

Maximum : 23°C  
Minimum : 12°C  
Humidity : 63%SUNSET  
Today 07:17 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 05:38 AMHEALTHCARE, EDUCATION  
& ECONOMY IN POST  
COVID WORLD

THE empty streets have become the new normal during the COVID-19 pandemic. The whole world has come to a sudden halt. The outbreak of COVID-19 has created a worldwide health catastrophe that has a deep impact on the way we perceive our world and our day to day lives. Not only the rate of contagion and patterns of transmission threatens our sense of agency, but the safety measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus also require social distancing by abstaining from doing what is naturally human, which is to find comfort in the company of others.....

.....OPINION  
P4

## News Digest

10 <sup>TH</sup> RAMAZAN		
IFTAR	SEHRI	
TODAY	TOMMOROW	
FIQAH HANAFIYA	07:19	04:06
FIQAH JAFARIYA	07:29	04:04

Grenade Lobbed At  
CRPF in Nowshehra

Srinagar: Suspected militants lobbed a grenade at the paramilitary forces at Nowshehra area of old Srinagar Sunday afternoon. The grenade, hit the road and didn't explode. A police official said that a grenade was hurled at the joint party of police and paramilitary CRPF, deployed to enforce lockdown. "The grenade fell on the road and didn't" ● P-02

19 New Covid  
Cases In Ladakh

Leh- As many as 19 people tested positive for coronavirus in Ladakh on Sunday, taking the virus tally in the union territory to 41, officials said. The new cases include 18 from Chuchot Yokma village of Leh, the biggest single-day spike in the region, the officials said. The village was declared a containment area on March 17 after three locals had tested positive for COVID-19. ● P-02

Leopard Kills 5  
Sheep In Pattan

Baramulla: At least five sheep were killed and many injured in a leopard attack in north Kashmir's Pattan area on Sunday. Locals said that panic gripped in the Checki Pusnag area of Pattan after a leopard killed five sheep and injured several others in the village. A local Farooq Ahmad said that a leopard was roaming around in the village since ● P-02

Injured In Mishap,  
Army Man Dies

Jammu: An Army man who had sustained injuries during an accident in Army's Corps Battle School (CBS) in Rajouri Sarol in Jammu division on Saturday evening, succumbed on Sunday. Officials said that accident took place on Saturday evening when army personnel were engaged in routine work in school. ● P-02

LG Pays Tributes To  
Handwara Slain

JAMMU, MAY 03: Lieutenant Governor Girish Chandra Murmu today paid rich tributes to the Security Personnel who laid down their lives in an encounter with the terrorists in Handwara. The Lt Governor observed that the supreme sacrifice made by security personnel who ● P-02

Ladakh BJP Chief Quits  
Party In Protest

SRINAGAR: Chering Dorjay, the Bharatiya Janata Party's president for Ladakh, has resigned from his post and the primary membership of the party to protest the "utter failure of UT Administration in evacuating passengers, patients, pilgrims and students stranded at different places throughout India." "The UT Administration is utterly insensitive and callous about the pathetic condition of our stranded people. The UT Administration has rendered autonomous hill councils of Leh and Kargil completely ineffective by not allowing them to function as per the council Act. The people of Ladakh have sacrificed a lot to achieve the autonomous status for the two districts," he wrote in a letter to JP Nadda, BJP National President. "I have expressed my doubts about these problems well in time to the party high command through video conferencing. I am pained to see the" ● PAGE 02

Colonel, Major, SOG SI Among 5  
Security Men killed In Handwara  
2 Militants Killed In Overnight Encounter

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Two senior army officers and a Sub-Inspector of police were among five security men— a Colonel, a Major and two soldiers of 21 Rashtriya Rifles besides a Sub Inspector of J&K Police's Special Operations Group —moved close to a cowshed near the house where the militants had taken refuge after escaping from nearby Rajwara forests on Friday afternoon. However, there was a standoff between them and militants amid inclement weather. The five men lost contact with colleagues on 'tour of duty'.

According to the reports after an initial fierce firefight, there was a lull following which five security men— a Colonel, a Major and two soldiers of 21 Rashtriya Rifles besides a Sub Inspector of J&K Police's Special Operations Group —moved close to a cowshed near the house where the militants had taken refuge after escaping from nearby Rajwara forests on Friday afternoon. However, there was a standoff between them and militants amid inclement weather. The five men lost contact with colleagues on 'tour of duty'.

Meanwhile, the army rushed more personnel including ● PAGE 02



Army soldiers marching towards an encounter site in Pulwama on Saturday.

Shell Explodes in Handwara, 4 Kids  
Among 7 Injured

Seven persons, four of them minors, were injured after an explosive device went off while some kids were fiddling with it in Agham area of Rajwara Handwara in north Kashmir on Sunday. The incident occurred on Sunday afternoon when many boys were playing with the device found by two of them, Junaid Ahmad Khan (12) and his brother Tanveer Ahmad Khan (18) sons of Mohammad Ashraf Khan, from a forest area adjacent to their native Agham village, sources said. The Agham area, sources said, is around 1.5 kilometers by radius even as it is around four kilometers away ● P-02

Local Militant Among 2 Slain in  
Handwara Gunfight: Officials

Buried in Sheeri along with two militants slain in Pulwama  
The two militants killed in an encounter with a joint team of army and police in Handwara on Sunday have been identified and one of them includes a resident of Handwara, officials said on Sunday. A senior police officer said that slain duo includes Asif Reshi son of Mohammad Sultan Reshi of Gund Chabootra, Handwara and Hyder alias Iqbal, a resident of Pakistani controlled part of Kashmir. He said a case FIR (number 175/2020) under section 307 IPC, 7/25 Arms Act has been registered in connection with the encounter ● P-02

## 5 Security Men Died Saving Civilians Held Hostage: Army

Army on Sunday said that five security men including a Colonel and a Major besides a police officer who were killed after they "successfully extricated civilians held hostage by militants" in Chanjimullah Rajwar area of Handwara in north Kashmir's Kupwara district. "Based on the intelligence input that terrorists were taking the civilian inmates of a house in Chanjimul, Handwara of Kupwara district hostage, a joint operation was launched by Army and JK Police on 02 May 2020," Army's Srinagar based spokesman Col Rajesh Kalia in a statement issued here said. A team comprising of five Army and JK Police personnel entered the target area occupied by the militants ● P-02

Kashmir Saffron  
Gets GI Tag, Finally

SRINAGAR: Department of Agriculture Kashmir has been granted Certificate of Registration by Registrar of Geographical Indication, Chennai, Government of India in respect of Kashmir Saffron. The Registered Proprietor of the G.I Kashmir Saffron is Director Agriculture, Kashmir, facilitated by SKUAST (K) and Saffron Research Station Dusso Pampore J&K.

Highlighting the achievement the Director Agriculture, Kashmir, Altaf Aijaz Andrabi said that GI is a sign on products that have a specific geographical origin and the product ● PAGE 02

J&K Chalks Out Plan For Phase-Wise  
Return Of Stranded People

Press Trust of India

Jammu- The Jammu and Kashmir administration has chalked out a plan for the phase-wise return of the residents of the union territory including students and migrant labourers stranded in different parts of the country due to the COVID-19 lockdown, an official said on Sunday.

The administration, however, said all the returnees will be tested for coronavirus upon their arrival, the spokesperson said.

It also announced a 21-day institutional quarantine in Lakhampur, the gateway to Jammu and Kashmir, in Kathua district for all those who arrive without prior permission of the administration.



The official said that the decisions were taken by Chief Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam during a video conference interaction with Deputy Commissioners while discussing the action plan for allowing local students and migrant labour

to return.  
The government has already initiated the process of bringing back students and labourers stuck in other states in a very controlled and regulated manner. More than 18,000 locals have reached Lakhampur between April 25 and ● PAGE 02

## ...COVID-19: J&amp;K TALLY CROSSES 700 MARK

8 Minors Among  
35 Test Positive

J&K breaks barrier of 2000 tests a day, says Rohit Kansal  
Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: As the Jammu and Kashmir government increased its testing capacity, 35 fresh cases of COVID-19 were reported on Sunday taking the tally of total number of positive cases to 701.

Government spokesman, Rohit Kansal in a tweet said that the Jammu and Kashmir has increased the testing capacity, saying that over 2500 people were tested in a day, thereby the target of 2000 tests a day stands broken.

He said that the positive cases have crossed 700 mark 35 more people tested positive today, taking the toll of positive cases to 701, adding 648 among them belong to Kashmir division.

"Finally J&K breaks the 2000 tests a day barrier. Over 2500 tests conducted in a day. New positives

35; Recoveries 33. Total Cases now 701(Kashmir 640, Jammu 61)," Kansal tweeted.

Officials said that out of 35 new cases, 34 are from Kashmir and one from Jammu division, adding that out of 34 tested positive in Kashmir division, 24 were tested at SKIMS Lab and 10 at CD hospital.

Among the new 34 new cases from Kashmir division, 11 are from Kupwara, 10 from Anantnag, 05 from Budgam, 04 from Shopian, 03 from Baramulla and one from Pulwama

Dr G H Yattoo Nodal officer for Covid-19 at SKIMS said that out of 826 samples tested in last 24 hours, 24 were found positive, adding that among them 11 are from Kupwara, 05 from Budgam, 04 from Shopian, 03 from Baramulla and 01 from Pulwama.

According to Dr Salim Khan Nodal officer for Covid-19 at GMC Srinagar out of 846 samples taken, 10 were tested positive who all belong to Anantnag district.

He further added that ● PAGE 02

A Salute to Corona Warriors  
IAF Jets Shower Petals  
On Covid Hospitals

Press Trust of India

New Delhi: India's air force flew aircraft low over more than a dozen cities on Sunday, part of a nationwide campaign by the armed forces to thank healthcare workers and other essential services personnel fighting the coronavirus outbreak.

So far India has recorded nearly 40,000 coronavirus cases and more than 1,300 deaths amid a weeks-long nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of the virus.

In the southern city of Bengaluru, a helicopter showered flowers over Victoria Hospital, as doctors and other medical workers in hospital gowns and masks cheered on, local television showed. A military band played alongside.



In the financial capital ● PAGE 02

Pregnant Lady Dies At Anantnag  
Hospital, Medical Officer Suspended  
Family Alleges Medical Negligence Led To Lady's Death

ANANTNAG: A pregnant lady of South Kashmir's Anantnag district died due to alleged medical of doctors of Sub district hospital Seer Hamdan Anantnag, forcing the top health officials in the area to rush to the hospital and take a stock.

Officials said that a pregnant lady namely Shakeela wife of Zahoor Ahmad resident of Salia, Anantnag was admitted at Sub District Hospital Anantnag on Saturday night and was later shifted to MCH Anantnag where she breathed her last on Sunday morning.

Soon after her death, family members and relatives of the lady assembled outside sub district

hospital Seer and alleged that the lady died due to medical negligence of doctors at Seer.

They alleged that doctors delayed her treatment and later asked to shift her to Maternity and child Care hospital.

Soon after the protest a team of high officials reached to the spot and assured the family that matter will be investigated and officials involved in negligence will be punished.

After the assurance of high officials, protest was called off and dead body was taken to her native area Salia for last rites.

Meanwhile, Block ● PAGE 02

## COVID-19: Distancing Is A Dream For These Migrant Labourers In Kashmir

AtharParvaiz

At a time when social and physical distancing has become extremely important because of the threat of coronavirus infections around the world, migrant labourers from Bihar, UP and Punjab, who are presently struggling to find any work because of restrictions due to the COVID-19 related lockdown, continue to stay within small rented rooms in groups.

Health experts and the global health organization, World Health Organization (WHO), have been constantly emphasizing that not only social distancing, but

physical distancing should also be maintained by people in order to curb the spread of coronavirus infections. This is why governments are not allowing gatherings even at religious places and people themselves hesitate to congregate in religious places. There are reports from various places across Kashmir that only upto three people (including Imam)

The deadly virus has killed over 244,000 people around the world and over 1300 in India. In Kashmir, the number of COVID positive has been alarmingly increasing especially when considered in terms of infections per million of population.

But social or physical distancing



is something migrant labourers (mostly Biharilabourers), who

have not been able to return to their homes in other states, find

hard to come terms with.

Near Shalteng crossing, in the western part of the Srinagar city, I met eight labourers who were staying in a room with dimensions of 10x10 feet. All of them are from Bihar and they have now given up the hope of returning to their homes.

"Earlier (when the lockdown began) we were very desperate to go back to our homes, but we couldn't get any transport," said Anup Kumar, a Biharilabourer. "Now, we think it is all the same if we stay here or go home. The situation is same everywhere," he added. According to Kumar, there is no work for migrant labourers or local labourers these days given

the restrictions due to lockdown.

"If we had some work at construction sites or elsewhere, it would not be difficult. But we have to stay indoors all day and night," Kumar said.

"We are aware about the Corona disease. It is very dangerous. We have also heard that people should maintain distance and a lot of people should not be staying in a single room. But, what can we do? We can't afford a large room on rent," said Ganesh, Kumar's roommate.

"So, yes, it is a risk which we are taking. If any one of us contracts the infection, all of us will fall sick and may probably die. But, we can't do" ● PAGE 02



From Front page...

# Covid Suspect in The Midst: Srinagar Municipality Top Brass Under Home Quarantine

**SRINAGAR:** Entire top brass of the Srinagar Municipality, including Mayor and Commissioner, have been advised home quarantine after one of the corporators was suspected of having contracted Covid-19.

"Administration doesn't want to take any chance. It has decided to put in quarantine all those who were in contact with a Corporator of Ward Kawdara Srinagar, whose brother was tested positive for Coronavirus a couple of days ago", officials said.

Pertinent to mention here is that the brother of the Corporator Majid Rashid Shahlu had concealed his travel history and was traced after neighbours informed the Administration. The Corporator was living with his brother at home and at the same time attending sanitation drives along with SMC officials and employees.

SMC is on the forefront of fight against coronavirus in the Srinagar city.

Local news agency KNT reported that the SMC has issued directives to some Corporators, employees and officials to go for home quarantine till the report of the Corporator in question doesn't turn out negative.

Those who will go for home quarantine include Junaid Azim Matuu Mayor, Parvaiz Qadri, Corporators, Zubair Fayaz, Uman Maqbool, Nazir Gilkar, Ms.Shaheena, Arif Raja of BJP, Aqib Ahmed Renzu, Tanveer Pathan, Inayat Hussain Mir, Saleem Lone, Aga

Syed Hussaini, Danish Bhat, Mukhtar Ahmed, Hanief Ahmed.

In addition personal private staff of Mayor including Sheikh Firdous, Fida Hussain, Firdous

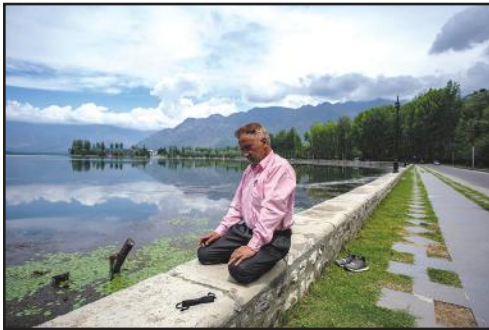
personnel and staff of Mayor and Deputy Mayor Office will go for home quarantine.

Deputy Mayor Office will go for home quarantine.

Besides, SMC officers including Gazanfar Ali (Commissioner), Syed Abul Qasim (JCA), Sofi Akbar (Secty, SMC), photographer teams accompanying Mayor and Deputy Mayor have also been asked to go for home quarantine.

Ironically, one of the Corporators, Nazir Ahmed Gilkar distributed nutrition to Anganwari Centres today. "As a Councillor and Chairman of Anganwari Centres of Ward 34 Basant Bagh Srinagar, today I distributed nutrition in Anganwari Centres under ICDS Program of Social Welfare Department," Gilkar wrote on his Facebook account.

He distributed nutrition kits at Gadoodh Bagh, Chandpora, Kralkhud, Safayar, Shalteng, Sheshyar, Agha Hamam and Bari Nambal.



KO Photos by Abid Bhat

## Colonel, Major, SOG SI Among 5...

those from elite para forces to the area in a bid to "rescue the men with whom contact was lost and to neutralise the militants." The operation, they said, was suspended for the night for "obvious reasons" amid inclement weather as it was raining heavily in the area.

At the first light on Sunday, the worst fears of the security establishment came true as all the five of their men were found dead. Army officers Col Ashutosh Sharma and Major Anuj Sood besides Naik Rajesh Kumar and Lance Naik Dinesh Singh and SOG Sub-Inspector Sageer Pathan alias Qazi were among the deceased, reports said.

An army officer confirmed the casualties and said that the bodies of two militants were also recovered. The officer said that a soldier namely Shinbe Mangesh sustained injury in his right leg and was hospitalised.

A senior police officer said that the "operation has been concluded" as bodies of the slain militants have also been recovered along with two weapons and other "warlike stores". He said that both the militants were foreigners and their group affiliation and identities were being ascertained.

"In this connection, a case under relevant sections of law has been registered and further investigations were taken up," the officer said.

Pertinently, a search operation was started by the army's 15 and 21RR besides 9 para commandoes and police in Rajwar and Mawar forest areas of Handwara on Friday afternoon amid reports that a group of militants was hiding there. The search team had also fired several warning shots during the cordon and search operation following which an encounter ensued. The militants later took shelter inside a residential house in nearby area and army and police cordoned off the village and sealed all possible entry and exit points to prevent the militants from escaping.

## Shell Explodes in Handwara, 4 Kids...

by road from Chanjimulla village where a colonel, a major and two soldiers besides a police sub-inspector were killed along with two unidentified militants in an overnight gunfight.

Incharge Duty Officer (DO) Zatchaldara Police Post Manzoor Ahmad said that seven persons were injured in the explosion.

Sources said the injured were shifted to district hospital Handwara wherefrom four of them were shifted to SMHS hospital Srinagar for specialized treatment. They said around a dozen persons suffered injuries but only seven needed hospitalizations as others were given first aid for "very minor injuries" locally.

Meanwhile the in-charge Duty Officer said investigations are underway as to where from the device was brought from by these persons.

Asked that the sources say it was found by two of the boys from the nearby encounter site, he said: "Investigation is underway and nothing can be said with surety now."

The injured have been identified as Reyaaz Ahmad (30) son of Mohammad Subhan Bhat, Mohammad Ashraf Qureshi (30) son of Syed Jaladun Qureshi, Syed Khalid Bukhari (17) son of Syed Hafeezullah Bukhari, Maqsood Ahmad Shah (28) son of Syed Mohammad Shah, Junaid Ahmad Khan (12) and his brother Tanveer Ahmad Khan (18) and Adil Ahmad Ganie (10) son of Ghulam Rasool Ganie.

Junaid, Adil, Maqsood and Syed Khalid have been referred to SMHS hospital here. GNS

## Local Militant Among 2 Slain...

at Chanjimullah which also saw the killing of an army Colonel, a Major, two soldiers, and police Sub-Inspector.

Meanwhile, the bodies of militants were taken to Sheeri in Baramulla district and buried there in presence of a magistrate. This follows burial of two militants Sahil Ahmad Bhat of Chakoor and Muzaffar Ahmad Wani of Dowaltpora Chadoora at Sheeri who were killed in an encounter with government forces in Dangerpora Pulwama on Saturday. (GNS)

## 5 Security Men Died Saving Civilians...

to evacuate the civilians, the spokesman said.

"The team of Army and JK Police entered the target area and successfully extricated the civilians. However, during the process, the team was subjected to a heavy volume of fire by the terrorists," the spokesman said.

In the ensuing firefight, two militants were eliminated and the team of five Security Forces Personnel comprising of two Army officers, two Army soldiers, and one JK Police Sub Inspector attained martyrdom in the service to the Nation," the spokesman added.

## 8 Minors Among 35 Test Positive...

out of 10, four belong to Pushroo, three to Kharpora, two to Hillar and one to Shangus.

Officials from SKIMS said that out of 24 cases tested positive at SKIMS, six are in the age group of 3 and 14 years while as officials from GMC Srinagar said out of ten new positive patients, 2 are of age of 3 and 14 respectively.

Officials from Kupwara said all new 11 cases belong to Gonipora village and are contacts of earlier positive cases. They said that with new 11 cases total number of active cases in district have reached to 43.

Officials from Anantnag said that out of 10 tested positive on Sunday, 9 are females and one is male. "The ages of females are 3, 14, 26, 30, 31, 31, 55, 66 years while age of male is 33 years," they said, adding that total number of positive cases in district have reached to 109 including one death and one recovery.

Officials from Shopian said that out of 145 samples tested 04 were found positive who all belong to Hirpora village and total number of positive cases in district have reached to 81.

Officials from Pulwama said that a seven year-old granddaughter of a couple who were tested positive three days before was found positive on Sunday.

Officials from JVC Bemina said that 27 more patients were discharged from the hospital after their recovery and were advised to go for quarantine for 14 days.

Among 27, 19 belong to Bandipora, 7 to Baramulla and 1 from Budgam, they said, adding that so far 77 patients were discharged from the hospital after their recovery and 96 patients are undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Officials from the Jammu said that a new case is from Samba belonging to Saroor area and with new case total number of positive cases in district have reached to 07 including four recoveries.

Pertinently with new 35 cases, the total number of positive cases in Jammu and Kashmir has reached to 701 including 61 from Jammu and 640 from Kashmir division.

As per officials figures 128 positive cases including one death and 55 recoveries are from Bandipora, 109 positive cases including one death and recovery are from Anantnag, 106 including two deaths and 70 recoveries are from Srinagar, 91 including 34 recoveries and 3 deaths are from Baramulla, 81 including 19 recoveries are from Shopian, 66 including 23 recoveries are from Kupwara, 26 including 12 recoveries are from Budgam, 14 with all fourteen recoveries are from Ganderbal, 11 including 03 recoveries are from Kulgam and 08 including 03 recoveries are from Pulwama.

In Jammu division, all 26 patients have recovered in Jammu district , 20 including one death and 19 recoveries are from Udhampur, 7 with four recoveries are from Samba and 4 including three recoveries are from Rajouri , one from Kishtwar who has also recovered and one active case each from Ramban, Kuthua and Reasi.

As per the daily information bulletin 75,838 persons in Jammu and Kashmir are under observation while as 10751 persons have been kept under home quarantine besides that 406 persons are in hospital isolation while as 183 persons are under hospital quarantine.

According to the bulletin, 57,386 persons have completed surveillance period and 7,104 persons are under home surveillance besides that so far results of 26,038 samples are available.

Out of 26,038 the number of samples tested negative stands at 25337 while as 701 have been tested positive, among them 406 are active and 287 persons have recovered and 8 persons have died.

## IAF Jets Shower Petals On Covid Hospitals...

of Mumbai, television showed fighter jets roaring over the famous Marine Drive, which runs parallel to the Arabian Sea, as some residents craned for a view from their balconies.

Later on Sunday, navy and coast guard ships will line up along more than 30 locations on the Indian coast, with some vessels lit up and firing flares.

## Pregnant Lady Dies At Anantnag Hospital...

medical officer Mattan in Anantnag has suspended a medical officer Dr Ridwana and staff nurse Zareefa who were on night duty when the incident took place. The top health officials also visited the hospital where the lady died to take stock of the situation and find out what caused the death of the lady.

Chief medical officer Anantnag Dr Mukhtar Ahmed told KNO that an inquiry team has been constituted in this regard who have been asked to submit report within two days. He assured that officials involved in negligence will be dealt strictly—(KNO)

## J&K Chalks Out Plan For Phase-Wise...

May 2, with majority of them arriving from Himachal Pradesh.

In the first phase, students and migrant labourers from Punjab and Himachal Pradesh would be allowed followed by other states.

All those who will enter the UT without prior permission will be compulsorily sent to institutional quarantine in Lakhanpur, Kathua for 21 days, the Chief Secretary emphasised.

Keeping in view the risk of transmission of the virus, it was decided that 100 per cent testing of all such people would be done to ensure their and others' safety.

All the Deputy Commissioners were asked to coordinate with the health department so that medical teams are deployed for the collection of samples, the spokesperson said.

Asserting that nodal officers have been appointed by the administration for ensuring smooth entry and movement of people, the chief secretary asked the divisional commissioners to ensure that proper computerised record of all the returnees is maintained and a system is evolved so that the entire exercise is carried out smoothly.

The chief secretary also reviewed quarantine facilities in the districts and directed the deputy commissioners to create additional quarantine facilities at the village level by utilising all available infrastructure and involving panchayat members and Anganwadi workers.

To arrive at an exact number of the students and migrant labour stranded in different parts of the country, the chief secretary said that data is being compiled and would be shared with the districts so that all necessary arrangements are made for their stay.

## Kashmir Saffron Gets GI Tag, Finally...

may have special quality or reputation. He said the Geographic indication leads to the overall economic prosperity of the producers. He added that the prime purpose of registering a geographic indication is to seek protection for specific products produced in a particular geographic region.

Speaking about the marketing of any product having GI Tag, the Director said it can encourage and motivate the marketers to expand their business at a global level besides; the protection of Geographical Indications boosts exports and helps the farmers to get best remuneration for their economic sustainability

Pertinent to mention J&K Government contemplated to file an application for GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION OF KASHMIR SAFFRON because of its unique identity and superior quality as compared to saffron grown around the world. Accordingly, Director Agriculture, Kashmir filed an application before the Registrar, Geographical Registration Industry Chennai in December, 2019 under Class 30 under the Fourth Schedule as per Geographical Indications Rules 2002.

The requisite documents including the Statement of Case, Logo, Documentary Evidence, Specification and Description of G.I product, List of producers of Kashmir Saffron, Traditional Practices adopted and Method of production were submitted to the Registrar, Geographical Registration. On completion of the formalities, a Consultative Group was constituted by the Dy. Registrar Geographical Indications, Government of India, for ascertaining the correctness of the particulars furnished by the Agriculture department in G.I application.

The Director Agriculture, Kashmir along with the concerned officers and farmers attended a meeting in New Delhi, presented a power point presentation regarding various aspects of the Kashmir Saffron to ascertain the correctness of particulars furnished in the Statement of Case in respect of G.I of Saffron.

## Ladakh BJP Chief Quits Party In Protest...

patriotic people of Ladakh who have stood with our armed forces in all the wars fought by our nation since 1948 are treated so shabbily and with disrespect by the UT administrators," he said.

## Covid-19: Distancing Is A Dream For These Migrant...

anything about it," Ganesh further said.

When asked if they take a lot of care about hygiene, Devinder Prasad, a labourer, who again lives with eight fellow labourers from Bihar in a 10x12 room at HMT-Srinagar, said: "We are trying our best to keep the room clean. That is what we can do. And we have also bought a few masks. Thankfully, no one among us has fallen sick so far."

We, Prasad said, "had thought that the government will take care of our expenses and provide us with food and accommodation. But no one from the government visited us." The government has taken has arranged lodging facilities for some migrant labourers at Srinagar and a few other towns,

but, there are reports that most of them continue to live in groups in very small rooms in various places like in Shalteng and HMT Srinagar. This might prove dangerous for both the migrant labourers as well as the population considering what globally acclaimed health experts and organisations have been emphasizing about social and physical distancing.

Thousands of skilled and unskilled labourers come to Kashmir every year from states like Bihar, UP and Punjab. Earlier, they used to be confined to Srinagar and other major towns only, but now they find work opportunities in villages as well and work as labourers, carpenters, masons and painters. So, they are found in good numbers in every town and most of the villages in Kashmir.

With a massive growth in Kashmir's lower middle class and middle class, large-scale construction of residential houses in Kashmir and the huge cultural changes in recent years in the region, local labour force has declined considerably within Kashmir valley. It is because of this reason that services of labourers from Bihar and other places are now even used in packaging of apples, Wazwan (a way of preparing different mutton dishes unique to Kashmir and the forte of people with specific skills in Kashmir only) wood carving, paddy plantation, paddy harvesting, and several other sectors. Construction work in Kashmir is largely dependent on migrant skilled and unskilled labourers in Kashmir and dependence on them in other sectors is only increasing with the social and economic changes taking place within this region.

Though not a lot of labourers had arrived in Kashmir when the lockdown began, official estimates say that around 22,000 migrant labourers are still stuck in Kashmir. Most of these labourers rent rooms in groups in order to make the monthly rent affordable for themselves. If seven-eight people stay together in a small room, it means each of them pays somewhere around 150 rupees every month as his share of the total monthly rent.

## Grenade Lobbed At CRPF in Nowshehra...

explode," said.

Police sources said that the Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) rushed to the spot and successfully diffused the grenade. Meanwhile, search operation was launched to nab those who hurled the grenade. There were however reports of no arrests.

## 19 New Covid Cases In Ladakh...

The officials said a 52-year-old woman, a resident of Kaksar village of Kargil, also tested positive for coronavirus on Saturday.

The woman had gone on pilgrimage to Iran and was evacuated and underwent quarantine for over a month in Rajasthan before being airlifted to her hometown last week, the officials said.

The woman was admitted to a hospital after her test report came positive, they said.

## Leopard Kills 5 Sheep In Pattan...

past few days due to which everyone was scared of going out. He said today in the wee hours, the leopard entered into the village and killed five sheep besides leaving many injured, adding more to the fear among the residents.

Meanwhile, villagers appealed the concern Administration and wildlife department to take immediate steps to control this leopard so that people will feel a sign of relief.

## Injured In Mishap, Army Man Dies...

"The army man sustained injuries after he was knocked by an army vehicle in the school," they said.

"The injured Army man was shifted to an army hospital for treatment where he succumbed on Sunday morning," officials said, adding that police has taken cognizance of the matter

## Lg Pays Tributes To Handwara Slain...

attained martyrdom during an encounter in Handwara area of Kashmir will always be remembered.

He also expressed his solidarity with the families of the martyrs and said that the sacrifices of these bravehearts will not go waste.

"We salute the valour of the Army, Police and other security forces for playing a crucial role in combating terrorism and ensuring safe and secure environment for the people", he said.



# Advisor Baseer Khan Calls For Institutional Coordination To Fight COVID-19

SRINAGAR, MAY 03: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan, who is overall in-charge of coronavirus control efforts in Kashmir, on Sunday, urged for institutional coordination among various health institutions to deal with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Advisor said this during a meeting held here to review the various measures being put in place by various institutions and departments especially SKIMS Soura and GMC Srinagar, regarding prevention and control of COVID-19.

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Nodal Officer COVID-19, Director SKIMS Soura, Principal GMC Srinagar, Additional Commissioner Divisional Commissioner Officer (Kashmir), Deputy Director Health Services Kashmir, MD, JK Medical Supplies Corporation, Principal SKIMS Medical College Bemina and other concerned were present in the meeting.



Reviewing the working of SKIMS Soura and GMC Srinagar, the Advisor urged for adapting a well-coordinated approach and to focus on institutional coordination especially among the main health institutions dedicated for COVID-19 in the Valley.

He said a well-coordinated approach which includes best practices, collaboration of work, needs to be adopted to flat-

ten the curve of corona in J&K.

During the meeting, the Advisor also highlighted the importance of ensuring the security those who are at the forefront in the fight against the deadly virus. He said that there should be zero violence against medical professionals, frontline healthcare workers and police personnel. The Advisor instructed for taking appropriate actions against those found indulg-

ing in any kind of violent means.

During the meeting, the officers gave detailed information regarding the preventive measures and steps put in place to curb the spread of deadly virus.

Highlighting the need to deal with the situation as per the recommended guidelines, Khan said strict lockdown needs to be enforced so that the curve of virus could be flattened at an earliest.

The Advisor directed to make optimal utilization of available resources in combating the corona pandemic.

He said focus should remain on saving the lives of people by providing them all possible healthcare facilities and ramping up capacities to the maximum level.

The Advisor also stressed on enhancing the efforts for the containment of the spread of virus. He said effective surveillance and monitoring mechanism needs to be put in place for its containment.

## 27 more patients discharged from SKIMS Bemina after recovering from Covid-19

SRINAGAR, MAY 03: SKIMS Medical College Hospital Bemina Sunday informed that 27 more Covid-19 patients were discharged from the hospital after recovering from the contagious disease.

So far 75 Covid-19 patients have recovered among the 149 such patients admitted in the hospital.

The 27 patients who were discharged from the hospital after recovery from Covid-19 infection today include 19 from Bandipora, 07 from Baramulla and one from Budgam district.

## Income Support for vulnerable segments in wake of COVID-19

All registered Houseboat owners, Shikarwalas, Tourist Guides, Pony Walas /Pithuwalas asked to share Bank Account Numbers with Tourism Department

SRINAGAR, MAY 3: The government has decided to provide income support to the vulnerable segments of the society, including Houseboat owners, Shikarwalas, Tourist Guides, Ponywalas, Pithuwalas and Palkiwalas, registered with the Directorate of Tourism Kashmir.

In this connection, all the Houseboat owners, Shikarwalas, Tourist Guides, Ponywalas, Pithuwalas and Palkiwalas registered with the Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir have been asked

to share their Bank Account numbers through their respective Associations by or before 6th May, 2020 positively for immediate disbursement of the financial assistance to them.

The Stakeholders have been asked to avoid congestion, wear masks and maintain the mandatory social distancing norms while sharing their Bank Account Numbers in person or otherwise with their respective Associations / concerned registering offices of the Tourism Department.



### OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) RIGHT RIVER CIRCULAR ROAD DIVISION, SRINAGAR ABBREVIATED TENDER NOTICE

NIT No: -03/RRCR/Camp/45-51. DATED:- 27-04-2020  
For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K Union Territory, e-tenders (In Single cover system) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S.No	Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (Rs. In Lacs)	Earnest Money (Rs. In Lacs)	Time of completion	Time & Date of Opening of Bid	Class of Contractor	Major Head of Account
1.	Improvement / Upgradation of interior links of Tengpora in KM 10th of Noorbagh Palpora Sundiroshan road by way of GSB/ Stone soling and WBM Grade II.	2.26 lacs	0.002	0.0226	10 days	12-05-2020	"Selfhelp Group"	3054-M&R
2.	Restoration of road surface by way of providing / laying of WBM Grade III in Patches / Stretches at Zoonimar Old SKIMS road	2.00 lacs	0.002	0.02	10 days	12-05-2020	"Selfhelp Group"	3054-M&R
3.	Restoration of damaged road surface of Gooripora main road by way of GSB/ Stone soling, P/L of WBM Grade II and Grade III in patches / stretches.	2.20 lacs	0.002	0.022	10 days	12-05-2020	"Selfhelp Group"	3054-M&R

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

1. Date of Issue of Tender Notice	27-04-2020
2. Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 28-04-2020, 10.00 A.M to 09-05-2020 4.00 P.M
3. Bid submission Start Date	28-04-2020 from 11.00 A.M
4. Bid Submission End Date	11-05-2020 upto 4.00 P.M
5. Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	12-05-2020 at 11.00 A.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer Right Riv.Cir.Rd.Div.Sgr.

DIPK-539/20

Executive Engineer,  
Right Riv.Cir.Rd. Div.Sgr.

### Government of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) TRUCK TERMINAL DIVISION SRINAGAR NOTICE INVITING TENDERS TWO COVER SYSTEM

NIT No:- 01 of R&B T.T Divn./2020-21 DATED:23-04-2020 (E-tendering)

For and on behalf of the Governor, J&K State e-tenders are invited on item rate basis/%age basis (as the case may be) from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for each of the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (Rs. In Lacs)	Earnest Money/ Bid Security (Rs. In Lacs)	Time of completion	Time & Date of Opening of tender (Technical Bid)	Class of Contractor
1.	Construction of Boys and Girls Hostels (One each) for National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT) Srinagar Campus at Rangreth.	673.00	5000/-	13,46,000/-	15 months	15.05.2020	AYY Class Civil/sanitary

Major Head: Deposit contribution works of NIELIT Srinagar

Position of AAA/TS AA Approved  
Position of funds Available

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

1. Date of Issue of Tender Notice	23.04.2020
2. Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 24.04.2020, 11.00 A.M
3. Date, Time and place of pre-bid meeting	04/05/2020 at 11.00 A.M in the Office of the Superintending Engineer (R&B) Circle Srinagar/Budgam
4. Bid submission Start Date	05.05.2020 From 10.00 A.M
5. Bid Submission End Date	11.05.2020 upto 4.00 P.M
6. Deadline for receiving the Hard Copy of documents including Original Challan & Bid Security, Affidavit on correctness of information - [The date should be one day after bid submission end date]	13.05.2020 at 4.00 P.M in the Office of the Superintending Engineer (R&B) Circle Srinagar/Budgam
7. Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online) - [The date should be one day after deadline for receiving of hard copies]	15.05.2020 at 11.00 A.M in the Office of the Superintending Engineer (R&B) Circle Srinagar/Budgam
8. Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online)	To be notified after technical bid evaluation is completed

No:-TTD/82-94  
Dated:23-04-2020

Executive Engineer  
R&B Truck Terminal Division, Sgr

DIPK-515/20

### Office of the Divisional Forest Officer Sindh Forest Division Ganderbal Auction Notice

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir open auction shall be held for extraction, removal and disposal of *Morchella Mushroon*, *Morchella esculenta* (Guchies) from the demarcated Forests/un-demarcated and Berune line Forests of Sindh Forest Division Ganderbal for the year 2020 as per the following schedule.

Division	Date and Time	Place of auction
Sindh Forest Division	14.05.2020 at 11:30 A.M	Office of DFO Sindh Forest Division Ganderbal

The auction shall be governed by standing rules & guidelines including the following:

- Only Firms /Contractors registered with the Department, possessing duly renewed registration cards for the current year can participate in the auction. The black listed contractors/firm/Government debtors need not to participate in the open auction.
- The prospective bidders shall have to deposit an earnest money of **Rs.10,000/=** (Rupees ten thousand only) in the shape of CDR (or Cash) of any recognized Bank of Union Territory of J&K, pledged to the Divisional Forest Officer Sindh Forest Division Ganderbal prior to participation in the Auction.
- The successful bidder shall have to deposit 50% of the total bid amount of the contract at the close of the bid and balance amount of the time of signing of the agreement.
- The successful bidders shall have to enter into an agreement with the Forest Department within one week of issuance of sanction. In case of failure to do so the contract shall be quashed. The bid amount together with earnest money will be forfeited in favour of the Department. Failure to execute such a formal deed shall not however, prevent the terms of the contract from being enforced against him. Any loss sustained as a result of re-occupation of the produce or by allotting it to 2nd bidder shall be recovered from backed-out bidder (party in arrears of land revenue) and will be black listed at the discretion of Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir.
- The successful bidders shall have to pay a security deposit of not less than 10% of the contract value of the time of signing the agreement which will be refundable on completion of the work and on Production of N.D.C from this Division.
- The committee reserves the right to accept or reject any offer/bid without assigning the reasons thereof, though it may be favorable to the Department.
- The successful bidder shall be bound to issue proper pass to his agent / Collectors with photograph duly authorized by the undersigned in shape of Form-7 authorizing him/ them to collect the Guchies from the Forests and its subsequent storage at specified location (depot) to be got registered by the office of undersigned immediately after the work is started. Any person / labourer found collecting Guchies without proper authority / pass of the successful bidder & duly authorized by the DFO shall be deemed as illegal collection and will be liable to seizure and vested in favour of the department at the discretion of Conservator of Forest Srinagar Circle.
- The successful Contractor shall be bound to return used/unused Form-7 copies to the office of undersigned after expiry of the contract period. In case of failure his security money shall not be refunded.
- All taxes, including GST central charges, etc as may be in vogue or revised by the Government for produce collected shall be payable by the concerned contractor.
- The successful bidder shall be entitled to start the work from the date the work order is issued and will complete the same within the calendar year 2020 during which the entire produce collected shall have to be removed outside the forests for transportation to and beyond the registered transit (point) depot within the calendar year 2020. No extension shall be accorded in the working period either for extraction or transportation.
- The stuff thus collected by the successful bidder and dumped at the registered transit depot shall be released up to Srinagar or outside State after obtaining proper permission from the Conservator of Forests, on the recommendation of the office of undersigned.
- In case of any dispute arising between the parties, the decision of the Chief Conservator of Forests Kashmir shall be final and binding on both the parties.
- The successful bidder, his agents/ labour shall have no right to extract or remove any other MFP from the forests.
- The Department shall not be bound for the payment of any compensation or refund the royalty in case of any natural calamity which may hamper or damage the prospects of the Guchies crop.
- The Department shall in no case be responsible for any injury, damage, casualty to the labourer. On all such cases contractor would be solely responsible for their liability.
- No Telegraphic communication or application received by post or otherwise for increasing/ decreasing or withdrawing offer after auction shall be entertained.
- Any other condition that the Department may like to impose on the contract shall be announced at the time of auction which will form part of the contract and any other information required by the bidders can be had from the Circle Office/ Divisional Headquarter / Range Offices.

Note: - In case of un-avoidable circumstances/ constraints or holiday, auction shall be conducted on the next working day of the same venue and time.

No: 124-34/W Dated: 01-05-2020

DIPK-521/20

Divisional Forest Officer,  
Sindh Forest Division Ganderbal

#### 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
- PAMPOR: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153



#### HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI  
CALENDAR  
10 Ramazan  
1441

#### PRAYERS

FAJR	4: 07
ZUHR	12: 28
ASR	5:18
Magrib	7:19
ISHA	8:50

## This Day In History

- 1471-Wars of the Roses: Battle of Tewkesbury- final battle between Lancaster and York sees the Prince of Wales, Edward of Westminster killed and King Edward IV restored to his crown thus extinguishing the Lancastrian of Plantagenet line
- 1493- Spanish Pope Alexander VI divides America between Spain & Portugal
- 1540-Venice & Turkey sign Treaty of Constantinople
- 1776- Rhode Island declares independence from Britain
- 1799- Fourth Anglo-Mysore War: The Battle of Seringapatam: The siege of Seringapatam ends when the city is assaulted and the Tipu Sultan killed by the besieging British army, under the command of General George Harris.
- 1814- Bourbon reign restored in France
- 1818- Netherlands & Britain sign treaty against illegal slave handling
- 1869- The Naval Battle of Hakodate takes place in Japan.
- 1878- Phonograph shown for 1st time at Grand Opera House
- 1888-Italy & Spain sign military covenant
- 1912- Italian mariners occupy Turkish Island of Rhodes
- 1915- Italy drops Triple Alliance with Austria-Hungary & Germany
- 1916- At request of US, Germany curtails its submarine warfare
- 1924- German Republic election fascists & communists win
- 1925- League of Nations conference on arms control & poison gas usage
- 1931- Mustafa Kemal Pasja becomes Turkish president
- 1942- Battle of Coral Sea begins in the Pacific (1st sea battle fought solely in air) between Japanese, US and Australian navies and air forces
- 1945- German troops in Netherlands, Denmark & Norway surrender
- 1960-1st great Delta dam closes, North-South Beveland
- 1961- 1st on-the-road Spacemobile lecture given.
- 1962- US performs atmospheric nuclear test at Christmas Island
- 1964- 70 GATT-countries confer in Geneva
- 1967-Lunar Orbiter 4 launched by US; begins orbiting Moon May 7
- 1978- Russian leader Brezhnev visits West-Germany
- 1979- Margaret Thatcher becomes the first woman to be elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
- 1979- NASA launches Fittsatcom-2
- 1983- China performs nuclear test at Lop Nor, PRC
- 1989- US launches Magellan to Venus
- 1989-US space shuttle STS-30 launched
- 2013- 77 people are killed by the Syrian Army in Baniyas

## From KO Archives

## Violent Upsurge Claims 11

#### Observer News Service

SRINAGAR - In stepped up attacks on political activists in Jammu and Kashmir, the head of the Pattan municipal committee, a block president of the Pradesh Congress- Committee and three policemen were shot dead on Tuesday, even as the security forces claims to have killed 6 militants on Monday night in foiling an infiltration-attempt in Poonch. Fifteen people, including two STF personnel, were injured in a grenade blast in Pulwama district today.

Gunmen, who police said were militants, opened fire on, the chairman of the Pattan Municipal Committee, Muhammad Ramzan Mian, in the town market at around 11:30 a.m., critically injuring him, his two security guards, a civilian, and a policeman who was standing nearby.

The injured were rushed to hospital, where Mian and his two personal security, guards, Zahoor Alunad and Riyaz Ahmad were declared brought dead. The police constable, Altaf Hussain, succumbed to his injuries later.

A civilian Bashier Ahmad Bhat with whom Mian had been in conversation at the time of the attack, was also injured in the firing. He has been shifted to the SKIMS in a critical condition. Mian had been inspecting developmental works in the market and had stopped for a chat at the shop of Pattan beopar mundal president when the attack took place, the CNS said.

According to one report, the attackers made off with two service rifles of Mian's security guards after the firing. Security guards deployed with political workers have been put on alert following the killings.

In another incident, a group of unidentified gunmen intruded into the house of one Abdul Ahad Ganai at Shangran near Doom in Anantnag district in the wee hours today and shot dead the block president of Pradesh Congress Committee Jabbar Ahmad Khanday.

A contractor by profession, Khandav died instantly and his gunmen fled the scene. Gunmen also shot at and critically injured the village head of Zainapora, Ali

Muhammad Wani outside his house in Shopian area of Pulwama district this morning. Another civilian Bashir Ahmad Dar was also injured in the firing and both were hospitalized.

The security forces shot dead six suspected militants as they were trying to sneak into Jammu and Kashmir through the Line of Control (LoC) in what is being called the biggest infiltration attempt this year.

(Kashmir Observer, 04 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  
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## Media in Kashmir

This World Press Day, the media in Kashmir has little to cheer about. The day comes in the immediate wake of the FIRs against three journalists Gowhar Geelani, Masrat Zahra and Peerzada Ashiq, first two of whom were slapped with Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. Though the government has not arrested them it has not withdrawn the cases. However, the recent FIRs are not the only problem the press in Kashmir is facing.

Both, the local newspapers and the reporters working for the various national and international publications have faced their toughest time in discharging their professional duties over the past nine months. The security lockdown and the communication blockade that followed the revocation of Kashmir's special status has hit the Kashmir media hard. Journalists struggled for an internet connection to get their stories out. The newspapers have found it difficult to get the content to publish. It was days after nullification of Article 370 that the government put together 'Media Facilitation Centre', initially only with just four computers. Though communication gag has been eased since, with the media given access to internet, this hasn't made a large difference to the prevailing pathetic state of journalism in Kashmir. Logistically, the situation may have eased, in terms of freedom of expression it has progressively worsened as recent FIRs bear this out.

Overall the challenges for Kashmir media are formidable and structural. The media in Kashmir, comprising a robust English and vernacular press has a particularly unenviable job to do. The problems faced by it are both universal to the conflict situations and unique to the region. One of the major problems bedeviling the freedom of expression in Kashmir is the economic sustainability of the local newspapers. Being a place with only a fledgling private sector and little industrial presence, government advertising is a predominant source of revenue for the newspapers. This gives government enormous power to influence news agenda. This renders the local press prone to the pulls and pressures from the administration and various other interests in the region. Until August last, however, the local media had managed to skirt such pressures and done a largely excellent job of covering the prevailing extraordinary situation.

But the situation has now become extremely difficult and one can only hope that the things become easier in the weeks and months to come. Much will depend on how government seeks to pursue the cases against journalists it has booked in recent times. Withdrawal of the cases will certainly be a victory of freedom of expression, in turn also for the government. For a journalist to report on the ongoing situation is his profession. Government can have questions about the accuracy of the reports and hold the journalist responsible for any lacunae thereof. This can't be held against the professional. Government, therefore, needs to revisit its current approach to journalists and journalism.

### OTHER OPINION

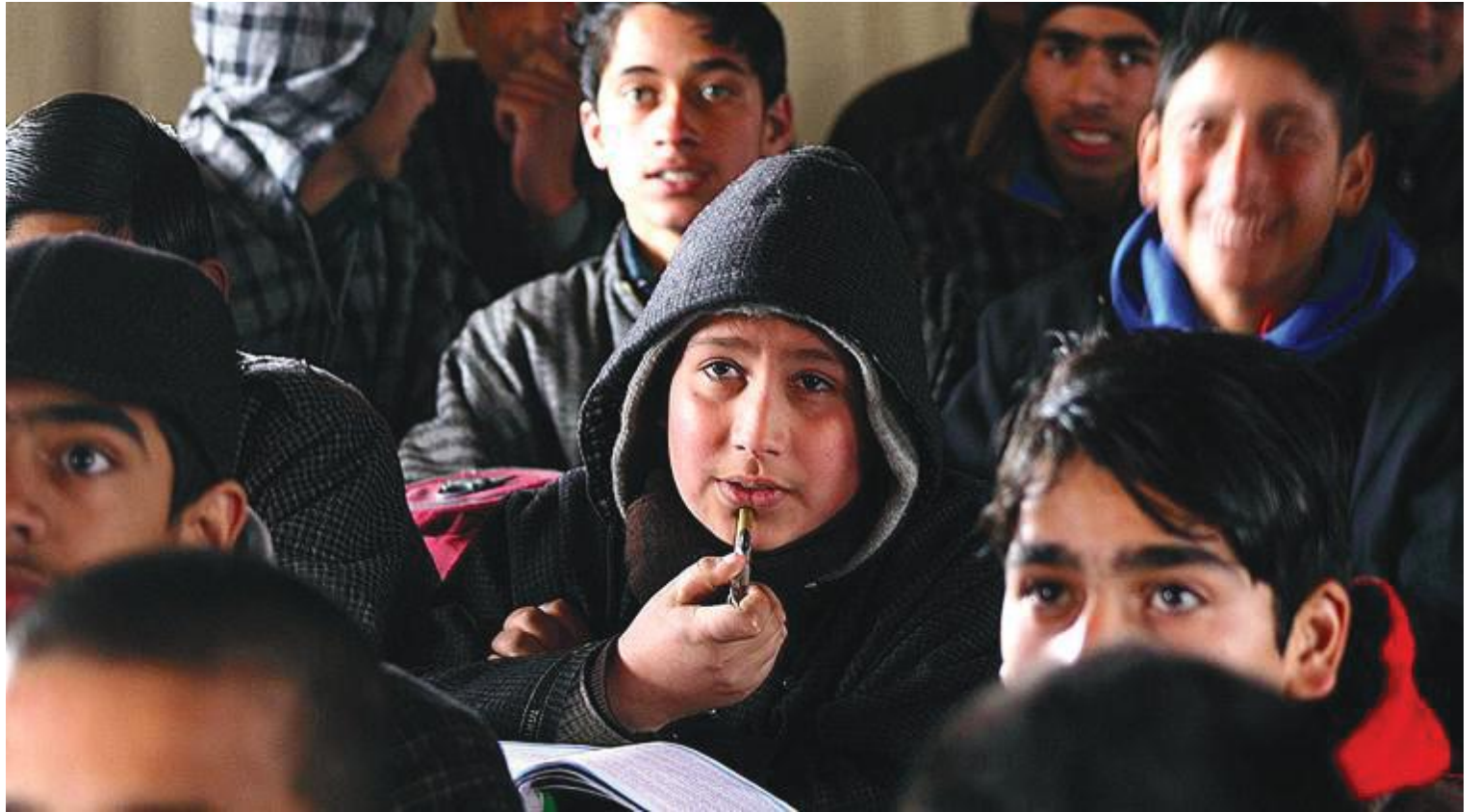
## Self-Isolated

It is almost two decades after liberalisation, when private enterprise took the initiative from state enterprises. In that time, privately-owned and for-profit hospitals took the burden of disease over from a moribund system of publicly-funded hospitals. But the Rs 2.4 lakh crore private health care sector is faltering in the face of a public health crisis, whose burden is being borne by government hospitals, their doctors and nurses. Private enterprise owns almost three out of every four hospital beds in India, and almost eight out of 10 ventilators, but they are handling less than 10 per cent of those critically ill with novel coronavirus. States like Bihar, where private capital owns about twice as many beds as government hospitals, have seen the private sector in complete rout. The reluctance to engage is so great that they have been turning away coronavirus patients and other patients in need of aid. In Delhi and Maharashtra, the state government has had to issue orders so that they do not turn any more away.

As a series of reports in this newspaper showed, numerous factors have been at play in this failure — pay cuts, employee reluctance, the fear of sealing, the future consequences to brand value of hospitals identified with the pandemic, the lack of established protocols and protective gear, and bureaucratic instructions, like those issued in Telangana, to refer viral patients to government facilities. Underlying all this is the economic reality of falling revenues and footfalls, accompanied by new expenses and risk. While the central and state governments should offer to underwrite the risk, the fact remains that a sector which has benefited hugely from government concessions and encouragements, and which has tried to take over healthcare in India, has abdicated its public responsibility and remains isolated from the national effort.

The pandemic offers an opportunity to policymakers to re-value the virtues of public versus private healthcare, and those of free facilities versus insurance-backed care. But both must continue to exist and the present system, however flawed, must carry the nation through the crisis. To retain its perceived value, it is imperative for the private sector to do its public duty now, and be seen to be doing so. In a crisis in which every citizen is pulling together according to ability, financial excuses for withdrawing appear to be pusillanimous and morally wrong. In their long-term interest, abstaining private hospitals must reconsider this divestment from the national effort.

Indian Express



# Healthcare, Education & Economy In Post Covid World

JALIB BEIGH

There are round about ten nuclear-powered nations & expenditure amounting to \$1.8 trillion on the military by the whole world to fight against each other yet they are failing to tackle a nano-micron sized organism. Now, will 13,890 nuclear warheads help any of the nations out there or will there be anyone left on this planet to use them? This pandemic is exposing each and every fault in the working of governments, International bodies & Organisations like UN/WHO/ILO.

The empty streets have become the new normal during the COVID-19 pandemic. The whole world has come to a sudden halt. The outbreak of COVID-19 has created a worldwide health catastrophe that has a deep impact on the way we perceive our world and our day to day lives. Not only the rate of contagion and patterns of transmission threatens our sense of agency, but the safety measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus also require social distancing by abstaining from doing what is naturally human, which is to find comfort in the company of others.

There are round about ten nuclear-powered nations & expenditure amounting to \$1.8 trillion on the military by the whole world to fight against each other yet they are failing to tackle a nano-micron sized organism.

Healthcare workers are on the front line of the pandemic outbreak response with limited PPE's and as such are exposed to hazards that put them at threat of infection. These hazards include pathogen contact, extended working hours, psychological agony and fatigue. Self-isolation and quarantine have precipitated depression and anxiety among people. People are away from their loved ones, dispossessed of personal liberties, and altered routine and livelihood. This is leading to frustration, boredom, low mood, and potentially depression. Anxiety is also rising at an alarming rate from fear of contagion and scarce clarity around social distancing guidelines, often made worse by less reliable media sources creating confusion and fear-mongering. Prolonged isolation and stress from the pandemic can affect people differently. It could put a strain on families, make those feel isolated who living alone and threaten people's sense of purpose by keeping them off from work and those who are experiencing financial uncertainty in the middle of the pandemic have added stress

that is difficult to resolve. Despite those differences, the experience of staying home together through a pandemic can be considered a collective mental disturbance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost every sector & among those badly hit sectors is education. Education is a constitutional right in India, but its provision falls beneath the satisfactory standards. Lack of education is a primary problem in India, and the Indian government schools are a clear picture of this. The infrastructure of schools is in a pathetic state and a lot of school teachers are not properly qualified, with 31% of them not having a degree. About 40% of schools are without electricity. Only a small over 50% of children enrolled in schools in India make it to 12th Class. Less than half of them enter higher educational institutes. By and large, only those students who can afford posh 'private coaching' advance through the entrance tests to the popular engineering and medical colleges.

When the whole world is trying to impart education through online mediums India is lagging way behind in this race. It is the time when India should try investing in the educational sector & promote online education which will eventually help masses of students. Diversity of online study material in the form of videos and texts will encourage students to adopt online education platforms & online courses at UG or PG level are much more affordable than traditional programs.

The pace at which the economic shockwaves from the plague has hit developing countries is dramatic. The COVID-19 crumple of the global economy is prompting comparisons with earlier major economic adjustments at the time of World War II. Globalisation has made countries inter-dependent to some extent & by closing borders completely, the world is deprived of goods and products that were produced by countries together, therefore, hurting economies and worsen-

ing unemployment situation. There are round about ten nuclear-powered nations & expenditure amounting to \$1.8 trillion on the military by the whole world to fight against each other yet they are failing to tackle a nano-micron sized organism. Now, will 13,890 nuclear warheads help any of the nations out there or will there be anyone left on this planet to use them? This pandemic is exposing each and every fault in the working of governments, International bodies & Organisations like UN/WHO/ILO.

Talking about India's economy it was already in decline due to the recession in the automobile sector & this pandemic is adding nails to the coffin. The impact of COVID-19 has mostly been felt across sectors such as logistics, auto, tourism, metals, electronic goods, MSMEs and retail. The Demand & Supply chain is also affected to the worst extent, as a result, India is suffering huge inefficiencies of working capital, which is tied up in stock/inventory that is probably in the wrong place at the wrong time. Also, India is facing losses in income to parallel trade, counterfeiting, and other reliability intimidation, and a lack of adaptableness to shifts in demand or conditions.

In the moment of dire mental trauma world is going through something which needs to be addressed with diligent care. Even after the pandemic is over it will leave its traces over the global economies which will take round about at least five to six years to overcome the trade depression post COVID-19 pandemic. It is the high time for organisations like United Nations, World Health Organisation, International Labour Organisation and all the countries over the globe to come & work together for the betterment of humankind. In the future the amounts spent by countries on defence should be temporarily stopped and those funds should be diverted into healthcare & in the development of trade & commerce.



OBSERVER  
MAIL

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## Brighter Side of COVID-19

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 essentiality's for ages yet world remained 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.

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# Watching Shikara In Kashmir

RIYAZ WANI

Being without cinemas and high-speed internet, Kashmir isn't the place where you can see new movies. Only fewer people have been able to watch Shikara by downloading its cinema print at selective facilities for broadband internet. But the media buzz around the movie which has largely framed the Pandit migration as the organized expulsion of the community by Kashmir's Muslim majority has offended people.

What is it like watching Shikara in Kashmir? It certainly is not the same as watching the movie outside the Valley where its subject – the expulsion of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley in 1990 – has strongly resonated with people. It has played to an audience long weaned on Pandit story, now a staple in the national political discourse. More so, over the past several years, due largely to its politicization by the BJP and also to its increasing use to counter the Azadi narrative in Kashmir.

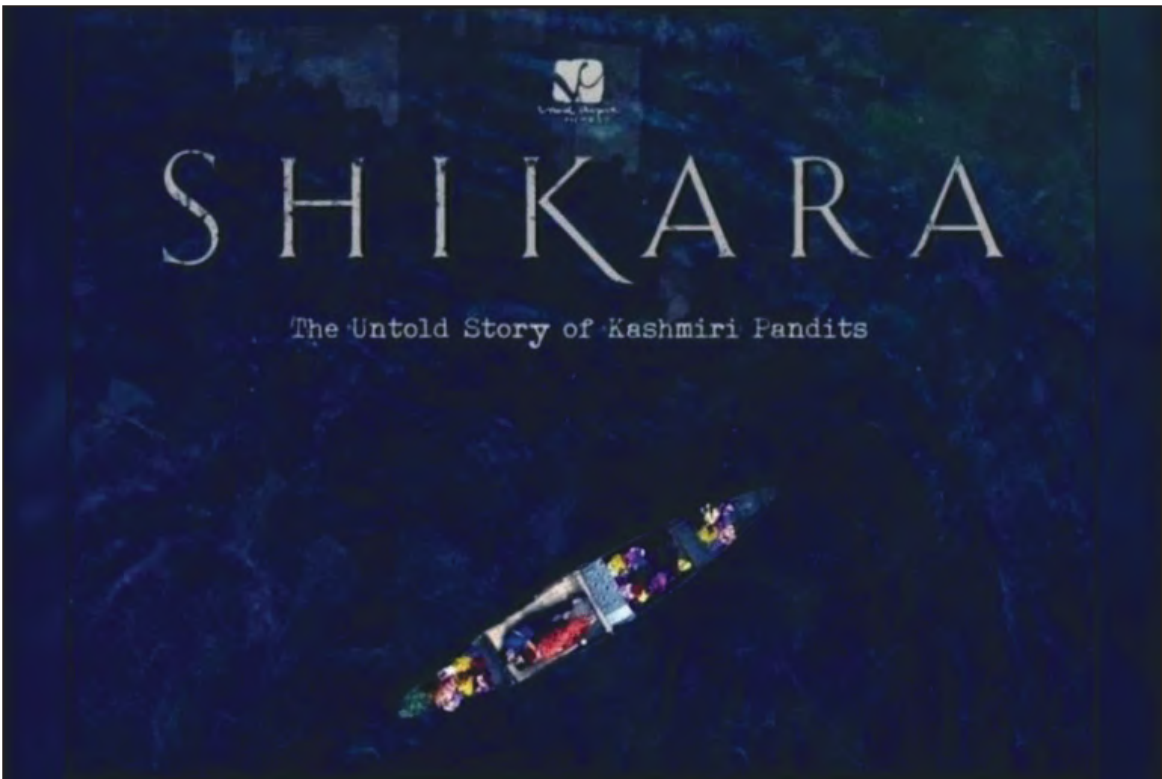
Shikara is thus seen as a welcome Bollywood recognition of the Pandit tragedy and an ode to the community's resilience on the 30th anniversary of the exodus. Criticism, if any, has generally been about the movie not being explicit enough about the atrocities perpetrated on community in the Valley forcing them to flee.

But in Kashmir, on the other hand, Shikara has become contentious for its politics and the portrayal of the events that led to the exodus. Being without cinemas and high-speed internet, Kashmir isn't the place where you can see new movies. Only fewer people have been able to watch Shikara by downloading its cinema print at selective facilities for broadband internet. But the media buzz around the movie which has largely framed the Pandit migration as the organized expulsion of the community by Kashmir's Muslim majority has offended people. What has riled them even more is that Shikara is seen to faithfully reproduce the Pandit account of the exodus, passing over the Muslim side of the story.

Holding Kashmiri Muslims responsible for Pandit expulsion is like blaming the victims of a tsunami for those affected by a storm.

Kashmiri Muslims have an alternative narrative on the exodus, which disputes the version of Pandits and some of the terms used by them to describe their expulsion like 'genocide', 'holocaust' and for that matter even 'exodus'. Kashmiri Muslims never tire of quoting the official Pandit casualty figure of 209 spanning the period from 1989 to 1994. Ever since, according to figures quoted by a former J&K minister Raman Bhalla in the then state Assembly in 2010, no Kashmiri Pandit has lost his life in the ongoing conflict in the region. Similarly, as for exodus, Kashmiri Muslim hate to be accused of forcing out Pandits, arguing the revolt in the nineties wasn't a communal riot between the two communities which could have created conditions for Pandit exodus but a struggle against New Delhi's rule over J&K as it has been ever since.

Both narratives reflect only a part of the truth. Or highlight only the convenient parts of it. And over the years the two accounts have become so sacrosanct that one can only them challenge them at one's risk. But it is also very important that it is done. It is true that many Pandits were killed by the militants for being alleged informers of the security agencies but so were Muslims and in much more numbers. If we go only by the official number of the killings in Kashmir, around 42000 people have lost their lives in past thirty years – unofficial figure routinely quoted by media is twice this number- among them 14,038 civilians, almost all of them Muslims. And they have died in cross-firings, grenade attacks, massacres and custody killings by se-



Both Muslims and Pandits are victims of the lingering conflict over Kashmir.

curity forces and of course a significant number was killed by militants for being alleged informers.

It is also true that the mosque loud-speakers crackled with slogans through the nights as rightly shown by Shikara. But these slogans were meant to be a part of the protest against New Delhi as their meaning would amply demonstrate. People chanted slogans like 'Hum Kya Chahte, Azadi (We want freedom)' and 'Ae Zallimo, Ae Jabiro, Kashmir Hamara Chor Do (O, oppressors, leave our Kashmir)'. The oppressors here meant New Delhi and its security agencies in J&K. The slogan is still chanted in Kashmir.

From the outbreak of the armed separatist campaign in the middle of 1989 until January 19, 1990, the day now observed as the exodus anniversary by Pandits, there was no communal riot in the Kashmir Valley. In fact, there has rarely been any in the Valley in the decades preceding 1990. Fewer that have been were localized and limited in scale.

But yes, there was every reason for Pandits to be terrified of the evolving situation in the Valley. As the 1990 rung in a new decade, Kashmir was sinking into a deeper turmoil with every passing day. More and more youth were taking up arms against New Delhi and more and more protesters were hitting the roads, which often continued through the night. And here was a community caught unenviably between the expectations of a majority community seeking Azadi and its own al-

legiance to New Delhi. This severely tested Pandits' efforts to negotiate the divide and after a point they gave up the effort. Random killings of the members of the community only further accelerated this end of the road feeling. They couldn't support the demand for an independent Kashmir or its accession to Pakistan but they were nevertheless dying alongside Muslims as part of the ongoing struggle.

It was this dynamic that precipitated the Pandit exodus than an organized Muslim campaign against the community as is being projected. That said, the Pandit exodus remains a darkest chapter in Kashmir's troubled history of the past three decades. The community's suffering has been enormous. What is more, the community is beset by a real prospect of an ethnic extinction.

But tell it to Kashmiri Muslims, they will readily acknowledge the Pandit suffering, albeit they remain contemptuous of the blame for the community's exodus, and occasionally charge the then J&K Governor Jagmohan for encouraging the community to leave. They say they are victims of a far bigger and an ongoing tragedy, pointing also to the current siege in the Valley. Some contend that both Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits are victims of the lingering conflict over Kashmir. Or as a journalist friend of mine remarked holding Kashmiri Muslims responsible for Pandit expulsion is like blaming the victims of a tsunami for those affected by a storm

## J&K Internet Curbs Vs Press Freedom

SANJOY HAZARIKA | VENKATESH NAYAK

At first reading, the recent judgment by the Supreme Court on the call by Anuradha Bhasin, the editor of Kashmir Times, who demanded the restoration of the internet in Jammu and Kashmir and inter alia of press freedom, appears to be, in part, an affirmation of the right to internet and media freedom.

The three-member bench laid down, in considerable detail, the approach to guide the assessment of the proportionality of governmental action while imposing restrictions on constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights, such as the freedom of speech and expression, on grounds of national security.

Yet, in our view, the court stopped short of making it a ringing (and stinging) ruling by giving the government a window to review. The Centre then went on to reassert its view that the time was not ripe for such openness. In addition, the judgment did not apply the very test of proportionality that it spoke of so eloquently to the blanket curbs imposed in Jammu and Kashmir since its constitutional status was changed in August 2019.

Indeed, the latter was the main prayer with which the petitioner had approached the court. Interestingly, the court did not admonish the administration for failing to produce all orders imposing blanket bans across Jammu and Kashmir despite repeated demands. Bhasin argued that the blackout was a "direct and grave violation of the people's right to know about the decisions that will impact them", denied public access to parliamentary debates and the prime ministerial address on the issues critical to the future of people in Kashmir, and was "wholly excessive and unconstitutional". She contended that the fact that the order placing the restrictions was not made available in the public domain, and had not been widely published and circulated, made it illegal and an abuse of State power.

India is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which recognizes "right to know" as an inalienable human right. Bhasin argued that the communications shutdown disabled reporters from giving news inputs for print; the action of the State amounted to trampling over press freedom and is "arbitrary, unreasonable, and constitutes an abuse of State power". The blockade had caused financial and opportunity loss for the Kashmir Times could not be published.

The local administration appears to disregard the highest court's ruling on imposing blanket curbs on



The average Kashmiri has to make to do with internet access restricted to 153 government-approved sites at 2G speeds. (No news site, channel or YouTube is accessible.) The apex court's bestowal of constitutional protection to free speech and expression, freedom of the press and the freedom to practice any profession or carry out any trade, business or occupation over the internet, seems stuck on the very paper of that judgment

people's access to the internet in Jammu and Kashmir. This is seen in the Kashmir Press Club's demand for immediate restoration of internet access to media houses and journalists without discrimination. Journalists are forced to give an undertaking that they will provide access to their professional files — violating the right to privacy — to the police and other government agencies and the latter seek it as a precondition for restoring internet access.

The average Kashmiri has to make to do with in-

ternet access restricted to 153 government-approved sites at 2G speeds. (No news site, channel or YouTube is accessible.) The apex court's bestowal of constitutional protection to free speech and expression, freedom of the press and the freedom to practice any profession or carry out any trade, business or occupation over the internet, seems stuck on the very paper of that judgment.

The court's ruling on Kashmir came on the back of the Gauhati High Court's quashing of the internet

blackout that the local administration had imposed across Assam after protests broke out over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The high court found that the blackout was without sufficient cause. We regard this difference in approach as perhaps responsible for the seeming impunity with which the administration continues to control freedom of expression in Jammu and Kashmir.

Even more perplexing is the apex court's acceptance of the Centre's justification of terrorism-insurgency for its blanket ban on internet access. It is not as if militant groups suddenly emerged to pose a critical threat to national security around the time the legislation to downgrade the status of Jammu and Kashmir was introduced in Parliament. Militancy has ebbed and flowed since 1989. The disinclination of the court to make a connection between the change of status and the imposition of the communication blackout is surprising.

It also left unanswered the question of whether access to the internet itself was a constitutionally guaranteed fundamental right. The 2011 report of the United Nations special rapporteur on free speech calls upon member states to ensure people's access to internet at all times, including times of political or social unrest.

The special rapporteur found the use of blocking technologies frequently used by States to be violative of their obligation to guarantee the right to free speech and expression under the ICCPR to which India acceded in 1979. Therefore, it is duty-bound to ensure its implementation across the country, including Jammu and Kashmir.

Another crucial element missing in the arguments on the blanket ban on internet access was the very basis of the internet as an enabler of the freedom of the press. Peoples' right to know what governments do in their name is the foundation stone in a functional democracy, which is strengthened by the freedom of the press.

This question of law has been kept open for another judicial challenge of State actions restricting fundamental freedoms.

Although the Supreme Court's ruling falls short of several expectations, there remains some hope: its guidelines require the publication of all ban orders for the people's knowledge. There is a duty placed on the administration to conduct a weekly review of such bans so long as they are in force.

Civil society must use the Right to Information Act to demand details of all such decision-making processes.

The Telegraph



# SCIENTISTS OUTLINE WAYS To Change Behaviour During Covid-19 Pandemic

Press Trust Of India

Scientists have outlined ways by which people can change their behaviour to adapt to life during the COVID-19 pandemic, suggestions that can be useful in combatting racially driven bias, fake news, and help better manage stress.

The review research, published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*, focuses on phenomena linked to COVID-19, connecting existing studies to potential courses of action in several areas, including group threat, fake news, social norms, stress, and coping.

"Because the crisis requires large-scale behaviour change and poses significant psychological burdens on individuals, insights from the social and behavioral sciences are likely going to be very helpful for optimising pandemic response," said study co-author Jay Van Bavel from New York University in the US.

"This interdisciplinary review points to several ways in which research can be immediately applied to optimize response to this pandemic, but also points to several important gaps that researchers should move quickly to fill in the coming weeks and months," added co-author Robb Willer from Stanford University in the US.

Referring to recent attacks on ethnic Asians in predominantly white countries, the scientists said pandemics may, in fact, present opportunities to reduce religious and ethnic prejudice. "Coordinated efforts across individuals, communities, and governments to fight the spread of disease send strong signals of cooperation and shared values, which allow people to re-cast others who were previously considered out-group members as

in-group members," they wrote in the study. To effectively curb the menace of fake news, the scientists said a "pre-bunking approach," could be used, which centers on psychological inoculation.

Based on earlier studies, they said preemptively exposing people to small doses of misinformation techniques, including scenarios about COVID-19, can reduce susceptibility to fake news. The current research noted another preventative approach to counter fake news which involves subtle prompts that emphasise accuracy such as asking users to judge the veracity of a single neutral headline. According to the scientists, such prompts can improve the quality of the content that users share, and could be easily implemented by social media platforms.

"How much people change will be influenced by aspects of the social and cultural context," the researchers wrote in the study. "The fact that people tend to follow social norms and cultural mores can sometimes have undesirable consequences," they said. Citing an example, the scientists said the continuous exposure to news examples of people going out might explain why it was difficult to convince Italians to stay at home after the COVID-19 lockdown of March 11.

"But they also report that understanding these features of the social environment, such as social norms, social inequality, culture, and polarization, can help identify risk factors and successful messages and interventions," they added.

According to the researchers, our decisions are influenced by social norms --what we perceive others are doing, or approve/disapprove of -- and that "informational influence" occurs when people use others' behaviour as

input for reasonable interpretations and responses. This effect is stronger when people are uncertain and outcomes are important such as during a pandemic, they added.

However, the scientists cautioned that our estimates of people's behaviour are also frequently inaccurate. People can underestimate the frequency others engage in health-promoting behaviours like hand washing, and overestimate their unhealthy ones such as not properly covering one's mouth when coughing, they explained. In order to effectively change behaviours by correcting misperceptions, the scientists pointed to the importance of public messages that reinforce health-promoting norms and not highlighting extreme or uncommon behaviours, such as panic buying.

The scientists also noted the value of on-line forums as hubs for mutual support, in particular, among individuals with rare illnesses, and psychological well-being amidst the lockdowns and physical distancing measures enforced in several parts of the world. They pointed to technologies, such as FaceTime and Zoom, as valuable tools in generating empathy and connection.

Van Bavel and Willer also recognised the potential barriers to these tools for seniors.

"Special attention should be placed on helping older adults, who might be less familiar with these technologies, to learn and acclimate to the potential richness of digital connections," they wrote in the research.

"By applying the knowledge gained from earlier research, we hope that public health experts will be better equipped to communicate effectively and drive behavior change in a manner that yields global benefits," Willer added.

## COVID-19 Triggers Depletion Of Immune System Cells: Study

Press Trust Of India

**BEIJING-** COVID-19 patients have significantly low counts of a cell type that plays a crucial role in immune response, with lower numbers of these cells indicating more severe disease, according to a study whose findings may lead to the development of new therapeutics against the disease.

The study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Immunology*, assessed COVID-19 patients in China, and found that an adverse immune response triggered in the body may affect disease severity by lowering the counts of T cells, which are a type of white blood cells that play important roles in the immune system.

According to the scientists, including those from the Army Medical University in China, COVID-19 patients had a high concentration of cytokines, a protein that normally helps fight off infection.

They said an increased concentration of these molecules can trigger an excessive inflammatory response known as a cytokine storm, which causes the proteins to attack healthy cells.

Coronavirus, the study said, does



not attack T cells directly, but rather triggers the cytokine release, which then drives the depletion and exhaustion of T cells.

The findings, according to the researchers, offer clues on how to target treatment for COVID-19.

"We should pay more attention to T cell counts and their function, rather than respiratory function of patients," said study co-author Yongwen Chen of Third Military Medical University in China, adding that "more urgent, early intervention may be required in patients with low T lymphocyte counts".

Chen and his team also noticed that many of the patients they treated for COVID-19 had abnormally low numbers of lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell that includes T cells. "Considering T cells' central role of response against viral infections, especially in the early stage when antibodies are not boosted yet, we took the T cells as our focal point," he said.

In the study, the scientists examined 522 patients with coronavirus along with 40 healthy controls.

They said all the patients studied were admitted to two hospitals in

Wuhan, China, between December 2019 and January 2020, and were between 5 days and 97 years old.

Of the 499 patients who had their lymphocytes recorded, the study noted that 76 per cent had significantly low total T cell counts.

It said ICU patients had significantly lower T cell counts compared with non-ICU cases, and patients over the age of 60 had the lowest number of T cells.

According to Chen and his team, the T cells that did survive were exhausted and could not function at full capacity.

This exhaustion also has implications for COVID-19 patient outcomes, and may leave patients more vulnerable to secondary infection, they added.

The scientists believe future research should focus on finding finer subpopulations of T cells in order to discover their vulnerability and effect in disease, along with identifying drugs that recover T cell numbers and boost function.

They said the existing drug Tocilizumab may be effective, but added that it needs to be investigated in the context of coronavirus.

## Scientists Using Algae To Produce Low-Cost COVID-19 Test Kits

Press Trust Of India

Researchers in Canada are using algae to rapidly develop low-cost serological test kits for COVID-19 that they say would determine if someone has been infected with the novel coronavirus.

The new method overcomes shortfalls of existing processes while saving money, according to the researchers from the University of Western Ontario in Canada.

The team collaborated with Canadian integrated energy company Suncor to develop algae as a production factory to make necessary proteins to identify COVID-19 antibodies in someone previously infected with the disease.

"We are using a microalgae that shows a lot of promise for not only producing the protein needed, but producing it with the correct modifications to mimic how it's made in humans," Daniel Giguere from the University of Western Ontario



said in a statement.

"We are leveraging our in-house expertise and technology to rapidly produce the proteins and validate their effectiveness as a testing reagent," Sam Slatery from the university added.

The researchers noted that one of the limiting factors in developing large-scale serological testing is the ability to make significant quantities of the viral proteins on a cost-effective basis.

Current tests rely on proteins made in reagents such as insect or mammalian cells which are expensive and difficult to scale, they said.

## Five Health Benefits Of Using A Miswak

Agencies

Oral hygiene, or the lack of it, is an issue that is often swept under the rug during Ramadan.

People generally avoid using toothpastes during Ramadan thanks to the fear that they might ingest it by mistake, breaking their fast, and let's face it, it's not the best practice! Who wants to come out of Ramadan with tooth sensitivity, oral decay and bad breath? The answer is, no one!

Luckily, there's one thing that has saved people's oral health and hygiene for thousands of years prior to toothbrushes and toothpastes -- we're talking about chew sticks or miswak!

Miswak is most generally associated with the *Salvadora persica* tree, commonly known as 'arak' in Arabic, and holds special importance in Islam -- the Prophet (PBUH) himself used 'twigs made from the Arak tree', and their use is often mentioned in hadith concerning the Prophet's life.

As compiled from StyleCraze, here are five health benefits of incorporating a miswak in your daily oral healthcare routine!

**1) Fights tooth decay and cavities**

While most commercial toothpastes use fluoride as a means to beat decay, another effective solution to this is your own saliva -- it prevents buildup of acid and gives teeth time to repair themselves. Miswak has been known to increase the formation of saliva in the mouth without the need for any commercial enhancers or additives, thus naturally fighting tooth decay.

**2) Protects against tartar and plaque**

The easiest way to prevent the buildup of tartar and plaque, and thereby prevent gum disease and tooth loss, is to brush regularly and in the right manner. Miswak being the 'toothbrush twig' helps here thanks to its antibacterial property that prevents the bacteria from accumulating on the teeth and gums.

## Scholarships This Week

Kashmir Observer In Association With Buddy4study.com Presents Scholarships Available For The Meritorious Students Of Jammu And Kashmir

**Scholarship Name 1: SERB National Post Doctoral Fellowship (N-PDF) 2020**

**Description:** Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), GOI has announced this fellowship for the young researchers and provide them with support for doing research in frontier areas of science and engineering.

**Eligibility:** Indian citizens who have obtained a PhD/M.D/M.S degree from a recognized University and not older than 35 years of age at the time of application, can apply for this fellowship.

**Prizes & Rewards:** Selected students will get a research grant of INR, 3 Lac per annum and monthly stipend up to INR 55,000 per month.

Last Date to Apply: 13-05-2020

Application mode: Apply online

Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/NPD8-----](http://www.b4s.in/observer/NPD8-----)

**Scholarship Name 2: Nursing Scholarship For Girls, Sasakawa India Leprosy Foundation 2020**

**Description:** Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation (S-ILF) has announced this scholarship for the girl students residing in self-settled leprosy colonies who wish to pursue nursing studies for Nursing Scholarship for Girls 2020.

**Eligibility:** Indian class 12 passed (PCB) girl student who are more than 17 years of age interested in pursuing B.Sc Nursing (Basic), have one parent who has leprosy and must be residing in a self-settled leprosy colony can apply for this scholarship.

**Prizes & Rewards:** Financial support up to a maximum of INR 88,000 and monthly stipend of INR 1,000 will be provided to the selected student.

Last Date to Apply: 31-05-2020

Application mode: Apply online

Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/IFN2-----](http://www.b4s.in/observer/IFN2-----)

**Scholarship Name 3: IITDM Kancheepuram Postdoctoral Research Fellowships 2020**

**Description:** Indian Institute Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing (IITDM), Kancheepuram is offering this fellowship for the PhD degree holders who are undertaking independent research work in advanced areas of engineering and technology.

**Eligibility:** Indian scholars with a PhD degree in the relevant field from reputed universities in India and abroad who are less than 35 years of age, can apply for this fellowship.

**Prizes & Rewards:** Fellows will get stipend up to INR 55,000 per month and INR 1,00,000 worth of grants.

Last Date to Apply: Round The Year

Application mode: Apply online

Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/ITK2-----](http://www.b4s.in/observer/ITK2-----)

**Scholarship Name 4: Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Research Fellowships 2021-22**

**Description:** United States-India Educational Foundation (USIEF) has announced this 6 to 9-month fellowship for Indian scholars who are registered for a PhD programme at an Indian institution. The selected scholars will get multiple financial benefits.

**Eligibility:** Indian students who have registered for their PhD at an Indian institution on or before September 1, 2019, can apply for this fellowship.

**Prizes & Rewards:** Selected students will get opportunities to audit non-degree courses, conduct research and gain practical work experience in suitable settings in the US and benefits like two-way airfare for the trip, visa, healthcare and more.

Last Date to Apply: 15-07-2020

Application mode: Apply Online

Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/FDR5](http://www.b4s.in/observer/FDR5)





## Amid Attack From Trump, WHO Praises China For Handling Coronavirus Pandemic

Press Trust Of India

Geneva: The World Health Organisation has praised China for its handling of the coronavirus pandemic, and said that other countries need to learn from Wuhan on how the epicentre of the virus was bringing the society back to normal, a day after US President Donald Trump likened the global health body to a public relations agency for Beijing.

this achievement," state-run Xinhua news agency quoted her as saying on Saturday.

"The world has learned from China and we need to continue to learn from Wuhan on how they are lifting those measures, how they are bringing society back to normal, or a new normal, in terms of how we're going to live with this virus going forward," she said.

Health officials in Wuhan, where the coronavirus emerged



Trump on Thursday said the WHO should be "ashamed" of itself, as he compared the UN's health organ to a public relations agency for China amidst the coronavirus pandemic after it originated in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

The Trump administration has launched a probe into the role of the WHO on coronavirus, and has temporarily suspended the US' financial assistance to it.

Many countries, including Germany, Britain and Australia, are blaming China for the spread of coronavirus, that has killed over 2,35,000 people globally, including 64,000 Americans, and has infected 3.3 million.

Noting that there are zero COVID-19 cases in Wuhan, Maria van Kerkhove, the technical lead for the WHO's Health Emergencies Programme at a virtual press briefing in Geneva, aid, "that's very very welcome news to hear that there are no more severe cases, no more patients in Wuhan."

"So congratulations on

in December last year, said all COVID-19 cases were cleared from hospitals on Sunday.

The Hubei province and its capital Wuhan have not reported coronavirus cases for 28 consecutive days since April 4, the local health commission said on Saturday.

The central province also lowered its emergency level from highest to next level on Saturday.

The lowering of the emergency level shows a major breakthrough in Hubei's prevention and control against COVID-19, Vice-Governor of Hubei Yang Yunyan told the media on Friday.

The province, however, reported 647 asymptomatic cases, which are under medical observation. Hubei has so far reported 68,128 confirmed COVID-19 cases in total, including 50,333 in Wuhan.

Amid criticism of under reporting of cases, Wuhan on April 17 revised its death toll by 50 per cent, taking the number of fatalities to 3,869.

The death toll in China stood at 4,633 as of Thursday, with 82,874 overall confirmed cases.

## Pakistan's Coronavirus Tally Crosses 19,000; Death Toll At 440

Press Trust Of India

Islamabad: Pakistan's coronavirus tally crossed 19,000 on Sunday after 989 new patients were diagnosed in the last 24 hours.

The Ministry of National Health Services said 23 patients died in this period, taking the total toll to 440. So far, 4,817 people have recovered from the deadly virus, the ministry said.

Out of the total 19,103 virus patients in the country, Punjab has reported 7,106 cases, Sindh 7,102, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 2,907, Balochistan 1,172, Islamabad 393, Gilgit-Baltistan 356 and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir 67 cases.

The authorities so far have conducted 203,025 tests, including 8,716 in the last 24 hours.

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday night said he was not sure when the vaccine against Covid-19 will be available and expressed fears that "we may have to live with the coronavirus for six months or (even) a year".

Khan said the war against the pandemic can be won by wisdom and not by using force to shut down the masses.



## Hundreds Of Rohingya Muslims Stuck At Sea With 'Zero Hope'

Agencies

Bangkok: Somewhere in turquoise waters, perhaps where the Bay of Bengal meets the Andaman Sea, wooden boats filled with Rohingya refugees are listing, adrift now for more than 10 weeks.

They were prevented from docking in Malaysia, their preferred destination, and Bangladesh, their port of origin. As of this week, rights groups that had been trying to track the boats by satellite lost sight of them. Each boat - there were at least three - carried hundreds of Rohingya Muslims desperate for sanctuary and at the mercy of human traffickers.

"I feel like crying, realising the situation of my brothers and sisters who are still floating in the deep sea," said Mohammad Yusuf, a chief imam in one of the refugee camps in Bangladesh, where about 1 million Rohingya have taken refuge after fleeing waves of persecution and violence in neighbouring Myanmar.

The boats had been caught in what the United Nations has called a dangerous "game of human Ping-Pong." The Bangladeshi government balked at accepting them, arguing that it has already taken in many Rohingya and borne a far greater share of the burden in the refugee crisis than

any other nation.

But with Malaysia refusing to allow the boats to dock amid a national coronavirus lockdown, and a xenophobic mood sweeping the region, the boats had nowhere else to go.

"Bangladesh has shouldered very heavy responsibilities for the Rohingya refugees and must not be left alone to deal with these challenges," said Steven Corliss, the UN refugee agency's representative in Bangladesh. "But turning desperate people away cannot be the answer."

The deadly results of such a rejection became clear on April 15 when another Rohingya boat that had been prevented from docking in Malaysia was rescued by the Bangladeshi coast guard. Nearly 400 malnourished and dehydrated figures, many of them children, emerged from the hold, where they had been kept by human traffickers.

The UN refugee agency, which assessed the refugees' condition, did not quantify how many Rohingya perished on the journey, saying simply that "many died and were tossed overboard." A significant number had suffered physical abuse at the hands of the traffickers, the agency said.

The Rohingya who survived that journey are now in quarantine for the coro-

navirus at a temporary camp in Bangladesh.

Stateless and traumatised

The human traffickers who smuggle the Rohingya from internment camps in Myanmar, or refugee camps in Bangladesh, prey on some of the most vulnerable people on earth. Mostly stateless and traumatised by decades of persecution by the Myanmar military, many Rohingya are desperate to get to Malaysia, where they can find work as undocumented labourers. About 100,000 are registered with the UN refugee agency, and many more live in the margins of society with no paperwork at all.

A trade in Rohingya women and girls supplies wives to the Rohingya men, ensuring that an already disenfranchised community continues to suffer in another country.

Hundreds of Rohingya have died trying to get to Malaysia. Some were thrown overboard from overloaded boats when the journeys lengthened because countries refused them safe harbour. Others were buried in mass graves in the jungle when their families could not afford trafficking fees that suddenly increased during the trip, a common tactic by human smugglers to squeeze more money out of the trade.

## UK Right Behind Italy As Worst Hit In Europe

Agencies

London: The United Kingdom's COVID-19 death toll rose by 621 to 28,131 as of May 1, just short of Italy which has so far had the world's second most deadly outbreak of the disease after the United States.

As Britain shadows Italy for the grim status of being the worst hit country in Europe, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is facing criticism from opposition parties who say his government stumbled in the early stages of the outbreak.

Housing minister Robert Jenrick gave the latest UK figures at a Downing Street briefing on Saturday.

The United States has had 64,740 deaths, followed by Italy with 28,710 and the United

Kingdom on 28,131 and then Spain on 25,100, according to a Reuters tally.

Italy, which has a population of 60 million, said its death toll rose 474 as of Saturday. The United Kingdom has a population of about 67 million.

Johnson, 55, initially resisted introducing a lockdown to restrict economic and public activity but changed course when projections showed a quarter of a million people could die.

Johnson himself battled COVID-19 last month, spending three days in intensive care. He returned to work telling the nation that people around the world were looking at the United Kingdom's "apparent success".

Tests for easing lockdown

He has said the country is over the peak but that it is still too early to relax the lockdown he imposed on March 23 because there could be a second peak that he fears might overwhelm hospitals.

The \$3.0 trillion British economy, the world's fifth-largest, is stalling and Johnson is due next week to present a possible way to get the country back to work without triggering a second spike in cases.

He has set five tests that must be met before he can lift the lockdown - with a reduction in the daily death toll and prevention of a second deadly peak among the key ones.

Government scientists say that while the daily death tolls show a downward trend they expect them to plateau for a while.

## Iran To Reopen Mosques Tomorrow As Lockdown Eases

Agencies

Tehran: Iranian president Hassan Rouhani said mosques would reopen across large parts of the country on Monday after they were closed in early March amid the Middle East's deadliest novel coronavirus outbreak.

Rouhani said 132 counties, around one-third of the country's administrative divisions, would "reopen their mosques as of tomorrow".

"Social distancing is more important than collective prayer," he added, arguing that Islam considers safety obligatory, while praying in mosques is only "recommended".

The targeted counties are "low-risk", Rouhani said in a televised meeting of the country's virus taskforce.

He said the committee was also mulling reopening schools by May 16 to allow for a month of classes before the summer break.

The new coronavirus has killed more than 6,150 and infected over 96,440 in Iran since it announced its first cases in mid-February.

Rouhani claimed hospital visits over potential infections were "much lower" compared to recent weeks.

Iran on Saturday reported its lowest daily toll of new infections since March 10.

Experts and officials both

in Iran and abroad have cast doubts over the country's COVID-19 figures, saying the real number of cases could be much higher than reported.

The Islamic republic has tried to contain the spread of the virus by shutting universities, cinemas, stadiums and other public spaces since March.

But it has allowed a phased



reopening of its economy since April 11, arguing that the sanctions-hit country cannot afford to remain shut down.

Only "high-risk" businesses like gyms and barbershops remain closed.

"We will continue the reopenings calmly and gradually," Rouhani said.

Yet he warned that Iran should prepare for "bad scenarios" too, saying "this situation may continue into the summer".

## Venezuelan Prison Riot Leaves 40 Dead; Warden Injured

Agencies

CARACAS: A riot erupted at a prison in central Venezuela on Friday, killing at least 40 people and injuring 50 more, including a National Guard officer who was wounded by an explosion and the warden, who suffered a knife wound, authorities said.

The upheaval at the Llanos

Noticias that a group of inmates attacked officers standing guard outside the prison.

The warden was injured by at least one inmate wielding a knife, Varela said.

A once-wealthy oil nation, Venezuela is gripped by a deepening political and economic crisis. Street violence is common in the nation that has had nearly 5 million residents flee in recent years as public



Penitentiary Centre started with an inmate protest demanding that their relatives be allowed to deliver them food and then an armed confrontation broke out between inmates and guards, lawmaker Mara Beatriz Martinez said.

The National Guard officer was injured by a grenade explosion, said Martinez, who had access to an early report prepared by the town's security forces. The prison is located in the city of Guanare, 450 kilometres (280 miles) south-west of the capital of Caracas.

Venezuela's minister of penitentiary services, Iris Varela, confirmed the riot, telling the local newspaper Ultimas

services crumble.

Venezuela has roughly 30 prisons and 500 jails that can hold an estimated 110,000 inmates. Human rights officials say the prisons are violent and badly overcrowded, with gangs that traffic weapons and drugs in control.

According to the human rights group Venezuelan Prison Observatory, the Guanare prison was built to hold 750 inmates but is jammed beyond capacity with 2,500 inmates.

A similar riot occurred a year ago in a nearby jail also in the state of Portuguesa, where 29 inmates died at a police jail that housed several hundred detainees.

## Indian-American physician launches study to find if prayers could heal Covid patients

Kansas City: An Indian-American physician in Kansas City has begun a study to find if something called remote intercessory prayer might initiate God to heal those infected with the coronavirus.

Dhanunjaya Lakkireddy launched the four-month prayer study on Friday, which involves 1,000 coronavirus patients who are in intensive care.

In the study, none of the patients' prescribed standard care will be changed. They will be divided in two groups of 500 each and prayers will be offered for one of the groups. Also, neither group will be informed about the prayers.

The four-month study will investigate "the role of remote intercessory multi-denominational prayer on clinical outcomes in COVID-19 patients," according to a de-



scription provided to the National Institutes of Health.

Half of the patients, randomly chosen, will receive a "universal" prayer offered in five denominational forms -- Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism -- while the other patients will constitute the control group.

All the patients will receive the standard of care prescribed by their medical providers and Lakkireddy has assembled a steering committee of medical professionals to oversee the study.

"We all believe in science, and we also believe in faith," Lakkireddy said.

"If there is a supernatural power, which a lot of us believe, would

that power of prayer and divine intervention change the outcomes in a concerted fashion? That was our question," he said.

The investigators will assess how long the patients remain on ventilators, how many suffer from organ failure, how quickly they are released from intensive care and how many die, Lakkireddy said.

He describes himself as "born into Hinduism," but said he also attended a Catholic school and had spent time in synagogues, Buddhist monasteries, and mosques.

The physician said he cannot explain how people praying remotely for someone they don't know (or a group of people,) could actually make a difference in their health outcomes, and acknowledged that some of his medical colleagues have had "a mixed reaction" to his study proposal.

## 19 kids bored from quarantine steal 46 cars worth over \$1.1 million

Police have identified nineteen kids aged between 9 and 16 years old after they stole 46 cars worth more than \$1.1 million - for a social media challenge.

The 20 heists, which took place in March, occurred in Forsyth County, North Carolina, with the goal of the Snapchapp 'contest' being to take as many pictures with stolen cars as possible.

Police have since found 40 of the 46 stolen vehicles - which included models from Audi, Ford, Honda, Chevrolet, Lexus, and Toyota. The Winston-Salem Police



Department says the vehicles were taken on joyrides mostly out of the boredom of self-isolation. However, because the kids are all minors they cannot be arrested.

"Detectives have sought, and thus far have been denied, secure

custody orders from the Forsyth County Department of Juvenile Justice for the involved juveniles," police wrote in the release. "Detectives are continuing their efforts to investigate these crimes and to prevent future thefts."



## Taxpayers Beware Of Phishing E-Mails Promising Refund

**NEW DELHI:** The Income Tax Department on Sunday asked taxpayers to beware of phishing e-mails promising refund.

"Taxpayers Beware! Please do not click on any fake link which promises to give refund. These are phishing messages and are not sent by the income tax department," the department said in a tweet.

According to the latest data, between 8-20 April, the department issued nearly

14 lakh refunds involving an amount of over Rs 9,000 crore to various taxpayers including individuals, Hindu Undivided Families, proprietors, firms, corporate, start-ups, and MSMEs.

On 8 April, the finance ministry said it will fast-track issuance of pending income tax refunds up to Rs 5 lakh which will benefit around 14 lakh taxpayers, to provide relief to individuals and businesses hit by the COVID-19 outbreak.



## Lockdown Deaths: Of Those Who Never Reached Home



**NEW DELHI:** As the government readied trains to transport migrant workers to their homes in distant corners, Dharamveer and Tabarat Mansoor gave up on the battle of life, one collapsing while cycling from Delhi to Bihar and the other as he headed from Maharashtra to Uttar Pradesh.

Sheer fatigue felled them both, as it did so many other stranded migrants who set off for home, hundreds, sometimes thousands, of kilometres away, desperate to be with their families in the prolonged lockdown that left them with no money, no jobs and no roof over their heads.

Home beckoned. But they never did get there.

Some bought cycles with their little savings and others just set off on the long walk, in shoes with paper thin soles or flip flops, their few belongings packed into backpacks or unwieldy bundles.

On Friday night, the first special train ferrying over 1,200 stranded migrants from Telangana reached Hatia in Jharkhand from where the state government took them to their respective districts in sanitised buses in accordance with Covid-19 protocols. Sometime around then, 32-year-old Dharamveer was declared brought dead at a hospital in Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh. He began cycling, along with other labourers like him, from Delhi to Khagaria in Bihar, about 1,200 km away, on April 28, police said.

"When Dharamveer's condition deteriorated, the

labourers took him to the medical college where he was declared brought dead," Circle Officer (city) Praveen Kumar said. The day before, 50-year-old Tabarat died in Sendhwa in Madhya Pradesh after cycling over 390 kilometres to get home from Bhiwandi in Maharashtra to Maharajganj in Uttar Pradesh, about 1,600 km away. "He died on Thursday near Sendhwa in Barwani possibly due to fatigue and heart attack," said Ramesh Pawar who was with him.

The unprecedented move to stem Covid spread triggered possibly the biggest movement of people since Partition.

Insaf Ali, 35, was even closer. He reached his village in Uttar Pradesh's Shravasti district but did not make it home. Ali walked or hitched 1,500 km from Mumbai to Shravast. He worked as a helper to a mason in Mumbai before the lockdown and reached Mathkanwa village where he was quarantined early on Monday morning this week. By noon, he was dead. The media recorded several such stories, of workers desperate to be with their families in the uncertain days of a pandemic but dying before they reached their destination.

The first reported casualty of this exodus was 39-year-old Ranveer Singh, who worked as a delivery boy for a restaurant in Delhi and died in Agra after walking for over 200 km to Morena in MP. — PTI



An EDMC official sprays disinfectant at CRPF camp at Mayur Vihar in Delhi. PTI photo

## CRPF Headquarters In Delhi Sealed After Staff Tests Positive For Coronavirus

**NEW DELHI:** The headquarters of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) here has been sealed after a personal staff of a senior officer tested positive for novel coronavirus, officials said on Sunday.

A personal secretary of a Special Director General (SDG) rank officer working in the headquarters

has tested positive for the virus and hence the building has been sealed by the force, they said.

Officials working in the building will not be allowed inside the premises from Sunday, they said.

The force has informed the district surveillance officer for "initiating required protocols" as per medical

guidelines, for time-bound proper sealing of the building located in the CGO complex on Lodhi Road.

They said a contact tracing exercise has begun of all the personnel who came in contact with the staffer at the headquarter building.

The CRPF is the country's largest paramilitary force.

## Special Trains Only For Passengers Authorised By States: Railways

**NEW DELHI:** The railways reiterated on Saturday night that it was ferrying only those authorised by state governments in its special trains for people stranded during the lockdown, following reports of unauthorised travel and crowding at some stations.

In a late night statement, the national transporter said, "Railways only accepting passengers, brought

and facilitated by state governments. No other group of traveller or individual are to come to station."

"Some special trains being run only on state governments' requests. All other passenger and suburban train services remain suspended," it said.

The railways also said that no tickets are being sold at any station, advising people not to converge at any

rail station.

India is under a nationwide lockdown to check the spread of the novel coronavirus, with a ban on rail, air and road traffic.

Earlier this week, the Union Home Ministry allowed states to ferry their residents, particularly migrant labourers, students and tourists, stranded outside due to the lockdown in special buses and trains.

## Aviation Fuel Now Costs Less Than One-Third Of Petrol Price

**NEW DELHI:** Jet fuel (ATF) prices have been slashed by a steep 23 per cent in line with a slump in international oil prices and it now costs about one-third of petrol and diesel whose rates continue to be frozen for the 50th day on Sunday.

Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price has been cut by Rs 6,812.62 per kilolitre, or 23.2 per cent, to Rs 22,544.75 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification by state-owned oil marketing companies.

ATF, which is used as a fuel in aeroplanes, now costs less than one-third of the price of petrol used in cars and two-wheelers. A litre of petrol in Delhi comes for Rs 69.59 while jet fuel is priced at Rs 22.54 per litre.

Diesel, used mostly in trucks, buses and tractors, is priced at Rs 62.29 per litre.

In fact, even market priced or non-subsidised kerosene is much cheaper than petrol and diesel after its rates were cut 13.3 per cent to Rs 39,678.47 per kl (Rs 39.67 per litre), according to the notification.

This the steepest cut ever and sixth reduction in ATF prices since February. Since February, jet fuel prices



have been cut by almost two-thirds. ATF price in Delhi before the reduction cycle began in February was Rs 64,323.76 per kl and now costs Rs 22,544.75 per kl.

Similar reduction has been effected in other metro cities as well.

While the oil PSUs have regularly revised ATF prices, they have since March 16 kept petrol and diesel prices on hold ostensibly on account of extreme volatility in the international oil markets.

Petrol and diesel prices were frozen soon after the government raised

excise duty on the two fuels by Rs 3 per litre each to mop up gains arising from falling international rates.

Oil companies, instead of passing on the excise hike to consumers, decided to adjust them against the reduction required because of the drop in international oil prices. They used the same tool and did not pass on the Re 1 per litre hike required for switching over to ultra-clean BS-VI grade fuel from April 1.

Similarly, they had stopped revising fuel prices for almost 14 days ahead of the assembly elections in Gujarat in December 2017.

## Economic Recovery From COVID-19 May Take Over A Year: CII Survey

The lockdown has brought economic activity to a grinding halt, the Confederation of Indian Industry CII said on Sunday, citing findings from its CEOs survey, which indicated that 65 per cent of the firms expect revenues to fall more than 40 per cent in April-June quarter.

The survey results reveal that the country may experience a protracted slowdown in economic activity, as 45 per cent of the CEOs polled feel it will take over a year to achieve economic normalcy once the lockdown ends.

The snap poll saw the participation of more than 300 CEOs, of which nearly two-thirds belonged to MSMEs.

On the career and liveli-

conomic activity, CII said.

For the full financial year 2020-21, the expectations of a fall in revenue are staggered, with 33 per cent of the firms anticipating a revenue fall of more than 40 per cent, closely followed by 32 per cent of firms expecting a revenue contraction ranging between 20 per cent to 40 per cent.

While three out of four firms have identified that a 'complete shutdown of operations' was a major constraint being faced by business, more than half of them have also indicated 'lack of demand for products' as a hindrance to business activity.

"While the lockdown was necessary to mitigate the coronavirus impact on the



hoods front, more than half of the firms foresee job losses in their respective sectors after the lockdown. A significant share of respondents (45 per cent) expect 15 per cent to 30 per cent cut in jobs. However, allaying some concerns, nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported that they have not experienced a salary/ wage cut in their firms so far.

The country-wide lockdown imposed on March 25, while necessary, has had deep ramifications on eco-

population, it has had dire implications for economic activity. At this hour, the industry awaits a stimulus package for economic revival and livelihood sustenance besides calibrated exit from lockdown," CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said.

Additionally, it is pertinent to note that according to a large proportion of the firms, a recovery in domestic demand, for their product or services, may precede the recovery in foreign demand for the same.

## UAE Sends 7 Metric Tonnes Of Medical Supplies To Boost India's COVID-19 Fight



The UAE on Saturday sent seven metric tonnes of medical supplies to India to bolster its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the Gulf country's embassy here said.

The aid sent by plane will assist approximately 7,000 medical professionals as they work to combat the virus, the embassy said in a statement.

"The UAE is committed to extending critical support to nations seeking to bolster their fight against the COVID-19 pandemic," the UAE's Ambassador to India Ahmed Abdul Rahman Al-Banna said.

"UAE assistance to India comes in recognition of the profound and brotherly ties our two countries have shared throughout the years," he said.

Combating COVID-19 has become a primary global concern, and the UAE acts out of its conviction that strengthening the efforts of other countries to contain the virus is a pressing necessity, the envoy said.

Till now, the UAE has provided more than 348 metric tonnes of aid to over 34 countries, supporting nearly 3,48,000 medical professionals in the process.

### NEWS MAKER

## Misery Of Migrants: 14 Labourers 'Rescued' From Concrete Mixture Truck

**BHOPAL:** The 'reverse migration' triggered by coronavirus pandemic has unfolded many a tragic tale involving migrant workers of Madhya Pradesh.

Traffic cops manning the Indore-Ujjain highway at Panth Piplani on Saturday could not believe their eyes when they spotted 14 labourers being carried inside a concrete mixture making machine to their native place of Lucknow from Pune in Maharashtra to beat the lockdown provisions.

"The movement of the vehicle carrying the machine sparked suspicion among us since no construction work was going on in any part of the country due to the nationwide lockdown.

We heard feeble noises com-

ing from the container when we went closer to it. Later, we found 14 labourers inside it", one of the traffic policemen who rescued the labourers said.

Just a couple of days ago, a 46-year-old man, a resident of Maharajganj district in Uttar Pradesh collapsed at Bijasan in Barwani district, while cycling around 400 km from Bhiwandi in Maharashtra along with a group of 11 people to return home.

The deceased identified as Tabrat Mansoori felt uneasy and collapsed, according to in-charge of Bhairavgarh police station V S Parihar. Mansoori died of cardiac arrest.

In the wee hours of April 19, three labourers including a woman were run over by a speeding truck when they were sleeping roadside at Un-

her-Mohanpura in Ujjain district.

They were part of a 12-member-group who had begun their journey to home in Mohanpura in Ujjain district from Jaisalmer in Rajasthan.

The labourers were dropped at the Madhya Pradesh border by a bus arranged by Rajasthan government to send them to their homes.

The migrant workers were tired and slept on the roadside, leading to the tragic incident.

"The migrant labourers preferred to die in the arms of their family members rather than die in an alien land. The fear psychosis created by all kinds of rumours involving coronavirus outbreak had prompted them to return their homes without bothering that it would cost their livelihood", noted food rights

activist Sachin Kumar Jain who conducted study on reverse migration caused by the pandemic told this newspaper on Saturday.

Hundreds of people including women and children walked even 500 km- 700 km to reach their village due to lack of transportation modes.

"We walked around 200 km to reach our home in Umeria from Jaipur where I was working as a construction worker. We survived on some dry roties and a few red chili during our 4-day-journey.

We were viewed with suspicion by people along the way as they thought that we may be Covid-19 patients", Lalu Singh who returned home along with his family of four told this newspaper.

Chander Pal of Satna who had

returned from Jaipur recent along with a group of 15 villagers by walking recounted how they refrained themselves from using makeshift shelter homes built by the locals at many places along the way for migrants fearing that they may contract infection.

Hundreds of migrant workers were forced to turn open roads as their temporary abode when they were blocked at the borders of MP by the police.

Many of them had to spend a day or two without food before being allowed entry into MP after being screened by medical personnel.

Around 500 migrant workers who were returning from different places in Gujarat to their homes in Jhabua were blocked at the border



leading them to stage demonstration on Saturday.

According to an unofficial estimate, nearly 35,000 migrant workers have already returned to their homes.

"We are making arrangements

to bring around one lakh migrant workers working in different states, back to their homes", chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said.

As on Saturday, MP has reported 2788 coronavirus positive cases and 151 deaths caused by the pandemic.