetics - how the prospect carries himself/herself and how they look and speak.

The survey found half the respondents saying they would like to upload a video on their profiles to bring out their personalities.

Decision-Makers Rely On Their Gut Feelings Despite Knowing The Best: Study

Agencies

People may know what choice would give them the best chance of success, but instead they just prefer to go with their basic feeling, a new study suggests. Here the old adage “everything in your life is a reflection of a choice you have made” is certainly worth bearing in mind.

When faced with a decision, people simply go with their ‘gut feeling’, a habit or what worked for them last time, rather than on what they have learned will work most often, said Ian Krajbich, co-author of the study and associate professor of psychology and economics at the Ohio State University.

The result runs counter to the belief that people make the less optimal choice because they just



“All my decisions are well thought out.”

don’t know any better.

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

“In our study, people knew what worked most often. They just didn’t use that knowledge,” Krajbich said. To elucidate this, he gives an example in real life: Think ‘Main Street’ is usually the fastest way home from work for

you. But yesterday there was an event that was going to slow traffic on Main Street, so you took ‘Spruce Street’ instead and it got you home a few minutes earlier than normal. Today, do you take Main Street—which you know is usually the better route—or take Spruce Street because it worked so well yesterday? This study suggests that many times we will take the route that worked yesterday and ignore the evidence of what normally works best.

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

In the study, participants played a simple computer game in which noticing patterns and using them could make them more money.

‘Indoor Workouts Up 40Pc In India As People Stay Home’

Agencies

India witnessed 40 per cent increase in indoor workouts in the first quarter this year and the trend only firmed up with lockdown and social distancing in March, a new report said on Tuesday.

The report from US-based wearable major Garmin said the activity count for outdoor activities had an overall drop of 15.5 per cent, with activity count for golf, hiking trail running and running decreasing by 87.6 per cent, 34.9 per cent, 29.2 per cent and 18.8 per cent, respectively, in the country.

In comparison, indoor activities such as floor climbing, yoga, and indoor cardio workouts showed an overall increase of 38.5 per cent in the same period.



With travel and activity restrictions implemented from March this year, overall outdoor activity count from January 20 till April 21 was dropped by 71.2 per cent while indoor activity count increased by 40.2 per cent in the same period, the report said.

According to the company that collected data of over 2,00,000 from its registered database, their smartwatches enable users to track physiological data, providing daily insights to their health status.

Cut Oil Supply Or Lose US Military Support, Trump Told Saudis: Report

Agencies

Washington: As the United States pressed Saudi Arabia to end its oil price war with Russia, US President Donald Trump gave Saudi leaders an ultimatum.

In an April 2 phone call, Trump told Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman that unless the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting

countries (OPEC) started cutting oil production, he would be powerless to stop lawmakers from passing legislation to withdraw US troops from the kingdom, four sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.



The threat to upend a 75-year strategic alliance, which has not been previously reported, was central to the US pressure campaign that led to a landmark global deal to slash oil supply as demand collapsed in the coronavirus pandemic — scoring a diplomatic victory for the White House.

Trump delivered the message to the crown prince 10 days before the announcement of production cuts. The kingdom's de facto leader was so taken aback by the threat that he ordered his aides out of the room so he could continue the discussion in private, according to a US source who was briefed on the discussion by senior administration officials.

The effort illustrated Trump's strong desire to protect the US oil industry from

a historic price meltdown as governments shut down economies worldwide to fight the virus. It also reflected a telling reversal of Trump's longstanding criticism of the oil cartel, which he has blasted for raising energy costs for Americans with supply cuts that usually lead to higher gasoline prices.

Now, Trump was asking OPEC to slash output. A senior US official told Reuters that the administration notified Saudi leaders that, without production cuts, "there would be no way to stop the US Congress from imposing restrictions that could lead to a withdrawal of US forces".

German Blacklisting Of Hezbollah Only Serves Israel Interests: Iran

Agencies

Tehran: Iran has vehemently condemned the German government's decision to designate the Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah a "terrorist organization", saying Berlin must be held to account for the "consequences" its decision will have for the fight against terrorism in the region.

"Certain countries in Europe are apparently adopting their stances without considering the realities in the West Asia region," said Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi in a statement on Thursday night.

Mousavi said the German government's blacklisting of Hezbollah only serves "the objectives of the propaganda machine of the Zionist regime and the bewildered US regime."

He further noted that Berlin's decision totally "disrespects" the Lebanese government and nation, as Hezbollah is a "legitimate and official part of the country's government and parliament".

Condemning the German move as "a decision of utmost imprudence", the Iranian official said the Lebanese resistance movement has been playing a key role in combating the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in the region.

Earlier in the day, Germany banned all of Hezbollah's activities in the country and ordered raids on sites police said were linked to the group.

A number of properties in Berlin, Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia were searched early on Thursday, according to the German police.

The German Interior Ministry, which has issued the ban, says four mosques and cultural associations were raided, as well as private homes of Hezbollah's board members, treasurers and tax advisers.

Most EU member states have so far refrained from labeling the political arm of the Lebanese resistance movement a "terrorist organization".



Pressure Grows To Relax Lockdowns As Economies Flounder

Agencies

PARIS: The world's economic pain was on full display with new bleak evidence on Thursday from Europe and the United States of the mounting devastation wrought on jobs and economies by coronavirus lockdown measures.

In Europe, where over 132,000 people with the virus have died so far, fears about new infection spikes were tempering hopes that economies now on government-funded life support will regain their vigour as workers return to factories, shops and offices.

New unemployment figures covering the 19 European countries that use the shared euro currency underscored how massive job-protection programmes are temporarily keeping millions of Europeans on payroll, sparing them the record-setting flood of layoffs that is battering tens of millions of Americans.

The European economy shrank a record 3.8 per cent in the first quarter as lockdowns turned cities into ghost towns and plunged nations into recession. The drop was the biggest since eurozone statistics began in 1995 and compares to a 4.8 per cent contraction in the United States.

In Europe, fears about new wave of infection dampen hopes that economies will regain their vigour.

France's economy shrank an eye-popping 5.8 per cent, the biggest quarterly drop since 1949. In Spain, the contraction was 5.2 per cent in the same period. In Croatia, the prime minister warned the economy could shrink nine per cent this year as the pandemic keeps tourists away from its Mediterranean beaches and historic sites and he wants European borders reopened.

Germany projects that its economy, the eurozone's biggest, will shrink 6.3 per cent this year.

No continent is being spared. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention reported a 37 per cent surge in coronavirus cases in the past week to more than 36,000 confirmed infections and over 1,500 deaths.

In Latin America, Brazil's virtually uncontrolled surge of coronavirus cases is igniting fears that construction workers, truck drivers and tourists will spread Covid-19 to neighbouring countries that are doing a far better job of controlling the virus.

The Paris-based International Energy Agency projected an unprecedented plunge

in the global demand for energy this year, equivalent to losing the entire demand of India, the world's third-largest energy consumer.

The pain of coronavirus lockdowns has piled pressure on governments to ease them. The World Health Organisation said nearly half of the 44 countries in Europe that restricted people's movements have started easing them and 11 more will do so soon.

But WHO's Dr. Hans Kluge noted that Europe still accounts for 46 per cent of virus cases and 63 per cent of deaths globally and remains very much in the grip of this pandemic.

"This virus is unforgiving. We must remain vigilant, persevere and be patient, ready to ramp up measures as and when needed," he said. Covid-19 is not going away anytime soon.

As economies splutter back to life and workers adapt to the strangeness of new barriers designed to keep them apart, governments are watching infection rates and public behaviour like hawks, wary of a second wave of deaths. German Health Minister Jens Spahn said his government wants to take small steps, rather than risk a big step back.

Half of US states easing coronavirus restrictions as jobless numbers grow

Agencies

NEWYORK: The White House let its 2-week-old economic reopening guidelines expire on Thursday as half of all US states forged ahead with their own strategies for easing restrictions on restaurants, retail and other businesses shuttered by the coronavirus crisis.

The enormous pressure on states to reopen, despite a lack of wide-scale virus testing and other safeguards urged by health experts, was highlighted in new Labor Department data showing some 30 million Americans have sought unemployment benefits since March 21.

The jobless toll amounts to more than 18.4% of the US working-age population, a level not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Physical separation of people — by closing schools, businesses and other places of social gatherings — remains the chief weapon against a highly contagious respiratory virus with no vaccine and no cure.

But with economic pain reaching historic proportions, agitation to relax stay-at-home orders and mandatory workplace restrictions has mounted.

For the second time in two weeks, hundreds of protesters — including armed militia group members — thronged Michigan's state Capitol in Lansing demanding an end to Governor Gretchen Whitmer's stay-at-home orders.

The latest protest was sparked by the Democratic governor's request, ignored by Republican lawmakers, to extend emergency powers she

had invoked in a state hard hit by both the virus and closures to combat it.

WHITE HOUSE STEPS BACK

Weeks after insisting he had "total" authority to decide when and how to reopen the nation's economy, President Donald Trump has largely left it to each governor to decide on a state-by-state basis.

US has most coronavirus cases in the world, crosses 80,000

Although the White House declined to extend its April 16 reopening guidance, which recommended an economic restart in stages only after strict precautions are put in place, medical experts said those conditions remained unmet and that acting prematurely risked a resurgence of the outbreak.

China Takes A Day Off From Virus Anxiety

Agencies

Shanghai: With optimism and a heavy dose of caution, millions of Chinese hit the road or visited newly re-opened tourist sites on Friday for an extended national holiday in a post-coronavirus confidence test.

Officials have cast the five-day Labour Day observance as an opportunity to ease pent-up travel demand in the country where the pandemic emerged and which was first to impose stifling mass quarantines and other travel curbs.

Caution reigned at sites like the Forbidden City imperial palace in the heart of Beijing, which reopened for the first time in three months.

People queued up two metres apart beneath its high red walls as a female voice on a loudspeaker told them: "Don't crowd together, keep your distance, protect yourself."

A staff member held up a sign instructing visitors not to spit.

Around 117 million people are expected to travel during the May 1-5 break, according to forecasts from China's transport ministry, as the country pushes to return to normal life while also guarding against new infections.

That will be just one-third of the passenger flows during last year's holiday, due to the lingering fear of packing into

trains and planes.

But that will still see the biggest movement of travellers since China began weeks ago to ease restrictions as new COVID-19 case numbers plummeted.

Turning point?

"We hope this can be a turning point, and that we can show the world that the epidemic can be overcome," said Bao Ping, a 46-year-old Shanghai insurance agent, who strolled along the city's picturesque Bund riverfront with his wife and teen daughter — all in medical masks.

Authorities have advised people against long-distance travel, in favour of shorter excursions within their city or province.

Many indoor attractions will remain closed while those still open can admit only 30 per cent of their normal numbers.

The Forbidden City quickly sold out of entry tickets after capping visitors at just 5,000 a day, down from 80,000 normally.

The thinner crowds were met with approval from one young woman wielding a selfie stick.

"It's so great! You can really enjoy it," she said to her boyfriend.

The far larger travel rush for the Lunar New Year holiday in January has been blamed for spreading the virus from its origins in the central city of Wuhan to the rest of China and the world.

Hong Kong Democracy Rallies To Make A Comeback As Pandemic Eases

Agencies

Hong Kong: Riot police hit Hong Kong's streets on Friday ahead of planned rallies by pro-democracy protesters who were looking to defy restric-

tions on Friday afternoon, despite a ban on more than four people gathering in public places that is aimed at halting the virus.

Police ramped up their presence across the city on



Friday morning, searching primarily young passengers at subway stations and in neighbourhoods where anti-government sentiment runs high.

The South China Morning Post reported that 3,000 riot police had been placed on standby with rubber bullets and tear gas at the ready.

Some encrypted chat groups used by protesters fretted that protesting while anti-virus laws remain in place might lead to large numbers of arrests, raising questions over whether significant crowds would risk gathering.

The annual Labour Day often sees protests around the world but this year's are expected to be tamer given the ongoing global health crisis.

Pro-democracy unions and social media posts have called for people to gather and shout slogans in their neighbour-

Pak speaker Asad Qaiser tests Corona+

Islamabad: Pakistan's National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser has become the latest top politician to be tested positive for the coronavirus on a day when authorities announced a record 990 new COVID-19 cases in the country.

The Ministry of National Health Services on Friday said that 24 people have died in the last 24 hours, taking the death toll in the country to 385.

A record 990 new infections were reported during the period, taking the country's tally to 16,817, it said.

Qaiser is the second high-profile politician and a member of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party to be infected with the virus. Earlier, Governor of Sindh Imran Ismail tested positive for the deadly disease.

The speaker went into self-



isolation after he got his test results on Thursday.

"I tested positive for coronavirus and quarantined myself in my house. I urge the entire nation to take preventive measures," he tweeted after he received his test results from the National Institute of Health (NIH) in Islamabad.

Qaiser's brother Abdul

Wahid was quoted as saying by The Express Tribune that the speaker's son and daughter also tested positive for the disease and were quarantined.

Earlier, Qaiser's brother-in-law and sister were also diagnosed to be infected with the virus.

Qaiser had reportedly hosted an Iftar dinner at his residence on Monday, in violation of the government's social distancing guidelines, the report said.

Meanwhile, Advisor to prime minister Imran Khan on Health Zafar Mirza on Thursday said that the country could reach the peak of the pandemic by the end of May or middle of June.

"But it can be different also as we are not sure and monitoring the situation closely," he said.

Saudi writer asks Netanyahu to 'wipe Palestinians off the world'



reason given his possession of numerous weapons."

Saeen also urged the Israeli prime minister to seal the border of the occupied territories in order to prevent Palestinians from immigration.

Scores of commentators later took to social media to

criticize Saeen's remarks.

The Saudi writer had earlier taken jibes at Sweden-based Palestinian cartoonist Mahmoud Abbas over a caricature of an Arab man struggling amid the global oil crisis.

"The purpose of the cartoon is to show the oil crisis

and its impact on the Arab world and the Middle East region — as it relies heavily on oil as a primary source of income," Abbas later told Middle East Eye online news outlet.

He maintained that his cartoon was not about Saudis.

Moreover, the new television series "Umm Haroun" produced by the London-based Saudi-owned Middle East Broadcasting Company (MBC) has provoked a storm in the Arab world, with critics regarding the drama as an invitation to normalize ties with Israel.

Palestinian Hamas resistance movement denounced the TV series as a "political and cultural attempt to introduce the Zionist project to Persian Gulf society."

Covid-19: India's Death Toll Rises To 1,147; Cases Stand At 35,043

NEW DELHI: The death toll due to the novel coronavirus pandemic rose to 1,147 with 72 more fatalities and the number of cases climbed to 35,043 in the country on Friday, according to the Union Health Ministry.

The active Covid-19 cases stood at 25,007, while 8,888 people have recovered, and one patient has

migrated. The total number of 35,043 cases includes 111 foreign nationals, the ministry data said.

Out of the 72 deaths reported since Thursday evening, 27 fatalities were from Maharashtra, 17 from Gujarat, 11 from West Bengal, seven each from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and three from Delhi.



Representational image. (DC Photo: Satish B)

12 Tablighi Jamaat Members Sent To Temporary Jail After Quarantine



SHAHJAHANPUR (UP): Twelve Tablighi Jamaat members, including nine from Thailand, were sent to a temporary jail in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur district after they completed their quarantine, police said on Friday.

The 12 people, including nine from Thailand and two from Tamil Nadu, were held on April 2 from a mosque where they were hiding. Their samples and that of a local were sent for testing,

an officer said. One of the persons from Thailand tested positive and was referred to Bareilly. He was later brought here after his report was negative, Superintendent of Police (City) Dinesh Tripathi told PTI.

After they completed 28 days in quarantine, they were sent to a temporary jail on Thursday. The passports of the foreigners were already seized and the Ministry of External Affairs has been informed, the officer added.

Naseeruddin Shah's Family Rubbishes Hospitalisation Rumours

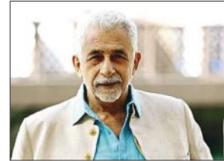
The Indian film industry has lost two gems this week. The deaths of icons Irrfan Khan and Rishi Kapoor shook the world as the two stars left for humble abode within 24 hours.

The D-Day actors passed away on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively. While Khan had been diagnosed with a neuroendocrine tumour, the Bobby star had been battling leukaemia.

Later, on Thursday evening, many came across rumours on the social media that veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah is hospitalised. However, his family has confirmed to IANS that Shah is fine and healthy, and is in his residence in the city.

Shah's son has rubbished rumours of his father's ill health. In a Twitter post, Vivaan Shah told his father's well-wishers that he is fine, and condoned the deaths of Khan and Kapoor.

Vivaan wrote in a tweet, "All well everyone! Baba's just



fine. All the rumours about his health are fake. He's keeping well. Praying for Irrfan Bhai and Chintu ji. Missing them a lot. Deepest condolences to their families. Our hearts go out to all of them. It's a devastating loss for all of us."

"That man is a national treasure. Please take care of him. Stay safe, ya'll!" one fan wrote under Vivaan's tweet. "Best wishes to Naseeruddin Shah," wrote another.

"He's absolutely fine, and is observing lockdown with my aunt Ratna in Mumbai, it is fake news," confirmed Saira Shah Halim, niece of the actor told the publication.

According to Saira, her father Lieutenant General Zameer Uddin Shah had spoken to the veteran actor a short while ago and was assured that Shah is hale and healthy.



IT and Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. (PTI Photo)

Work From Home May Become New Norm, Says Ravi Shankar Prasad At G20 Meeting

NEW DELHI: Work from home being practised during the ongoing coronavirus-induced lockdown might become a trend in coming days, IT and Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Thursday said at a meeting of G20 ministers.

The minister highlighted India's action plan to fight coronavirus by leveraging digital technology and called for a coordinated global digital response to fight the pandemic.

"Work from home may become a new norm. Spoke about the tremendous role played by Indian IT/ITES industry in providing uninterrupted support to global businesses during COVID-19 by switching to the work from home mode," Prasad said on social media platform Twitter.

An extraordinary virtual 'G20 Digital Economy Ministers' meeting was convened on Thursday to discuss the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic that has killed over 2.17 lakh people globally and to forge a global coordinated response harnessing digital technologies.

The death toll due to coronavirus rose to 1,075 and the number of cases climbed to 33,610 in the country on Thursday.

While Prasad talked about work from home culture, he also spoke about the need for developing digitally connected and more resilient global supply chains supported by innovations.

"India is an attractive destination for businesses who are willing to set up such resilient supply chains," Prasad said.

He said that to handle coronavirus, India has developed the Aarogya Setu mobile app, using geo-fencing for quarantine management.

The app has been made mandatory for government employees and people applying for e-pass in some jurisdictions.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) in a statement said the G20 digital ministers agreed to leverage the potential of digital medium to contain the pandemic and protect people.

MeitY said that Prasad during the

meeting emphasised the importance to revive the economy while continuing the fight against COVID-19.

"He impressed upon the G20 ministers that the present situation also demands greater collaboration among stakeholders for providing solutions that can address issues related to social distancing, distributed workforce and the changing nature of global supply chain," the statement said.

Prasad also urged G20 to come out with a concrete digital action plan to fight the global pandemic.

"At the end of the summit, a G20 Digital Economy Task Force COVID-19 ministerial statement was issued which called for a coordinated global digital response to fight the pandemic, adopting measures to strengthen communication infrastructure and network connectivity, non-personal data exchange in a secured manner, use of digital solutions for healthcare, cyber-secured world and measures to strengthen resilience of businesses," the statement said.

'Significant' Increase In Cybercrime Against Women During Lockdown: Experts

NEW DELHI: There has been a significant increase in cybercrime against women, especially sextortion, during the COVID-19-induced lockdown with "caged criminals" targeting them online, say experts.

The nationwide lockdown imposed from March 25 to April 14, and then extended to May 3, aims at preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus that has claimed 1,147 lives and infected 35,043 people in the country.

According to National Commission for Women (NCW) data, 54 cybercrime complaints were received online in April in comparison to 37 complaints - received online and by post -- in March, and 21 complaints in February. The panel is taking complaints online due to the lockdown.

Cyber experts, however, said the numbers are just the "tip of the iceberg".

"We received a total of 412 genuine complaints of cyber abuse from March 25 till April 25. Out of these, as many as 396 complaints were serious ones from women, (and these) ranged from abuse, indecent exposure, unsolicited obscene pictures, threats, malicious emails claiming their account was hacked, ransom demands, blackmail and more," said the founder of the Akancha Foundation, Akancha Srivastava.

The organisation works for educa-



tion and empowerment of people by imparting knowledge on cyber safety. Srivastava said on an average she has been getting 20-25 such complaints daily, while before the lockdown the number was less than 10 per day. This is a "significant" increase, she said.

"This is just the frustration and anger that is coming to the fore as there is no other release right now. This is a form of frustration as they (cyber criminals) are caged right now," she said. "Men are morphing images and threatening women. There is a whole racket going on where women are getting these emails that your phone and laptop has been hacked, and if you don't deposit money my account I will send your morphed images, and share it with all your contacts," Srivastava added.

Vineet Kumar, founder and president of Cyber Peace Foundation, said specially the cases of "sextortion" have increased during the lockdown. Sextortion is extorting money or sexual favours from someone by threatening to reveal evidence of their sexual activity through means like morphed images.

"People are getting into relationships online as they are under lockdown and sextortion cases are being reported to us," he said. Kumar said in these times people are connecting through technology but forgetting the security component.

"Immediately after lockdown, we saw a rise in cases of misinformation, fake news and women getting duped online when they click on malware links which gets all their information on phone, turns on the camera and microphone, and captures their intimate moments. These are then used for blackmailing," he added.

Many women do not want to make official complaints in these cases, he said. "Cyber Peace has been receiving complaints through its channels and it has been seen that people are reluctant in filing complaints. They want us to handle things unofficially," Kumar said. "Whatever official figure that is being quoted is just the tip of the iceberg as a majority of women do not report cybercrime because they worry about the social stigma associated with it," he said.

Newspaper Industry Could Face Losses Of Up To Rs 15,000 Cr If Relief Not Provided: INS To Govt

NEW DELHI: The Indian Newspaper Society (INS) has urged the government to provide a strong stimulus package to the newspaper industry which, it said, has lost over Rs 4,000 crore and is likely to suffer further losses of up to Rs 15,000 crore in the next six to seven months, if relief is not provided.

In a letter to the Information and Broadcasting Secretary, the INS said the newspaper industry is among the worst affected in India with hardly any revenues coming in from either advertising or circulation

journalists, printers, delivery vendors and many others, said INS, which represents over 800 newspapers.

According to INS estimates, newspapers provide direct and indirect employment to about nine to 10 lakh people and over 18-20 lakh people, respectively.

"For the last several weeks, due to the above severe losses and choking of cash flows, the newspaper establishments are finding it very difficult to even disburse salaries to employees and payments to their vendors," said the letter



amid the nationwide lockdown in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The newspaper industry has already lost Rs 4000-4500 crore in the last two months. Since economic activity has nearly collapsed and there is no likelihood of advertising from private sector, the losses are expected to continue at the same rate for the next 6-7 months (implying an additional loss of Rs 12,000-15,000 crore over the next 6-7 months) unless a strong stimulus is implemented by the government at the earliest", the letter signed by INS president Shailesh Gupta said.

INS also urged the government to provide two-year tax holiday for newspaper establishments, 50 per cent increase in advertisement rate of Bureau of Outreach and Communication and 100 per cent increase in budget spend for print media.

INS also urged the government to withdraw 5 per cent customs duty on newsprint. The losses already incurred have had very severe repercussions for the 30 lakh workers and staff who are directly and indirectly involved in the newspaper industry—

dated April 20.

"In our various communications we have requested for withdrawal of five per cent customs duty on newsprint. Newsprint cost accounts for 40 to 60 per cent of the total cost for publishers. The removal of the five per cent customs duty on newsprint will have no impact on domestic manufacturers or any 'Make in India' efforts," it said.

INS also urged the government to provide two-year tax holiday for newspaper establishments, 50 per cent increase in advertisement rate of Bureau of Outreach and Communication and 100 per cent increase in budget spend for print media.

It called for immediate settlement of payment towards all outstanding bills of advertising, from BOC (Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity) as well as various state governments. PTI

Not A Single Maruti Car Sold In April



NEW DELHI: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Friday said it did not sell a single unit in the domestic market last month due to coronavirus-led nationwide lockdown.

The company had zero sales in the domestic market in April 2020, MSI said in a statement.

This was because in compliance with the Government orders all production facilities were closed, it added.

The company, however,

exported 632 units from Mundra port following resumption of port operations. The company said the units were dispatched ensuring all safety guidelines.

R C Bhargava, Chairman at Maruti Suzuki, also pointed out that sales figures would fail to open account in April. "There would be some unusual things which would happen. For example, it has never happened that there is a month in the year when there would be zero sales of automobiles. April is going to be such a month," he said.

NEWS MAKER

5G signal now available on Mount Everest peak

BEIJING: Climbers to Mount Everest from the Chinese side can now enjoy high-speed 5G coverage after the world's highest-altitude base station started operation in the remote Himalayan region of Tibet, the state media reported on Friday.

Built at an altitude of 6,500 metres, the base station which became operational on Thursday, is located at the advance base camp of Mount Everest, the world's highest peak, according to state-run telecom giant China Mobile.

The base station, along with another two that were previously built at altitudes of 5,300

metres and 5,800 metres respectively, realises the full coverage of 5G signal of Mount Everest on the north ridge as well as the summit, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Global Times quoted officials connected with the project as saying that the cost of building five 5G stations in the extremely difficult terrain could reach 10 million yuan (USD 1.42 million).

The 5G stations will help mountaineers from across the world communicate better. It could also prove to be helpful for rescuing workers and researchers, it said.

Located at the China-Ne-

pal border, Mount Everest has an altitude of more than 8,840 metres, with its north part located in Xigaze prefecture of Tibet Autonomous Region.

5G is the fifth generation of wireless communication technologies. In addition to faster speeds, 5G offers greater bandwidth and network capacity, paving the way for a future of driverless cars, more connected devices and high-definition connections for virtual meetings and telemedicine.

Zhou Min, general manager of Tibet branch of China Mobile, said the facility will ensure telecommunication for the activities of mountain climbing, sci-

entific research, environmental monitoring and high-definition livestreaming.

The building of 5G infrastructure is in tandem with the measuring of the height of the peak, which officially started on Thursday.

The base station at 5,300 metres is expected to serve the base camp area. Once 5G is commercially available, climbers, tourists and local residents will be able to use the service in the base camp area, the report said.

The base stations at 5,800 metres and 6,500 metres above sea level are temporary base stations to provide signal coverage over the climbing route to the summit. The base sta-

tions are expected to be dismantled after the completion of the elevation survey in 2020, the Xinhua report said.

Meanwhile, Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant said it has teamed up with China Telecom to set up the world's highest 5G base station on the altitude of 6,500 metres.

"Together with the launch of the Gigabit optical fibre network on Mount Everest," the company said in a statement.

At the altitude of 5,300 metres, the 5G download speed exceeded 1.66 Gbps, where the upload



speed tops 215 Mbps, it said.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the first successful arrival at Mount Everest from the northern slope, and the 45th anniversary of China's first official accurate measurement and

announcement of Mount Everest, the 5G network on Mount Everest will provide communication services for this 2020 Mount Everest re-measurement is of great significance, the statement added. PTI AKJ AKJ