



Maximum : 23°C
Minimum : 11°C
Humidity : 62%

SUNSET
Today 07:22 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 05:33 AM

OBSERVER

23rd year OF PUBLICATION

KASHMIR

16 Ramazan-ul-Mubarak | 1441 Hijri | Vol: 23 | Issue: 99 | Pages: 08 | Price: ₹3

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



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

ROBOTS CAN HELP REDUCE HUMAN CONTACT, TRANSMISSION OF DISEASE DURING COVID-19

Robots can act as an interface between a doctor and a patient wherein they can carry out diagnostic and treatment processes, reducing the human contact and risk of transmission of infection during the coronavirus pandemic, an expert in the field of Robotics has said. Bartłomiej Stanczyk, Robotics Engineer with ACCREA Engineering in Germany, was speaking during an e-discussion on the the topic- Using Artificial Intelligence to Tackle Epidemics: The COVID-19 Model. The event, organised by the Abu Dhabi-based TRENDS Research & Advisory.....

.....LIFE & TIMES
P6

News Digest

16 TH RAMAZAN		
IFTAR	SEHRI	
TODAY	TOMORROW	
FIQAH HANAFIYA	07:24	03:59
FIQAH JAFARIYA	07:34	03:57

Kashmir's Marginalized Facing Starvation: NC

Srinagar: National Conference on Saturday expressed anguish over the "pathetic situation" the poor and the underprivileged are going through owing to lockdown across the valley. "It's really unfortunate that a huge number of people who have been left without work for the past 50 days are finding it impossible to make two ends meet. People, both from rural as well as

4 Held For Circulating Fake Currency

Srinagar: Police on Saturday arrested four people for allegedly circulating fake currency notes in north Kashmir's Bandipora district. Addressing a news conference, SSP Bandipora Rahual Malik said that acting on specific information, Police arrested four people, two from Bandipora and two from Kulgam and recovered fake Indian currency notes from their possession, reports said. He said police seized counterfeit currency notes worth Rs 5 lakh of 500, 2000, 100 denomination

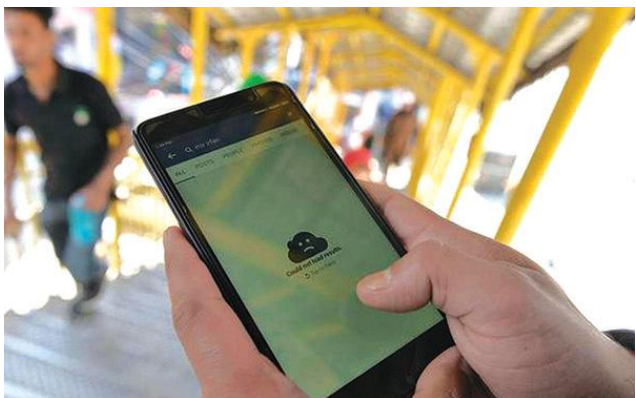
Driver Killed As Tractor Turns Turtle

Srinagar: A tractor driver was killed on Saturday after his vehicle turned turtle in Bhangai village of Thanamandi in Rajouri district. 35-year-old Mohammad Aslam, son of Faiz Mohammad was killed on the spot when the tractor he was driving, turned turtle in Bhangai village area of Thanamandi, news agency KNO reported. Meanwhile, police have have taken cognizance of the matter.

Strict Curbs Reimposed In Bhadarwah

Bhadarwah: Police and paramilitary personnel were deployed in greater strength on Saturday to curb free movement, a day after some people under quarantine were caught in a traffic jam in Bhadarwah of Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, officials said. Out of the total 20 districts in the Union territory, Doda and Poonch in Jammu division are coronavirus free with no reported case till date. Doda district was recently declared a green zone by the administration and simultaneously

SMS, Mobile Internet Remain Shut in Kashmir On 4th Day



Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR- Mobile Internet and SMS services continued to remain suspended on Saturday in the Kashmir valley after the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander, Reyaz Naikoo, earlier this week.

The situation in the valley, which has been witnessing lockdown since the third week of March due to COVID-19 pandem-

ic, was generally calm barring a few local protests in some villages of Pulwama in south Kashmir.

Seeing an improvement of the situation after Naikoo was killed on Wednesday, the authorities allowed private telecom operators to resume their services from Friday night but asked them to keep Internet connection barred.

Restrictions had been imposed in the valley after the death of Naikoo and additional

Indo, Pak Troops Trade Fire Along LoC

Jammu:India and Pakistani troops continued exchanging gunfire along the line of control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir.

According to a defence spokesman Pakistani troops again violated ceasefire by firing and shelling Indian army posts along the LoC in Degwar sector of Poonch.

The Indian Army is retaliating befittingly, the spokesman said.

"At about 7.30 pm, Pakistan initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and shelling with mortars in Degwar. Indian Army is retaliating befittingly," he said.

The cross-border shelling is going on but there is no report of any casualty on the Indian side so far, the spokesman said.

Fear has heightened among villagers along the LoC in Rajouri, Poonch and Kupwara since three civilians were killed last month in shelling by Pakistan.

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

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

2 Nurses Among 13 New Covid-19 Cases, J&K Tally Reaches 836

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Two nurses at the Super Specialty Hospital here besides an attendant on Saturday were among thirteen people who tested positive for coronavirus in Kshmir Valley, taking the number of Covid-19 infected across the Union Territory to 836.

Out of 463 samples tested at the virology lab at the Chest Disease hospital here, six turned out to be positive, reports said. Among those include two city residents, two staff nurses from Super Specialty Hospital Shireen Bagh here, an attendant of a patient from Shahlattoo Shopian and another from south Kashmir's Awantipora.

Similarly out of 947 samples processed Viral Diagnostic Lab of the SKIMS, six came out to be positive for the coronavirus and include four from Ganderbal district and two from Handwara, Professor Farooq Jan, medical superintendent of SKIMS told news agency GNS.

Sources said one positive case of Covid 19 has been confirmed at Basohli belt in Kathua district.

The person was under administrative quarantine, the sources added.

According to the media bulletin issued by the government today, 43917 samples out of 44753 have tested as negative till May 09, 2020. "Furthermore, till date 90541



AN EXPECTING MOTHER STANDS near a Covid-19 screening booth at a health centre in Srinagar on Saturday. Pic Abid Bhat

164 Walk Home After Quarantine

The authorities on Saturday discharged as many as 164 persons who completed their mandatory quarantine period at a government run facility in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. According to reports, all the 164 people hailing from Baramulla district were discharged from a college in Parihaspora Pattan after they tested negative for coronavirus. They were sent back to their homes with the advice that they should quarantine themselves in homes for next 14 days.

Tehsildar Singhpora, Nisar Ahmed told news agency

travellers and persons in contact with suspected cases have been enlisted for surveillance which includes 20092 persons in home quarantine, 167 in hospital quar-

antine, 459 in hospital isolation and 9244 under home surveillance. Besides, 60570 persons have completed their surveillance period," the bulletin adds.

HC Seeks Govt's Response If PRC Has Lost Relevance In J&K

Agencies

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir High Court has issued a notice to J&K government, seeking its response on whether or not Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) has lost its relevance following abrogation of Article 35(A) by BJP-led government last year.

A bench of Justice Rajnesh Oswal issued the notice to Secretary, General Administration Department, after arraying the officer as respondent in a petition filed by one Aradhay Gupta through his counsel who



contended that petitioner was born in Jammu and he has undergone all his studies in the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that authorities were demanding Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) so as to enable him to participate in the CET-2020.

He further contended that with the abrogation of Article 35(A), the concept of PRC has lost its relevance and as such the same cannot be demanded by the authorities.

"This Court is of the opinion that the important point of law is involved, which requires the response from the General Administration Department, as such Secretary, General Administration Department, UT of J&K is arrayed as party respondent," the court said and issued notice through e-mail to the secretary GAD for filing objections/ response.

'I'm Totally Healthy' Shah Breaks Silence on Health Rumours



NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday took to twitter dispelling recent rumours about his ill health saying he is "totally healthy" and not suffering from any disease. Shah said in a statement that the rumours about his

Train With Stranded J&K Students To Leave Bangalore Today

SRINAGAR: First special train with stranded students from Jammu and Kashmir will leave for Jammu from Bangalore city on Sunday.

According to officials here, a special train carrying 1112 stranded students of Jammu and Kashmir to leave for Udhampur from Bangalore city tomorrow (Sunday) morning. He said only students with prior registration would be allowed to board the train after proper ID verification.

Special train to Udhampur will leave at 11 AM from Bengaluru city railway station. We have made all the necessary arrangements for operating the train, a railway of-



ficial said. He said students have been informed to reach Baiyappannahalli Police Station (K R Puram) Tin Factory ground by 7: 30 Am Sunday where from Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL) will carry them to railway station.

ertinently, this is the first batch of stranded students who are being taken back to home

People With Travel Passes Put Under Quarantine

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Despite having a valid official pass to move between Jammu and Kashmir, hundreds of travellers have ended up at administrative quarantine centres set up by the government on the outskirts of the winter capital as part of its efforts to combat the coronavirus.

The move is agitating the people who questioned the logic behind sending them to an institutional quarantine when they are given the passes in extremely exceptional situations, like a medical emergency or joining

their duties after completing the formalities due to a lockdown.

One such quarantine centre is set up at Excise and Taxation Training Institute in Nagrota, 15 km from Jammu city, where 35 persons, including women and a seven-year-old girl, are anxiously waiting for their sample reports – the outcome of which will decide their future at the sprawling facility.

While a majority of them are expected to be released after their test reports are negative, four labourers from Amritsar in Punjab who had travelled from Srinagar to Jammu in a truck without

Is Pandemic Changing Perceptions About Political Lockdown in Kashmir?

Mrinal Pathak

SUDDEN snapping of mobile internet and cellular calling in Kashmir lately made Rahul Sharma, a 26-year-old NIT graduate from New Delhi, to break ice on Kashmir.

He talked about his 'caged' Kashmiri friends, the repeated casualty of internet, curbs on public movement, weary students wondering about their online classes and careers, and the constant hostage sense unleashed in the valley, with his family, like never before.

Before pandemic lockdown, Sharma would support the political lockdowns in Kashmir for "national interest". But after living as a captive in

his own home for nearly two months now, he started "feeling" for the lockdown-plagued populace of the valley.

"I would support lockdown in Kashmir as long as I was living as a freeman," Sharma said, matter-of-factly. "But once I suffered the fate of common Kashmiris, I had a change of heart. I believe the proof of the pudding is in the eating."

Amid pandemic, the current political lockdown enforced after the passage of the most wanted insurgent of Kashmir recently has come as a plagued reminder of the state of affairs in the valley.

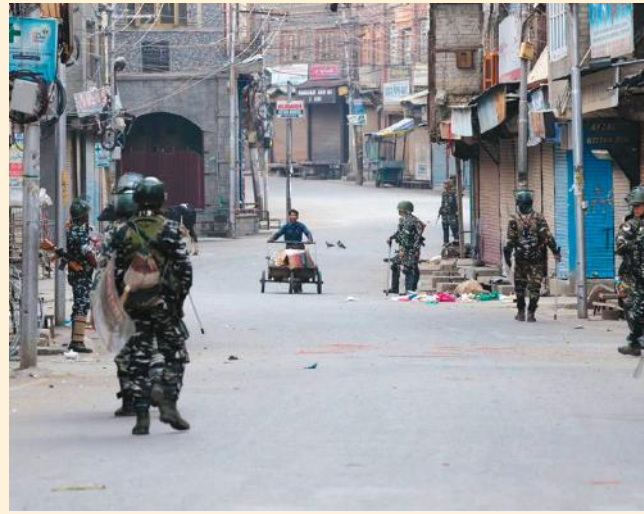
"At a time when all of us are sailing in the same boat," Sharma continued, "there should a collective resolve to improve things in the val-

ley. Let's not support these repeated restrictions in the name of security there anymore."

Even as some lockdown-hostage Indians are showing a 'change of heart', the rightwing TV news and social media-driven campaign continue to dominate the discourse with its 'vocal narrative'.

But away from virtual "eco-chambers" and "kangaroo courts", as many people dismiss them, the real life change is slowly taking place.

"While most of us are new to these curbs," said Dr. Ramesh Gupta, a Haryana-based political science professor, "I'm amazed how Kashmiris are braving the continuous state of lockdown from last August. While we all should learn



from their resolve, we must also raise our voices for a meaningful change in their lives."

Many of these fresh voices are asserting their tacit support at a time when the problems due to the earlier restrictions in Kashmir got compounded after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi imposed the nationwide lockdown to limit the spread of the deadly virus.

Some of these issues are now striking a perceptive change in locked down Indians.

Internet Woes

"It's unthinkable for me to live without internet for even an hour," said Meenakshi Joshi, a college student from Uttar Pradesh. "How Kashmiris are living without it

makes my head spin. I believe we, Indians, need to raise our voice against such injustices."

After restoring 2G internet earlier this year, the authorities once again snapped it recently. While the broadband services have been resumed, the high-speed or 4G internet remains suspended since August 5, 2019, when New Delhi rendered J&K's special status null and void.

Despite the fact that majority of employees are working from home currently, J&K government on April 28, 2020 extended the ban on 4G internet till May 11, 2020.

"The most essential element required to enable people to work from home is the high speed of the internet," Joshi, the

Budgam Locals Allege Vandalism By Govt Forces

KO Web Desk

BUDGAM: The government forces on Friday night allegedly went berserk and vandalized public property in a village in central Kashmir's budgam district, reports said Saturday.

The joint team of Kashmir police and CRPF appeared in Nasrullah Pora village of the district around 11:30 pm on Friday and went on rampage damaging public property, beating locals and arresting nearly a dozen people before leaving the village, news agency KNT reported today.

"The forces damaged parked vehicles, shops and gates of the house. They barged into the houses and damaged my JCB, LeD TV, washing machine, refrigerator, Maruti Alto and other things. They spared only a few households and created havoc in almost in home," a local said.

Another local said that forces personnel arrested people randomly during night.

"Even elderly people were not spared and arrested," he said.

However, police refuted the allegation of high-handedness and instead blamed the locals for creating a mess.

"First they attacked our police officer and then they resorted to stone-pelting. When police tried to disperse them they pelted stones, injuring four other cops," SSP Budgam, Ashok Amod Nag-puri said.

He said that 10 miscreants have been arrested over the massive stone-pelting in the village that caused damage to the public property, including shops and vehicles.



A health worker takes samples for swab test from a pregnant woman during the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown in Srinagar- **KO** Photo by Abid Bhat

SMS, Mobile Internet Remain Shut in Kashmir...

paramilitary forces were deployed at vulnerable points. SMS services have been snapped across all telecom operators till further notice, officials said.

164 Walk Home After Quarantine...

KNT that those who were sent back to their homes had travel history and were put in quarantine.

Those who completed their quarantine period today included females and children as well. They exhibited a positive attitude and said landing in quarantine was in their interest.

Meanwhile, authorities put 48 people mostly students in quarantine in the same building at Parihaspora Pattan. These include 22 students returning from Bangladesh and 26 from Mohali Punjab.

Train With Stranded J&K Students To Leave Bangalore

from Karnataka state.

Meanwhile another train carrying 2,000 stranded residents of Kashmir in Goa will depart on Sunday.

According to Commissioner-Secretary Industries and Commerce, Manoj K Dwivedi, who has been appointed the overall incharge for management of stranded people/returnees by train, said that while the train carrying nearly 1,000 people from Goa's Thivim railway station will be arriving in Udhampur during wee hours of Tuesday, another will reach from Goa's Mudgaon Junction railway station on Wednesday.

The UT government is expecting the return of 60,000 – 70,000 stranded people, including students, traders and labourers from different parts of India by trains, Dwivedi said.

434 Kashmiri Students Leave Bhopal For Home Bhopal/Indore, May 9 (PTI) Over 434 Kashmiri students, stranded in various parts of Madhya Pradesh due to lockdown on account of coronavirus outbreak, left for Jammu and Kashmir from Bhopal and Indore by buses on Saturday afternoon.

365 students started their home-bound journey in buses from Bhopal, while 69 others left from Indore.

Bhopal district collector Tarun Pithode said medical check-up of all the students was conducted before they were given e-passes for the journey.

A fleet of 18 AC buses carrying 365 students left Bhopal around 3 pm, while the group of 69 students left Indore in two buses.

In Bhopal, Kashmiri students from various parts of the state gathered at a private school in Gandhi Nagar locality on Friday night.

The buses will ferry the students to Lakhanpur post on Punjab-J&K border in Kathua district, from where the administration of the Union Territory will arrange their travel to their hometowns, an official said in Indore.

Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silawat was present in Indore when two buses carrying students left.

Firdaus Ahmed Johar, a research student at Indores Devi Ahilya University, was among those who boarded buses for Jammu and Kashmir.

Expressing happiness, he said, "We were stranded in Indore for the last several days due to lockdown. We are thankful to Chief Minister Shivrj Singh Chouhan for helping us return home."

Congress leader Digvijaya Singh had recently written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, requesting him to make arrangements to take Kashmiri students stranded in Madhya Pradesh to their homes.

As Jammu and Kashmir is under Central rule, it is the Centre's duty to help the people from that region to return from various parts of the country where they are stranded, Singh had said.

People With Travel Passes Put Under Quarantine...

permission will have to wait till the government decides to send them to their hometown.

"I have been given a pass under medical emergency and diverted to this centre on the pretext of taking samples after almost a day-long hectic travel. If this was to happen, then why did they entertain my request for a pass in the first place. They should have first conducted COVID-19 test before giving me a pass for travel from Srinagar to Jammu," an agitated Sikh youth from Srinagar said.

The travellers are also concerned about their well-being at the centre.

"I have taken so much precaution and followed the general guidelines and medical advisories religiously since the lockdown came into force about two months ago. I am perturbed since landing at the centre because you don't know the other

people camping here or the fresh arrivals," Tawseef Ahmad Mir, a resident of Budgam district of central Kashmir, told PTI.

Mir was accompanying his seven-year-old daughter Manhaa Tawseef in a private vehicle to Jammu when he was stopped at Nagrota Toll plaza and diverted to the centre on May 7. Tawseef studies at a school in Jammu and was returning to join online classes.

"I have no complaint about the facilities being provided by the government. My concern is my child who is unaware of the threat perception. I am sharing a 10-bed dormitory with four others from Amritsar and another relative. Luckily for us, these labourers have already tested negative a few days back, which gave me some relief," he said.

Mir, his daughter and 23 others were taken to GMC hospital in a State Road Transport Corporation bus on Friday without maintaining the much-publicized social distancing and their samples were taken. The samples of nine others were taken a day earlier and all of them are now waiting for their reports.

Three occupants, hailing from Uri township of north Kashmir's Baramulla district, were discharged from the centre on Friday night, five days after their samples were taken which came negative.

"I failed to understand the logic behind shifting us here. Wasn't it better to allow us to reach our destination and call us for testing on the next available slot which would have saved the government all the expenditure on our lodging, boarding and transportation to and fro the hospital," a Srinagar resident, who wished not to be named, said.

He said all the commuters moving on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway are being screened and registered at nearly a dozen places on either side with full details including residential address and phone numbers.

"It is simply a waste of public money. We are fortunate that none of the occupants at this centre have tested positive for the coronavirus till date," he said, alleging that the people with influence are getting away without screening, testing or spending time at the quarantine centres.

Sharing similar views, a Sikh woman said she is praying for an early release from the centre.

"I have had sleepless nights since reaching here two days ago. I want to return to the safety of my house," she said.

The occupants, however, hailed the incharge of the centre, Sunit Singh, for his cooperative nature and effort to ensure that all facilities are provided to them.

"I am doing my job. I know this is Ramzan and my guests are mostly Muslim. I am making sure they get fruit and juice at the dusk for breaking their fast," Singh, a tehsildar, said adding the centre was activated early this week and so far nearly 100 people have been accommodated here.

For those fasting, Singh said he delivers extra meals to them at dinner time so that they can use it for "Sehri" to start their fast. He himself distributes water bottles, toothbrushes and toothpaste among them.

Sweeper Subash Chander is the busiest person at the centre and keeps the place clean and safe.

However, not everyone at quarantine centres is lucky as complaints of lack of facilities and mismanagement are pouring from various centres across Jammu region.

Several videos, purportedly showing hundreds of labourers brought from outside Jammu and Kashmir and put up at Dalwas, Dharmound and Mangat-Khari quarantine centres in Ramban district, are being provided prepared meals and tea in polythene bags.

These people are agitated over the treatment and demand that they be allowed to go to their homes if the government is not in a position to give them proper lodging and boarding facilities.

people camping here or the fresh arrivals," Tawseef Ahmad Mir, a resident of Budgam district of central Kashmir, told PTI.

Mir was accompanying his seven-year-old daughter Manhaa Tawseef in a private vehicle to Jammu when he was stopped at Nagrota Toll plaza and diverted to the centre on May 7. Tawseef studies at a school in Jammu and was returning to join online classes.

"I have no complaint about the facilities being provided by the government. My concern is my child who is unaware of the threat perception. I am sharing a 10-bed dormitory with four others from Amritsar and another relative. Luckily for us, these labourers have already tested negative a few days back, which gave me some relief," he said.

Mir, his daughter and 23 others were taken to GMC hospital in a State Road Transport Corporation bus on Friday without maintaining the much-publicized social distancing and their samples were taken. The samples of nine others were taken a day earlier and all of them are now waiting for their reports.

Three occupants, hailing from Uri township of north Kashmir's Baramulla district, were discharged from the centre on Friday night, five days after their samples were taken which came negative.

"I failed to understand the logic behind shifting us here. Wasn't it better to allow us to reach our destination and call us for testing on the next available slot which would have saved the government all the expenditure on our lodging, boarding and transportation to and fro the hospital," a Srinagar resident, who wished not to be named, said.

He said all the commuters moving on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway are being screened and registered at nearly a dozen places on either side with full details including residential address and phone numbers.

"It is simply a waste of public money. We are fortunate that none of the occupants at this centre have tested positive for the coronavirus till date," he said, alleging that the people with influence are getting away without screening, testing or spending time at the quarantine centres.

Sharing similar views, a Sikh woman said she is praying for an early release from the centre.

"I have had sleepless nights since reaching here two days ago. I want to return to the safety of my house," she said.

The occupants, however, hailed the incharge of the centre, Sunit Singh, for his cooperative nature and effort to ensure that all facilities are provided to them.

"I am doing my job. I know this is Ramzan and my guests are mostly Muslim. I am making sure they get fruit and juice at the dusk for breaking their fast," Singh, a tehsildar, said adding the centre was activated early this week and so far nearly 100 people have been accommodated here.

For those fasting, Singh said he delivers extra meals to them at dinner time so that they can use it for "Sehri" to start their fast. He himself distributes water bottles, toothbrushes and toothpaste among them.

Sweeper Subash Chander is the busiest person at the centre and keeps the place clean and safe.

However, not everyone at quarantine centres is lucky as complaints of lack of facilities and mismanagement are pouring from various centres across Jammu region.

Several videos, purportedly showing hundreds of labourers brought from outside Jammu and Kashmir and put up at Dalwas, Dharmound and Mangat-Khari quarantine centres in Ramban district, are being provided prepared meals and tea in polythene bags.

These people are agitated over the treatment and demand that they be allowed to go to their homes if the government is not in a position to give them proper lodging and boarding facilities.

people camping here or the fresh arrivals," Tawseef Ahmad Mir, a resident of Budgam district of central Kashmir, told PTI.

Mir was accompanying his seven-year-old daughter Manhaa Tawseef in a private vehicle to Jammu when he was stopped at Nagrota Toll plaza and diverted to the centre on May 7. Tawseef studies at a school in Jammu and was returning to join online classes.

"I have no complaint about the facilities being provided by the government. My concern is my child who is unaware of the threat perception. I am sharing a 10-bed dormitory with four others from Amritsar and another relative. Luckily for us, these labourers have already tested negative a few days back, which gave me some relief," he said.

Mir, his daughter and 23 others were taken to GMC hospital in a State Road Transport Corporation bus on Friday without maintaining the much-publicized social distancing and their samples were taken. The samples of nine others were taken a day earlier and all of them are now waiting for their reports.

Three occupants, hailing from Uri township of north Kashmir's Baramulla district, were discharged from the centre on Friday night, five days after their samples were taken which came negative.

"I failed to understand the logic behind shifting us here. Wasn't it better to allow us to reach our destination and call us for testing on the next available slot which would have saved the government all the expenditure on our lodging, boarding and transportation to and fro the hospital," a Srinagar resident, who wished not to be named, said.

He said all the commuters moving on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway are being screened and registered at nearly a dozen places on either side with full details including residential address and phone numbers.

"It is simply a waste of public money. We are fortunate that none of the occupants at this centre have tested positive for the coronavirus till date," he said, alleging that the people with influence are getting away without screening, testing or spending time at the quarantine centres.

Sharing similar views, a Sikh woman said she is praying for an early release from the centre.

"I have had sleepless nights since reaching here two days ago. I want to return to the safety of my house," she said.

The occupants, however, hailed the incharge of the centre, Sunit Singh, for his cooperative nature and effort to ensure that all facilities are provided to them.

"I am doing my job. I know this is Ramzan and my guests are mostly Muslim. I am making sure they get fruit and juice at the dusk for breaking their fast," Singh, a tehsildar, said adding the centre was activated early this week and so far nearly 100 people have been accommodated here.

For those fasting, Singh said he delivers extra meals to them at dinner time so that they can use it for "Sehri" to start their fast. He himself distributes water bottles, toothbrushes and toothpaste among them.

Sweeper Subash Chander is the busiest person at the centre and keeps the place clean and safe.

However, not everyone at quarantine centres is lucky as complaints of lack of facilities and mismanagement are pouring from various centres across Jammu region.

Several videos, purportedly showing hundreds of labourers brought from outside Jammu and Kashmir and put up at Dalwas, Dharmound and Mangat-Khari quarantine centres in Ramban district, are being provided prepared meals and tea in polythene bags.

These people are agitated over the treatment and demand that they be allowed to go to their homes if the government is not in a position to give them proper lodging and boarding facilities.

Shah Breaks Silence on Health Rumours...

health conditions have been spread through social media.

"I am completely healthy and not suffering from any disease," the Home Minister tweeted in Hindi.

He said that since the last few days people have been concocting stories about his health adding that some were even praying for his demise.

Shah asserted that that he did not pay heed to the rumours initially as he was busy performing his duties as the country is fighting a public health crisis like the coronavirus.

"I thought it was better that these people are left with their imaginative world, hence I did not give any clarification", Shah said, adding that he was clarifying today as lakhs of BJP workers and his well wishers have expressed concern over the last two days.

Furthermore, he expressed gratitude towards them for inquiring about his health and requested people to stop indulging in such rumours.

Meanwhile, reports have claimed that Ahmedabad police crime branch has arrested four people for allegedly spread rumours about the Home Minister's health. The accused have been identified as Firoz Khan, Sarfaraz, Sajjad Ali, and Shiraz Hussain.

HC Seeks Govt's Response

If PRC Has Lost Relevance...

"Objections be filed positively by or before the next date of hearing," the court said as per global news service and posted the petition on May 18.

Article 35A of the Indian Constitution empowered erstwhile state's legislature to define "permanent residents" and provide special rights and privileges to them. The erstwhile state defined these privileges to include the ability to purchase land and immovable property, ability to vote and contest elections, seeking government employment and availing other state benefits such as higher education and health care. However on 5 August 2019, the President Ram Nath Kovind issued a Presidential Order, whereby all the provisions of the Indian Constitution were made inoperative while J&K was placed under unprecedented security and communication lockdown. (GNS)

J&K Govt Urges Airlifting Of Remaining Students...

"Their early return attains significance in view of the ongoing holy month of Ramadhan and the approaching Eid festival falling on 25th May, 2020," Subrahmanyam says.

He says that with the present plan of evacuating these students in a staggered manner, there was every apprehension that such students who have to take flights at later dates would get anxious.

"This needs to be mitigated, keeping in consideration the extreme distress prevalent in the stranded students/ persons due to the Covid-19 pandemic," J&K Chief Secretary says.

"I would, therefore, request your personal intervention for arranging return of these students to Srinagar International Airport in a single flight by arranging their airlift in an aircraft with a capacity of 250 persons so that they reach Jammu and Kashmir well before the Eid festival," he adds.

Union Minister Says India Has 'Ready Plan'...

what the government will do or has to do.

"It will happen when the time comes," he said.

Singh, who retired as Indian army chief, also claimed in the programme that entire Kashmir, including Pck belonged to India and that the territory "will come to us automatically"

Talking about Pakistan's Supreme Court decision allowing elections in Gilgit-Baltistan, the MoS said, "Pakistan's rulers are not even able to manage their country, their army is deciding what to do to the people. In this situation, the people there are trying to do something so that the world stands with them.

Speaking about Handwara gunfight that left two senior army officers among five security personnel dead, MoS Singh said when there is an encounter, only the person present on the ground can inform about the damage done there.

"If someone outside makes a comment, it is wrong. I have spent 12 years in Kashmir. Judgments are made and these will continue to be made, there is no need to give weight to every judgment," he said.

Ex-army chief's comments come after India's IMD's Regional Meteorological Centre has started including cities under Pakistan-controlled-Kashmir in its forecasts, a departure from its earlier format.

Is Pandemic Changing Perceptions About Political

college-goer, continued. "People belonging to the working class in J&K are finding it difficult to keep up with their respective works at the punishing speed of 2G. This has to change."

After the Indian apex court recently reserved their judgment on the fate of 4G internet in J&K, students grappling with the slow-internet connection had to eschew their expectations once again.

Earlier this year, the educational institutions in J&K had opened after almost eight months, but the pandemic once again forced the administration to shut them till the further orders.

"Fact is, students from J&K studying in different parts of India are facing tremendous difficulty while attending the online classes due to the slow speed of the internet," said Gautam Puri, a Delhi-based IT consultant. "How these students are surviving without high-speed internet since August 05, 2019 makes me wonder."

Restriction on Movement

The current lockdown has forced a section of society to reshape their opinion on the earlier curfews imposed in the valley.

Those who defended the stringent curfews imposed in the valley are now empathising with the Kashmiris who are put under lockdown for long.

"To some extent, coronavirus has made an impossible-looking thing possible," Puri, the consultant, said. "Now many In-

dians from different parts of the country are trying to understand the pain and agony of Kashmiris."

Among them are young Indians, desperately waiting for this lockdown to end to live an ordinary life.

Occasions and Ceremonies

The pandemic lockdown has forced many Indians to cancel their events, weddings and leisurely occasions.

Every cancelled wedding is now giving rise to a 'softer narrative' on all the weddings cancelled in Kashmir in the last nine months.

"While we were worrying about the cancellation of our brother's wedding, I was reminded of a photo of a Kashmiri groom leaving for his bride's home with two people amid lockdown last year in the valley," said Tania Mehta, a Delhi-based research scholar.

"We know how big and important weddings are for Kashmiris. Now when the lockdown has redefined our own merry-making occasions, you can't help thinking about those caught in the perennial curbs."

One only feels the agony of others when they feel that sorrow, Mehta continued. "Just like the beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, the sympathy lies in the heart of a person facing tough times."

Children Are Worst Affected

While the children in rest of India are getting desperate to roam in the community parks, their parents are now driving their thoughts for the kids of Kashmir who have not been able to play under the sun for almost a year.

"The joys and giggles of little children took a major hit due to the current pandemic," said Sandeep Singh, a trader and a father of four kids. "Many reports have suggested that the mental state of children may get destabilised if they are not allowed to go outside and play. The innocence of our own kids has forced some of us to think of the innocence of Kashmiri kids."

Humanity Survives

Even after facing so many hardships, many Indians believe, Kashmiris have not left their humanity behind.

"Humanity has not vanished from the hearts of Kashmiris, even after treated very harshly by the state," Singh said. "It has given birth to the already lost soft corner for them in the hearts of many Indians."

Kashmir's Marginalized Facing Starvation: NC...

urban settings, are the hardest hit. Most have been left to fend for themselves in these trying times," Party spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar said in a statement issued here today.

"In times like these , the government and its agencies have to step in and help the underprivileged section to get over the crisis and live a dignified life" he added.

He said that like other places in Kashmir, Kulgam too was facing the brunt of the 50 days lockdown with no work available for the majority. He demanded a a comprehensive relief package for such families who have been hit due to the lockdown.

4 Held For Circulating Fake Currency...

from their possession. Two printers, he said were also confiscated from the accused.

He said a case FIR number of 40/2020 US 489 B, 420 IPC have been registered aainst the accused.

Strict Curbs Reimposed In Bhadarwah...

some relaxations in lockdown restrictions were announced following which people started resuming their normal activities and vehicles also started plying in different areas, including Bhadarwah town.

However, alarm bells started ringing when a group of labourers, who are under administrative quarantine after being brought back from outside Jammu and Kashmir this week, were caught in a massive traffic jam in the middle of the main market while being taken to a hospital in the hilly town for COVID-19 testing on Friday, the officials said.

Taking serious note of the incident and violation of compulsory social distancing directives, the officials said the district authorities on Saturday enforced a strict lockdown to restrict free movement of the people.

"We have been receiving reports of lockdown violations so we decided to enforce it completely and also restricted and diverted movement of traffic from the town," Additional District Commissioner Rakesh Kumar said.

He requested the people not to pay heed to the rumours as there is no positive case reported from the district till date.

The officer said the restrictions in the town would remain in force till May 17, the day when the nationwide lockdown is scheduled to end.

People Asked To Take Immune Boosting Herbs To Strengthen Immune System

SRINAGAR:- At a time when Jammu and Kashmir is facing a difficult situation due to outbreak of Covid-19 disease, the Department of ISM (AYUSH) is playing its role in containment and prevention of corona virus in Kashmir Division.

Giving details about the initiatives and measures undertaken by the ISM (AYUSH) to contain and prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic in Kashmir Division, the Divisional Nodal Officer Covid-19 for Kashmir, Dr Iftikhar Hus-

sain Qazi said that as many as 350 Medical officers and 240 Pharmacists are working round the clock as front line workers in their respective districts to fight covid-19 pandemic and to strengthen the immunity of the masses.

He said as per the Advisory issued by the Union Ministry of AYUSH, immune boosting medicines are being distributed in all the districts of Kashmir province and till date these immune boosting medicines have been distributed to about

70000 persons like frontline warriors, people kept in quarantine centers, isolation centers, people living in red zones as well as front line workers of civil and police administration across the Kashmir division.

Explaining the benefits of Indian System of Medicines, AYUSH experts said that people can use garlic, ginger, turmeric, lemon, besides Unaab, Be-dana, Sapistaan, Daalchini, Kaloongi to improve their immunity and consuming fresh fruits, drinking luke warm wa-

ter to strengthen immune and respiratory system is an effective remedy in fight against this disease. They added that liquid Amritarishta, Sharbat, Tab libest, Liquid Ashwagandha Arishta, Annu Taila etc can also be used as immune boosting medicines.

It was also informed that Medical Officers and Pharmacists of ISM (AYUSH) are performing their duties 24*7 in red zones, contact tracing centers and Covid-19 control rooms to fight this pandemic.

ISM Department has also set up telemedicine facility through which people can contact doctors for emergency treatment and general public can get in touch on these mobile numbers: Srinagar, 7006277690, Bandedipora 7889898644, Ganderbal- 7006271393, Anantnag, 7889683848, Kulgam, 7006338425, Pulwama 9419406283, Kupwara 7006913269, Shopian 7780910107 and Budgam/Baramulla 9419999445.

Rajouri Admn Facilitates Gujjar, Bakerwal Migration

RAJOURI: Nationwide lockdown was imposed across the country to combat the spread of Covid-19 and break the chain of deadly Corona virus infection. While it has restricted the movement of people outside their homes and has imposed a total ban on non-essential businesses, one community that was caught in this decision was the Gujjar-Bakerwal nomads residing in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. In Jammu, Gujjar and Bakawals comprise more than 54% of the tribal population. These nomadic herders along with Gaddis and Sippis move

from higher temperature to lower temperatures between the month of March to May every year. They along with their animals climb down to the plains in Jammu during the harsh winter months and then as the temperature starts rising they move back to the higher reaches for greener pastures, a tradition being followed by them for last many years. This seasonal migration also entails movement of the entire clan or settlement in a group. As the lockdown prolonged clouds of uncertainty loomed over their migration.

District administration Rajouri,

realized that any delay in the spring migration would adversely affect the health and well being of these nomadic tribes and their animals. The district administration on April 23 gave them permission to use vehicles to transport their families and animals. The decision required coordination from all the districts through which the movement had to pass, some of which were also having villages/places declared as Red Zones. The concerned Tehsildars has been designated as the nodal officers to issue and renew permits in their favour.

Laborers Heave Sigh Of Relief On Resumption Of Works In Shopian

SHOPIAN: In a bid to restart the cogwheels of economy and livelihood of poor laborers, the local administration has allowed the resumption of works at New Court Complex Shopian which is being executed by Roads and Building department.

The workers were seen wearing face masks and following social distancing norms as precautionary measures that are being taken in view of COVID-19 pandemic.

Executive Engineer R&B Shopian while briefing regarding the resumption of works, he said that after proper permission from higher authorities following the SOPs issued by the government, we have started the work of new district court complex Shopian once again for its early completion.

The daily wage workers who were seen at sites were very much happy and appreciated the initiative for resumption of R&B works.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Office Of The Executive Engineer P.H.E Division, Budgam

H.Q: Budgam.

e – mail: phedivisionbudgam@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING e – TENDERS:

Short Term e– NIT No:- 02/PHEDB/Civil of 2019-20.

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir U.T., e – tenders are invited (in Single Cover System) on "item rate basis" from Registered/Approved/Valid Civil of Contractors/Agencies for the following works:

TABLE (I)

S.No	Name of work	Tentative Annual maintenance Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Earnest MoneyIn Rs.	Class of Contract	Cost of Document	Period of completion	MH of Account
1.	Annual Maintenance, Repairs, and other emergent works of PHE Sub-Division Budgam.	9.00	18000	CEE/ DEE	1000/-	15/05/2020 to 31/03/2021	M&R
2.	Annual Maintenance, Repairs, and other emergent works of PHE Sub-Division Khanshib.	8.50	17000/-	CEE/ DEE	1000/-	15/05/2020 to 31/03/2021	M&R
3.	Annual Maintenance, Repairs, and other emergent works of PHE Sub-Division Beerwah.	8.50	17000/-	CEE/ DEE	1000/-	15/05/2020 to 31/03/2021	M&R

Position of funds:- Demanded

The Bidding Documents and other details can be downloaded from the website: <https://jktenders.gov.in>

From 05.05.2020 (10:00a.m) 13.05.2020 (04:00p.m)

The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings (if any), Book of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms, conditions of contract and other details can be seen / downloaded from the website: www.jktenders.gov.in

As per schedule of dates given below

TABLE (II)

01	Date of issue of Tender Notice	04.05.2020
02	Date of downloading of bidding documents	From 05.05.2020 from 10:00 a.m To 13.05.2020 upto 04:00 p.m
05	Bid submission start date	05.05.2020 from 10:00 a.m
06	Bid Submission end date	13.05.2020 upto 04:00 p.m
08	Date & time of opening Bids (on line)	14.05.2020 from 10:30 a.m

Bids must be accompanied by bid security viz: Earnest Money, CDR/FDR and Additional Security Deposit, if any and Treasury Receipt (mentioning therein the NIT No., S.No. of work and Advertised Cost as per the NIT) under M.H 0215 to be pledged in favor of the Executive Engineer PHE Division Budgam (as specified in the table (I) (Page 1st). Bid security will have to be in any one of the forms as specified in the bidding documents and shall be valid for 90 Days after opening of bid. Bids will be opened in the Office of the Executive Engineer PHE Division Budgam /Sgr (H.Q. Budgam) 14.05.2020 at 12:00 Noon. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

No:- PHEDB /151-74
Dated:- 04.05.2020

(Er. Gurmit Singh)
Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.
H.Q. Budgam.

DIPK NO 609/20

Government of Jammu & Kashmir U.T.

Office Of The Executive Engineer, PHE Division Chadoora.

Gist of Notice Inviting e-Tenders

e-NIT NO:-01/PHEDC OF 05/2020 (2020-21)

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Union Territory of J&K, Executive Engineer PHE Division Chadoora invites tenders by e-tendering mode in single cover system from Self Help Group of Engineers approved/registered with J&K UT for the works detailed below.

S. No	Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest Money	Cost of Document	Head of Account	Time of Compl.	Class of Contract
01	Providing/laying fitting of 50/40/25/20MM dia pipes to Qisermul-lah Under Back to village Programme	Rs.5.29lacs	Rs.5290=00	Rs.370=00	BVP	07 days	"SHG"
02	Providing and laying fitting of GI pipes at Kanidajan and C.J.Dhar at Charishrief Under Back to village Programme	Rs.24.96 lacs	Rs.24960=00	Rs.1800=00	BVP	15 days	"SHG"

The bidding document can be downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in wherein all the terms and conditions are highlighted in details.

Important Dates.

Date of Publishing.	06-05-2020	upto 4:00 P.M
Date of downloading the bidding documents.	08- 05-2020 to 16-05-2020	upto 4:00 P.M
Date of submission of bid online.	08- 05-2020 to 16-05-2020	upto 4:00 P.M
Date of opening.	18- 05-2020	upto 2:00 P.M

"Executive Engineer"
PHE Division Chadoora.

No:- PHEDC/308-23
Dated:- 05-05-2020

DIPK-607/20

DIAL-EMMA



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS



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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

This Day in History

- 1797 - 1st US Navy ship, the "United States," is launched
- 1801 - First Barbary War: The Barbary pirates of Tripoli declare war on the United States of America (1st US foreign war)
- 1804 - British Prime Minister Henry Addington resigns, replaced by William Pitt the Younger
- 1857 - Indian Mutiny against rule by the British East India Company begins with the revolt of the Sepoy soldiers in Meerut
- 1862 - Battle of Plum Run Bend, Tennessee
- 1864 - Battles at Spotsylvania Court House, Virginia
- 1865 - Confederate President Jefferson Davis captured by Union troops at Irwinsville Georgia (US Civil War)
- 1871 - Peace of Frankfurt-am-Main concluded between France & Germany ends Franco-Prussian war
- 1872 - Victoria Woodhull becomes 1st woman nominated for US presidency by Equal Rights Party at Apollo Hall, NYC
- 1910 - Halley's Comet closest approach to Earth in 1910 pass
- 1915 - Canadian physician Cluny MacPherson first presents his gas mask invention to the British War Office
- 1917 - Atlantic ships get destroyer escorts to stop German attacks
- 1918 - HMS Vindictive sunk to block entrance of Ostend Harbor
- 1925 - To control demonstrations against foreigners, British troops in Shanghai fire into a crowd, leading to a boycott against British goods
- 1933- Nazis stage public book burnings in Germany
- 1933- Paraguay declares war on Bolivia
- 1940- French troops arrive in Zealand/Brabant Netherlands
- 1940- Nazi armies attack Netherlands, Belgium & Luxembourg
- 1940- Winston Churchill succeeds Neville Chamberlain as British PM
- 1940- World War II: The first German bombs of the war fall on England at Chilham and Petham, in Kent.
- 1942-World War II: The Thai Phayap Army invades the Shan States during the Burma Campaign.
- 1944- Chinese offensive in West-Yunnan
- 1945- Allies capture Rangoon from the Japanese
- 1945- Russian troops occupied Prague
- 1948- 1st attack by Egyptian irregular forces at Kfar Darom Israel
- 1956- French government sends 50,000 reservists to Algeria
- 1959- Soviet forces arrive in Afghanistan
- 1967- Stockholm Vietnam Tribunal declares US aggression in Vietnam/Cambodia
- 1968- Vietnam peace talks began in Paris between the US & North Vietnam
- 1969- Apollo 10 transmit 1st color pictures of Earth from space
- 1979-Vivekananda (Sri Lanka) completes nonstop cycle ride of 187 hrs, 28 min, around
- Viagra Maha Devi Park, Colombo, Sri Lanka [From May 2]
- 1994 Nelson Mandela sworn in as South Africa's 1st black president

From KO Archives

Hurriyat Finally Sits To Discuss Unity

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR - The crucial joint session of Hurriyat Conference began here this morn-mg to discuss the ongoing efforts to forge unity among the badly divided separatist leader-ship. They are also likely to chalk out future strategy on the proposed dialogue with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the visit of amalgam leaders to Pakistan and Pakistan-cons trolled Azad Kashmir. Besides the Executive Council, the members of the General Council and the Working Committee are also attending the meeting which however remained inconclusive and would continue on Tuesday as only few leaders were able to put forth their views on the is-sue today, the sources said. They said the meeting will continue Tuesday to allow other leaders to present their views on the issue. Almost all the leaders in-chiding Chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, Maulana Muhammad Abbas Ansari and Prof Abdul Ghani Bhat refused to comment on what transpire in the closed door meeting that lasted nearly three hours. Although the moderates are keen on a complete merger of both the factions and roping in other separatist outfits, the hardline faction led by Syed Ali Geelani wants to form a coordination committee to put up a united platform which will have Geelani's newly floated Tehreek-e-Hurriyat as a separate constituent. According to the sources, re-unification process has hit a road block as JKLF led by Mohammad Yaseen Malik is not happy with Geelani admitting Malik's former deputy Javid Ahmad Mir into his amalgam. The hardliners want to install Geelani as the undisputed leader of the unified amalgam which has also led to expression of reservations by some of the senior moderate leaders. Moderate leaders want dis-solution of both the factions and holding of fresh elections for the post of chairman, the sources said. The possibility of the re-union comes two years after Geelani's faction staged a walk-out, alleging that the talks by Mirwaiz faction with the Centre were a sell out to New Delhi. Since their split, the modern ate Hurriyat faction has held two rounds of talks with the previous NDA government, but negotiations with the UPA had broken down in August 2004. The Centre had renewed its dialogue offer to both factions of the Hurriyat after peace talks between India and Pakistan.

(Kashmir Observer, 10 May, 2005)

KASHMIR OBSERVER

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

Ramazan In The
Midst Of A Pandemic

“O you, who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that possibly you would be pious,” [Al Baqarah 2: 183]



HAROON RASHID

The world is currently in the midst of a global pandemic of novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was first detected in early December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and spread worldwide thereafter. Till date, more than 2.3 million individuals have been affected worldwide and causing nearly 1.6 lakh deaths. As on 19th April, 2020, in India, COVID-19 has affected around 16 thousand individuals (341 in J&K) and 530 deaths (05 in J&K). The novel coronavirus has taken just a few months to sweep the globe. How many will die, how societies will change — those questions are impossible to fathom as the disease rages.

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is one of the five core pillars of Islam observed annually by majority of the 1.9 billion Muslims worldwide. Throughout this holy month, Muslims fast and abstain from food, liquids, and immoral acts between dawn and dusk to achieve taqwa (self-restraint), and for seeking redemption. This year, Ramadan falls between late April and late May, even as the COVID-19 pandemic rages. Therefore, it is safe to assume, Ramadan will be immensely challenging and different this year. For one, there will be suspension of mosque congregations (including tarawih, itikaf), and we have to perform daily prayers at home. There will be no large social and religious gatherings at Iftar (fast-breaking meals) time either, when we usually unite to break our fast together, after sunset.

COVID-19 is kind of a perfect storm, difficult to track and control. The virus spreads through respiratory droplets and contact with contaminated surfaces. It can be transmitted by pre-symptomatic people and is severe enough to kill a significant fraction of those who have it. It is spreading rapidly, and we are relying solely on quarantine, isolation, and infection-control measures to prevent disease spread. Physical distancing measures play a vital role in stopping or slowing down the spread of disease. In context of Ramadan, these measures include the closing of mosques, restrictions on movement, and ban on the social and religious gatherings.

Ahead of Ramadan, World Health Organization (WHO) issued interim guidelines for religious practices during the month of Ramadan in the context of the COVID-19.

Healthy people should be able to fast during the holy month. However, COVID-19 patients can break the fast in consultation with doctors. Cancellation of any social and religious gathering. Measures to limit crowds and the movement of individuals in vulnerable areas should be maximized Practice physical distancing by strictly maintaining a distance of at least 1 metre (3 feet) between people at all times and avoid gathering in places associated with Ramadan activities, such as entertainment venues, markets, and shops. Physical distancing should be following while distributing ‘Zakat’ during Ramadan. Avoid the crowded gathering associated with Iftar banquets; consider using individual pre-packaged boxes of food. While we must practice social and physical distancing, it does not have to lead to social isolation. We must stay connected.

Proper nutrition and hydration are vital. People should eat a variety of fresh and unprocessed foods every day and drink plenty of water during the Iftar and Shar time. Tobacco

and cigarette smoking are ill-advised under any circumstances, especially during Ramadan and the COVID-19 pandemic. Regular and thorough hand-washing and practice good respiratory hygiene. Urge people who are feeling unwell or have any symptoms of COVID-19 to avoid attending events.

Urge older people and anyone with pre-existing medical conditions (such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer) not to attend gatherings, as they are considered vulnerable to severe disease and death from COVID-19. If Ramadan gatherings are allowed to proceed, measures to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission should be implemented. Perform wuzu (ritual ablutions) before prayers, helps to maintain healthy hygiene. Encourage the use of personal prayer rugs to place over carpets. Ensure that hand washing facilities at the entrance to

While we must practice social and physical distancing, it does not have to lead to social isolation. We must stay connected. Proper nutrition and hydration are vital. People should eat a variety of fresh and unprocessed foods every day and drink plenty of water during the Iftar and Shar time. Tobacco and cigarette smoking are ill-advised under any circumstances, especially during Ramadan and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Is It Curtains For Durbar Move?



Basit Amin Makhdoomi

With advancement of technology distances have dwindled and the outdated method of ferrying truck loads of records seem rearward and retrograde. Digitisation of all records would be complete by 2021 making this exercise redundant.

In its recently delivered judgement, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court has rung the bell on Durbar Move, the legacy of autocratic rule. As per this 148-year-old practice the capital of the region is relocated twice a year — from Srinagar to Jammu during winter months and vice versa in the summers.

High Court had recently taken a suo motto cognisance of the order issued by the administration of the newly carved out Union Territory which had delayed the Durbar Move from Jammu to Srinagar in view the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Honourable High Court after considering the material placed before it pronounced:

“Our judicial conscience compels us to “ring the bell” else we would fail in discharging our judicial duty or to perform our Constitutional function as demanded in the interest of the nation and the people of Jammu and Kashmir especially its common woman and man, the poor and the weak. We hasten to add that conscious of the limitations of our jurisdiction, we shall confine ourselves to “ringing the bell” without anything more”.

The bench headed by Chief Justice Gita Mittal observed that there are no grounds or reasons forthcoming for enabling and supporting the considerations of administrative efficiency, legal justification or constitutional basis for effecting Durbar moves. The Division Bench of the High Court then went on to prod the decision makers, including the Centre directing them to look into the necessity of holding this 148-year-old biannual Durbar Move, keeping in mind the financial implication of more than Rs 200 crore incurred by the “hopelessly fiscally deprived Union Territory”.

The Legacy of Durbar Move

Historical references indicate that the practise of switching Durbars/Headquarters were prevalent much earlier in 1325-1350 when Mohammad bin Tuglaq on an experimental basis kept shuttling his capitals between Delhi and Daulatabad. The Sultan adopted this new methodology keeping in view their strategic value and safety they brought along.

A similar sort of practise was adopted by Mughals during the reign of Emperor Jahangir when he temporarily kept on shifting his capital to Kashmir during the harsh summers in mainland India. The British rule also witnessed a similar practise of moving capital when they shifted their capital to the hills of Shimla in summers and preferred working from Calcutta during winters.

In the erstwhile princely state of J&K the practice was started by Dogra ruler Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1872. It was during

his reign the construction of Banihal Cart Road was also started which facilitated his move from Jammu to Srinagar more conveniently. Some historians assert that it was on the ‘advice’ of British Regent to address the grievances of Kashmiris, who felt neglected at the hands of Dogra rulers that this practice was adopted while many claim that it was out of Maharaja’s own volition and to have best of both the worlds: away from the scorching heat of Jammu during summer and chilling cold of Kashmir during winter. This method of governance culminated into a convention which has stood the test off time till now.

Implications of undertaking this exercise

The enormity of this exercise can be gauged by the fact that when the capital shifts, so does the civil secretariat, important subsidiary offices, files and government documents, and the assembly. Official documents and other equipment are packed in hundreds of bundles, cartons and metallic trunks, and loaded into more than 250 trucks which ferry all of them for the over 300 km distance between Jammu and Srinagar and vice versa. The General Administration Department in its affidavit before the High Court stated that about 9695 Government officials were involved in this biannual exercise in Nov 2019, while it stood at a figure of 10112 in April 2019. On each Durbar Move, move allowance equivalent to Rs. 25,000/- (therefore, an amount of Rs. 50,000/- is paid per annum) were paid to employees who are involved in the Durbar Move. Additionally a Temporary Move Allowance of Rs. 2,000/- per month is also paid to each moving employee, bringing the annual expenditure to Rs.75,000/- per employee.

Managing Director J&K SRTC informed the Court that in (April 2019), 152 trucks and 56 buses were provided by SRTC for transportation of records. IGP (Security), J&K in his report to the court stated that surveillance and security for the Durbar Move are given from the point of loading of the records, en-route National Highway up-to destination by deploying Police/CAPF nafri for ROP, meticulous Anti-sabotage Checks to ensure proper area domination for secured moment of Durbar convoy. It was also submitted that 1081 personnel from J&K Armed Police, police in Kashmir and Jammu zones were engaged in providing security for the move in Oct 2019. Additionally 15 companies 1 section of Central Armed Police Force provided security to this exercise in Oct 2019. Similarly the J&K’s Estate’s Department which is responsible for providing accommodation to the Civil Secretariat employees whenever there is Dubar Move

in its affidavit before the court disclosed that Rs 127 crore was spent for providing accommodation to the move employees during 2018-19 and 2019-20. All this gives an insight into the magnanimity of this exercise and its bearing on the public exchequer.

Previous attempt to reform

In 1987 when the then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi was on a visit to J&K and due to bad weather he got stuck in Kashmir this when the headquarter and the administrative seat of governance was in Jammu. As this seemed ironic and strange, Gandhi asked the then Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah to review this age old practice keeping in view the changing times. Dr Farooq Abdullah then constituted a committee with the then Financial Commissioner Sheikh Ghulam Rasool as its Chairman and Shafi Pandit and Shusma Chaudhary as members to suggest measures to reform this practice. The committee submitted its report titled “Durbar Move-The Reality” which recommended certain measures to revamp this age old practice.

When some of its recommendations were taken up for implementation some vested interests inflamed passions under the banner of regional discrimination and because of which the report had to be shelved. An informal effort in this direction was also made when Omar Abdullah was the chief minister but again such attempts were looked upon with suspicion across the state, especially in Jammu. The strangle hold this issue has on the false prestige and psyche of the people of two provinces has been the biggest impediment for the requisite political will to bid this practice its long overdue farewell.

Call for reforms

Way back in 1872 the practice of Durbar Move might have seemed pragmatic and rational keeping in view the aspirations and the governance needs of the provinces of the erstwhile state of J&K. The rugged and mountainous topography further complicated by the geographical disconnect owing to lack of road and air travel facilities available in those times seem to have been eased to a great extent in present era. It also needs to be appreciated that since the state was dismembered its size has shrunk and J&K has fallen to 18th sport in terms of area in the union of India and even much bigger states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have managed governance efficiently with a single permanently stationed capital.

With advancement of technology distances have dwindled and the outdated method of ferrying truck loads of records involving large scale money and manpower seem rearward and retrograde. Digitisation of all records has already been undertaken to a great extent and its expected that by 2021 this exercise would be complete thereby making the practice of ferrying records redundant.

The High Court has been gracious in suggesting a number of viable alternatives that could be adopted, but for their implementation the onus to a great extent lies on the people of J&K. It won’t be too hypothetical to imagine the results that the rationalising of practice could bring along in terms of amount of money, resources and time. All these could be deployed in tackling much more pivotal issues of unemployment, healthcare and a better infrastructure against which we all have been grappling since ages. The people need to acknowledge the fact that attaching ego & emotions to issues of governance has bled us profusely since many past years and time has come to shed stereotypes and its only then the ordinary people will reap the benefits of good governance.

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

Social Distancing Works In Absence Of Vaccine

Shafiq Gul

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to minimise social contact between individuals. Indeed, even in less challenging occasions, many of us attempt to stay away from close contact with somebody who is sneezing or coughing to avoid from becoming ill ourselves. Our consideration regarding such issues has now been drastically uplifted by the development of a novel Coronavirus causing a pandemic of a sickness known as COVID-19.

Many have thought about whether we couldn’t just secure ourselves by staying away from individuals with side effects of respiratory ailment. Lamentably, the appropriate response is no. A research shows that just dodging symptomatic individuals won’t go far enough to check the COVID-19 pandemic. That is on the grounds that researchers have found that numerous people can convey the novel Coronavirus without demonstrating any of the common-place indications of COVID-19: fever, dry cough, and brevity of breath.

Be that as it may, these asymptomatic or just somewhat sick people can even now shed infection and contaminate others. This further gives weight to the ongoing guidance from U.S. general health specialists: what we

need most right currently to slow the stealthy spread of this new Coronavirus is a full usage of social separating.

What precisely does social distancing mean?

First of all, it is prescribed that individuals remain at home as could reasonably be possible. Going out just for basic needs like grocery and medicines, or to exercise and enjoy the outdoors in all the way open spaces. Other recommendations incorporate maintaining a strategic distance from social affairs of in excess of 10 individuals, no handshakes, and standard hand washing, and, while experiencing somebody outside of your quick family unit, attempting to stay at any rate 6 feet separated.

These may seem like extraordinary measures. Be that as it may, the social distancing might be our only method to slow the spread of COVID-19. Here are a couple of features which numerically models the spread of the Coronavirus in China:

For each affirmed instance of COVID-19, there are likely another five to 10 individuals with undetected infections.

Although they are believed to be just about half as irresistible as people with affirmed COVID-19, people with undetected diseases were so pervasive in China that they obviously were

the contamination hotspot for 86 percent of affirmed cases.

After China set up movement limitations and social distancing, the spread of COVID-19 eased extensively.

The research group created a PC model that empowered analysts to reproduce the time and spot of contaminations in a network of 375 Chinese urban communities. The specialists did as such by consolidating existing information on the spread of COVID-19 in China with versatility data gathered by an area based assistance during the nations mainstream 40-day Spring Festival, when travel is across the board. Meanwhile, social distancing stays probably the best weapon we need to slow the quiet spread of this infection and straighten the bend of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will give our medicinal services experts, clinics, and different foundations increasingly significant time to plan, ensure themselves, and help the numerous individuals whose lives might be on the line from this Corona virus.

Decrease in the social association will without a doubt help in decrease of the transmission of Corona virus (COVID-19). They are to:

Avoid contact with somebody who is showing indications of Corona virus (COVID-19). These manifestations incorporate high temperature as well as

new and persistent hack.

Avoid superfluous utilization of open vehicle whenever the situation allows.

Work from home, where conceivable. Your manager should bolster you to do this. Please refer to employer guidance for more information.

Avoid huge and little social affairs out in the open spaces, noticing that bars, restaurants, recreation focus’ and comparative settings are as of now shut as diseases spread effectively in shut spaces where individuals assemble.

Avoid social associations with loved ones. Stay in contact utilizing remote innovation, for example, telephone, web, and online networking.

Use phone or online administrations to contact your GP or other fundamental administrations

Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is practicable and to significantly limit your face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible, particularly if you: are over 70 have an underlying health condition are pregnant

This advice is likely to be in place for some weeks.

Author is a Doctoral Fellow and can be reached at: shafiqgul@gmail.com

Author has a Doctorate in Neuropharmacology from AIIMS, New Delhi

Coronavirus Crisis Shows What Is Wrong With The World

Jennifer Clapp

“The Bakarwals mostly rear the Australian Merino breed and local Poonchi and Kernai sheep, which cannot stand summer temperatures of the plains. “These breeds are used to colder regions and if the migration doesn’t start in time, the Bakarwals and Gujjars will have to face major losses in coming days,”



Belgians are being told that they need to increase their consumption of frites. Across Britain, farmers have dumped millions of pints of milk down the drain instead of churning it into butter. In Iran, millions of baby chickens — which may have one day been bound for barbecues — have been buried alive. In India, farmers are feeding strawberries to cattle rather than sending them to markets. Is this what an “efficient” global food system looks like? According to the economists, politicians and corporations that have pushed for increasingly interconnected food supply chains over the past 50 years, efficient is what it’s supposed to be: Each country specialises in what it’s best at — potatoes in Belgium, beef in Canada, cocoa in Ghana — and puts it on the global market. Producers and processors within countries specialise, too, as a way to minimise costs. As a result, at least in theory, prices stay low, the world gets fed and everyone wins. The coronavirus has revealed that there are serious weaknesses with relying too much on this approach. Improving efficiency can certainly be a good thing, especially if consumers benefit from cost savings and access to more diverse foods. But the changes in recent years have undermined other important goals, like the ability to adapt during a crisis. When new barriers prevent food from reaching its markets, or demand suddenly drops — both of which are happening now — the system falls apart. Any one of these would have caused problems in the world’s complex and specialised food supply chains. All of them happening at the same time is wreaking havoc. International trade in food dates back centuries — ancient Romans traded wine across the Mediterranean; spices travelled the medieval Silk Road — but since the 1970s, when agricultural industrialisation began to really speed up, more and more people have

relied on another country for providing at least part of their dinner. International food trade has increased nearly five-fold since the 1990s, when governments agreed to new rules to open up food trade. Today, nearly a quarter of all food produced crosses a border. Large transnational corporations saw an opportunity to profit from these changes and are now pivotal players in the trade, processing and packaging of food. As we have seen with the emergence of megasized companies that dominate entire sectors in the rest of the economy, the largest of the food and agriculture businesses have been steadily buying up their rivals in recent years and command enormous power. These changes fundamentally transformed food systems that once were more localised and diverse to be more specialised, distant and corporate controlled. Farmers increasingly contract to produce single commodities — crops, meat, dairy — for just a handful of large transnational corporate buyers that process and market it. A food system organised in this way may be “efficient” in terms of delivering lower prices, but it also has costs: to the environment, to social inequality and, as the pandemic has revealed, to flexibility in the face of disruption. Specialisation makes it hard to shift into different markets when disruptions arise. Belgium, one of the world’s leading exporters of potatoes, lost sales not only to local shuttered restaurants but also to other European countries and China because of lockdowns. At least the Belgians can try to eat the potatoes at home. That strategy won’t work for every crop: Ivory Coast and Ghana, the world’s top two cocoa exporters, lost markets across Europe and Asia when people started focusing on buying essential items during the lockdowns instead of chocolate. The loss in export income in Africa more generally could have huge ramifications if the pandemic continues, as many countries on the continent rely heavily on imported wheat and rice.

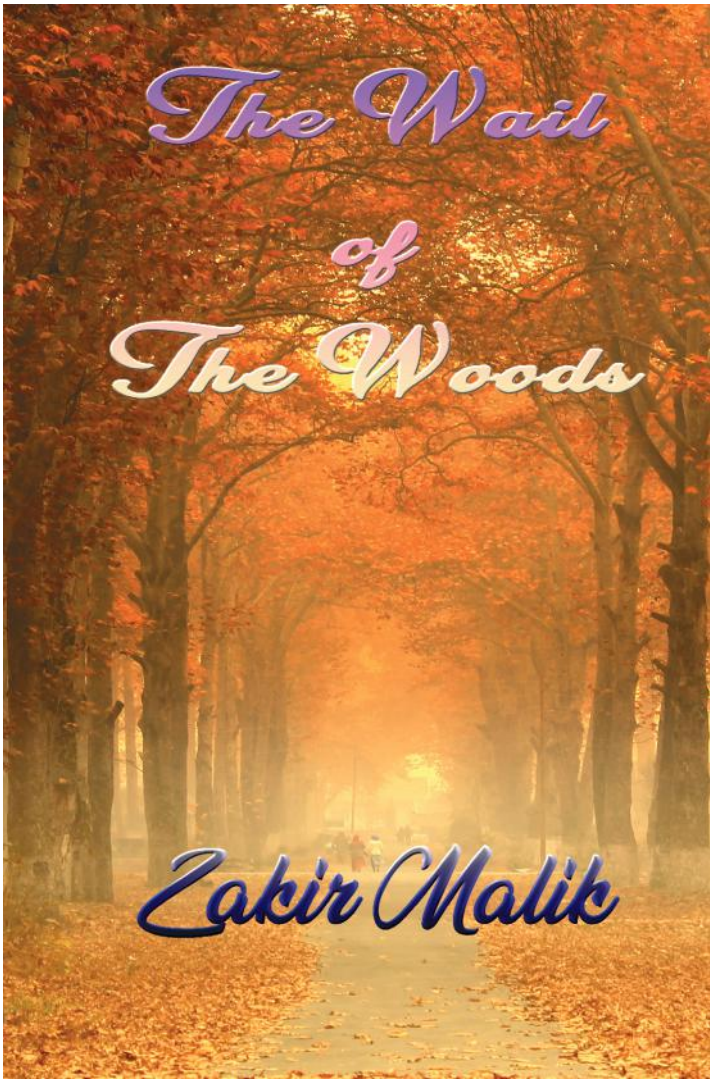
The prices of these grains have soared not only because of rising demand for these staple grains during the crisis, but also because a few countries — including Russia and Vietnam — imposed export restrictions out of fear that sending food abroad would lead to higher prices at home. (Other countries, like Canada, are reaping profits from elevated wheat prices.) Concentrated markets dominated by just a handful of companies create narrow bottlenecks that heighten food system fragility. The meatpacking industry is one of the most concentrated in the United States, and in many other countries around the world. In Canada, just three meatpacking plants process over 95 per cent of the country’s beef and nearly all of its beef exports. In both the United States and Canada, meat processing plants have had to temporarily shut down because of outbreaks of Covid-19 among workers. The meatpacking disruptions also highlight other consequences of the food system’s drive for efficiency: its reliance on poorly treated workers, many of whom are immigrants and people of colour, and its dependence on seasonal migrant labour, as evidenced by the fact that travel shutdowns have led to widespread labour shortages across Europe and North America. And this isn’t just about justice, as important as that is: If the people who keep food supply chains moving are made vulnerable by unsafe working conditions, low wages and closed borders, the entire food system is vulnerable. Seeing the spoiled dairy products, rotten vegetables and needlessly culled animals across the world should force all of us to rethink our “efficient” food supplies and try to create a system that is better able to withstand shocks. We need to rejuvenate local and regional food systems to reduce the vulnerabilities that come with being too reliant on imported and corporate-dominated foods. This doesn’t mean cutting off all trade or abolishing all packaged foods, but it does mean building diversity, decent livelihoods for workers and opportunities for small and medium-scale enterprises to flourish in shorter, more sustainable food supply chains that are closer to home. One place to start is for governments to shift their support from the large-scale and specialised food system to building infrastructure for more diverse local food production, processing and markets. In North America and around the world, small-scale and organic producers have been overwhelmed with the surge in interest from customers who want to buy directly from farmers during the crisis. But these producers often lack the infrastructure to meet that demand. As governments around the world pass stimulus packages to address the crisis, building more diverse and localised food systems should be an obvious inclusion. For decades, alternative food movements promoting local markets and sustainable production methods have sought to expand their reach in the face of growing social inequities and a changing climate. But lower prices and abundant supply offered by the global food system were serious headwinds. Now that the pandemic has shown just how fragile that system is, it is time to seize the moment to build real change that prioritises diversity and resilience.

Jennifer Clapp is a professor in the School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability at the University of Waterloo in Ontario and the author, most recently, of “Food.”

Book Review Zakir Malik Is A Poet, Of Whom, We Will Hear A Lot In The Future

By: Qasim Kashmiri

“Reading this book will definitely compel the reader to resemble the work with many famous bards although there are the poems that takes one to the world of uprising with soul and body. I smelt the taste of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Iqbal and Ibni Arabi in the verses of the author.



“The Wail of The Woods” is the collection of poems encompassing more than hundred poems that highly bridge the grounds of hope, affliction, antagonism, containment and the margins of distress. The book is intellectually twisted with deep thoughts of uprising that fills the inward fractions of person to dream with new hope and devotion. Zakir Malik has portrayed the images of bloodshed that has been violating the circumstances of the Kashmir valley for decades. The poems inside the book deeply touch the pain of dwellers of the valley. As a poet Zakir has narrated the tenderness of every person dwelling in conflict-ravaged valley that undergoes and experiences death every day. Poetry often gives some specific and definite insights of living and sheer imagination but the attempt of the author has bewildered me. He pens harsh reality of life in his poetry. Zakir Malik is a fantastic artist who can paint on the canvas of white pages a melody of well-chosen words, which deliver an intense message crafted in beautiful diction and tasteful language. The book not only reveals the artistic approach of Zakir to the readers but also lays bare far-reaching outlook of his philosophy itself. The multiple prospects in the verses in the book “The Wail of The Woods”, will win the interest of audience and greatly meet up the expectations of the readers hungry for quality literature. The beautiful grip that Zakir has on his reader’s psyche of ‘what next’ takes the book to the highest horizons of wisdom and courage. Most of the contemporary poetry books let us surge into skies with our closed eyes into the dream world. On the contrary the poems of ‘The Wail of The Woods’ penetrates deep inside the soul and compels one to ponder and search for the answer to questions posed. Zakir then goes on to provide answers which raise the readers confidence with renewed sky touching dreams and hopes. Moreover Zakir Malik succeeded to wing up his readers with ears of passion, eyes of longing and flow of unbridled tongue. Though, I wonder how Zakir Malik

with deal with generic poetry themes of beauty and nature. Reading this book will definitely compel the reader to resemble the work with many famous bards although there are the poems that takes one to the world of uprising with soul and body. I smelt the taste of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Iqbal and Ibni Arabi in the verses of the author. A writer should make the strong endeavour to bring forward the novel familiarity to the audience and this is the book that gives the reflection of oceanic rapture and absolute wisdom to move on. I strongly believe that author is going to be counted in the iconic writers of the Kashmir in the years ahead. His work will definitely rock in every nook of the world. The eye-catching page layout done by the publisher, The Indian Wordsmith, is another thing I must make positive mention of. The beautiful book cover, the paper quality, the layout of pages comes bundled in the well-produced paperback book. Price may seem a bit high, but with escalating costs of book publication, I found it reasonable. Anyways the content of the book provides solace of every penny, well spent. In the end I may sum it up in these words, ‘Zakir Malik is a poet, of whom, we will hear a lot in the future’.

-----Qasim Kashmiri, is pursuing doctorate in English Literature and is a poet and novelist. He is author of two poetry books and a novel ‘The Ashes’.

Title: The Wail Of The Woods.
Author: Zakir Malik
Genre: English PoetryPublisher: The Indian Wordsmith
Bound: Paperback
Price: Rupees 300/-

Robots Can Help Reduce Human Contact, Transmission Of Disease During COVID-19



Press Trust Of India

Robots can act as an interface between a doctor and a patient wherein they can carry out diagnostic and treatment processes, reducing the human contact and risk of transmission of infection during the coronavirus pandemic, an expert in the field of Robotics has said.

Bartłomiej Stanczyk, Robotics Engineer with ACCREA Engineering in Germany, was speaking during an e-discussion on the topic- Using Artificial Intelligence to Tackle Epidemics: The COVID-19 Model.

The event, organised by the Abu Dhabi-based TRENDS Research & Advisory, brought together leading experts from around the world who deliberated on the importance of artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data, and other technologies in the ongoing fight against the COVID-19 that has infected more than 3.8 million people

and killed over 260,000 people across the world.

Stanczyk said that robots could help doctors keep a safe distance from the patient by using probes and other remote medical equipment.

We aim to build a completely autonomous diagnostician through robotics, thus enabling the transfer of the skill from the human doctor on the machine carrying out the treatment, he said.

The interface between the doctor and patient means the robot can carry out all of the diagnostic and treatment processes, he said.

Explaining a wide range of uses of robots in the medical field, Stanczyk said that they can help in disinfection of inaccessible areas in hospitals. They can also be used in close proximity to humans by installing a sense of touch based on force sensors.

Munier Nazzal, Professor of Surgery at the University of Toledo, in the US advocated the use

of artificial intelligence (AI) in the development of a vaccine to cure COVID-19 patients.

AI can help with vaccine development by examining the virus' components. This can aid specialists gain a basic understanding and develop treatments that can be subject to pre-clinical trials, he said.

Konrad Karcz, Professor of Medicine and Head of Minimally Invasive Surgery at the Ludwig Maximilian University Clinic in Germany, spoke about the potential for chatbots to measure body temperature and other medical indicators in patients.

Sapan S Desai, Chief Executive Officer of the Surgisphere Corporation in the US, explained the transformative potential of AI illustrated by the company's collection of data on 86,000 COVID-19 cases which was used to model outcomes that suggested healthcare resources would be severely strained.

'Novel Cloud-Based Web Interface Detects COVID-19 From CT Scans'



Press Trust Of India

Researchers have developed an easy-to-use cloud-based web interface powered by artificial intelligence (AI) that they say can detect COVID-19 quickly from radiology reports such as CT scan or X-Rays.

The system may enable doctors and medical staff even in remotest villages of the country to get quick results on the COVID-19 status of a patient, the researchers said.

AI technologies that study CT Scans and X-Rays are being deployed as part of global efforts to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, according to the researchers from Lovely Professional University (LPU) in Punjab.

However, one of the biggest roadblocks in their adoption has been the need for a high-tech device or computer to support the software, and a qualified technician for operating it, they said.

"The unavailability of resources in our healthcare system is a big hindrance in COVID-19 detection and treatment, especially in the remote areas of the country," Prabin Kumar Das, a B.Tech student at LPU said.

"We wanted to build a cloud based system which could be accessed at minimal costs even from the remotest possible locations in the country while ensuring high quality results," Das said.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the novel coronavirus causes respiratory illness resembling viral pneumonia, resulting in fever, cough, and

shortness of breath.

A study published in the journal Radiology found that chest X-ray scan features can aid in the early detection and diagnosis of the virus.

The interface developed by researchers at LPU is cloud-based, and does not need any high-tech device or technicians to operate.

It can be accessed by an authorised healthcare professional any where in the world via a basic mobile device with internet connectivity and a web browser, they said.

The researchers noted that the user will have to upload a patient's scan on the website and it will return the diagnosis result "within a few seconds".

The interface is connected to an AI model at a centralised server which processes the image received from the web portal and sends the results back to the web portal, they said.

The researchers said no extra technical skills are required to use the portal, except for uploading the images.

The portal is capable of hosting any AI model that is preferred by a hospital, and will accordingly be able to detect the infection as well as the extent to which it has affected the patient, they said.

"Several experts from around the world have strongly recommended the use of CT scans for quick diagnosis of COVID 19. We are proud to have come up with a solution that can rapidly scale these tests," Lovi Raj Gupta, Executive Dean of Science and Technology at LPU said.

Study Says Most COVID-19 Patients May Lose Sense Of Smell By Third Day Of Infection

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW YORK: Loss of the sense of smell is most likely to occur by the third day of infection with the novel coronavirus, according to a study of over 100 COVID-19 patients which may help public health experts better identify those carrying the virus without adverse symptoms.

The telephonic study, whose results were published in the journal Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, examined characteristics and symptoms of 103 patients who were diagnosed with COVID-19 over a six-week period.

The patients from Aarau, Switzerland provided data on the number of days they had COVID-19 symptoms, and the timing and severity of their loss of smell, said study co-author, Ahmad Sedaghat from the University of Cincinnati in the US.

Of the 103 patients, at least

61 per cent reported reduced or lost sense of smell, Sedaghat said, adding that the mean onset for reduction or loss in the sense of smell was 3.4 days.

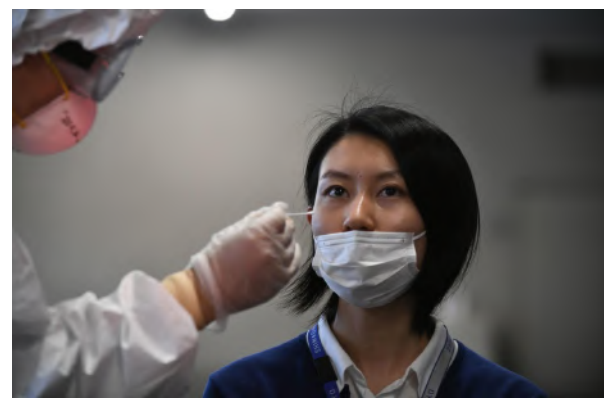
"We also found in this study that the severity of the loss of smell is correlated with how bad your other COVID-19 symptoms will be," Sedaghat said.

"If the anosmia, also known as loss of smell, is worse, the patients reported worse shortness of breath, and more severe fever and cough," he added.

According to the scientist, the relationship between decreased sense of smell and the rest of the COVID-19 is something to be aware of.

"If someone has a decreased sense of smell with COVID-19, we know they are within the first week of the disease course, and there is still another week or two to expect," he added.

The findings indicated that a decreased sense of smell



may be an indicator of patients early in the disease course as well as those who may go on to develop more severe symptoms, like shortness of breath, Sedaghat said.

He cautioned that while the loss of smell is an indicator of COVID-19, it's not the only factor.

"When you start to experience serious symptoms of COVID-19 which include shortness of breath and respiratory dis-

stress, that's when you should become alarmed," he said.

Younger patients and women in the study were also more likely to experience a decreased loss of smell, the study noted.

About 50 per cent of study patients experienced a stuffy nose and 35 per cent experienced a runny nose.

According to Sedaghat, this is important since previous studies indicated that these nasal symptoms were

rare in COVID-19, and these symptoms were attributed to allergy and not the novel coronavirus.

"This just means that greater awareness is needed of COVID-19's nasal symptoms so people are not running around sneezing in public and thinking it is okay since this is just allergies," Sedaghat said.

"It very well could be COVID-19 and wearing masks as protective gear for others you encounter is a good idea," he added.

Understanding more about loss of smell and COVID-19 is important for a public health perspective, the scientist cautioned.

"No one is going to die because of a loss of the sense of smell and it's not the symptom that will kill anyone," he said, but adding that, "it is important because it helps us to identify these COVID-19 patients as asymptomatic carriers so they don't spread the disease to others."

'Elderly People Living In Rural Areas Likely To Have Better Mental Well Being'

AGENCIES

A study shows that there is a link between the mental well-being among the elderly people and the environment they are living in, be it rural or urban.

The mental well-being of the elderly refers to how they perceive their everyday existence, i.e., if their outlook is positive or negative, which, in turn, makes their life pleasant or unpleasant.

A study by researchers at the University of Barcelona and Pompeu Fabra University focused on the association between the main variables related to the satisfactory mental well-being of the elderly and the rural or urban characteristics of the environment in which they live.

The study was published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.

"The perception that older people living in rural areas have with regard



to the limitations of health and aging is associated with less deterioration of mental well-being while living in urban areas is related with an increased risk of suffering emotional problems attributable to economic difficulties or a low level of education", said the authors, who argue that encouraging older people to live in rural areas could lead to greater well-being in later life.

The research was carried out by taking cross-sectional microdata between 2015 and 2017 from the Health Survey of Catalonia (ESCA), an official survey administered

to the entire population residing in Catalonia, which is conducted continuously throughout the year. The sample, which is representative of the overall population, included 2,621 individuals (1,219 men and 1,402 women) aged 65 and over living in municipalities classified as rural, semi-urban, and urban. For the study, the participants responded to the questionnaire, providing information on the health and lifestyles of individuals in relation to a wide range of socio-demographic factors.

Posting Edited Selfies On Instagram Ups Eating Disorders Risk

Agencies

Editting and uploading the selfies on the social media platforms like Instagram, in the hopes of getting more likes, may increase the risk of an eating disorder, according to a new study.

The researchers from Florida State University revealed a consistent and direct link between posting edited photos on Instagram and risk factors for eating disorders.

Specifically, digitally-editing pictures to improve personal appearance before posting photos to Instagram increased weight and shape concerns in college students.

The study, published in the International Journal Eating Disorders, found that posting photos (edited or unedited) contributed to greater anxiety and reinforced urges to restrict food intake and exercise compared with not posting photos.

"As more people turn to social media to stay connected, it's critically important to let others see you as you are."

"Compared with edited pho-



tos, we saw no decrease in the number of likes or comments for unedited photos on Instagram; knowing this could reduce harmful pressures to change how you look," said co-author Pamela K Keel from Florida State University.

Social media use has been implicated as a correlate and a cause of increased disordered eating but little is known about the impact of specific aspects of social media use, such as posting edited photos of the self.

Utilising a two-stage design, the present study sought to determine how posting edited photos relate to eating disorders, as well as anxiety and depression symptoms, in male and female college students. In stage 1, the research team examined concurrent associations between posting edited photos and mental health measures in 2,485 undergraduates (76 per cent female)

Pakistan Begins To Ease Month-Long Lockdown Even As Coronavirus Cases Rise

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Saturday began easing the month-long lockdown despite a steady rise in the number of the coronavirus cases which rose to 27,474 after health authorities reported a big jump of 1,637 infections and 24 deaths in a single day.

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday said that Pakistan would begin easing its nationwide lockdown in a phase-wise manner by allowing various businesses to open up from Saturday, citing the economic crisis due to the shutdown, which was enforced in the country in March end.

The first phase of easing lockdown began as the government announced removing restrictions by allowing more business to open and operate from dawn to 5 pm.

The federal government was trying to provide maximum relief to the people but due to the current economic conditions of the country,

will be closed at 4pm.

Also, the government has allowed congregational prayers in mosques during the month of Ramzan after the clerics agreed to follow the government guidelines on social distancing while praying in mosques.

However, doctors and the Opposition expressed reservations about the decisions. Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said "this government has no policy on lockdown or coronavirus."

Although several economic sectors and business activities are allowed to reopen, schools in Pakistan will remain closed until July 15.

According to the Ministry of National Health Services, Pakistan reported a total of 27,474 coronavirus cases after 1,637 new patients were diagnosed in one day. Another 24 patients died taking the death toll to 618.

The Punjab province reported 10,471 cases, Sindh 9,691, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 4,327, Balochistan



the lockdown must be eased, the Express Tribune quoted Khan as saying.

Sindh chief minister Murad Ali Shah and Adviser to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Ajmal Wazir said the provincial government is on board with Khan's plan.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Friday announced the easing of lockdown enforced on March 21. According to it, shops and selected businesses will open four days a week and that all businesses

1,876, Islamabad 609, Gilgit-Baltistan 421 and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir 79 cases.

So far 7,756 patients have recovered. The authorities have conducted 270,025 tests including 12,982 in the last 24 hours.

Separately, prime minister Khan appreciated the 'Made in Pakistan' initiative of the Ministry of Science and Technology focusing on boosting indigenous productivity in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Sri Lankan Muslims Urge Govt For Burial For COVID-19 Victims

COLOMBO: Muslim theologists in Sri Lanka have urged the government to reconsider its decision on cremating the Muslims who died due to the coronavirus, saying the revised rule goes against the Islamic tradition.

Sri Lanka has made cremations compulsory for coronavirus victims, ignoring protests from the country's Muslims, who make up 10 per cent of the 21 million population.

In a letter to the Director General, Health Services, the All Ceylon Jamiiyathul Ulama (ACJU) claimed that more than 180 countries in line with the guidelines of the World Health Organisation have allowed burials for Muslims who die of COVID-19.

"It is our moral and ethical duty to abide by the law of the country and to guide people towards it. But it does not imply that we endorse or give consent to this ruling as it is against our religious principles", the letter said.

They urged the health authorities to reconsider the decision.

The Muslim clerics in Sri Lanka had earlier also made an appeal regarding their opposition to cremations.

Sri Lanka had earlier amended the operational guidelines to allow only cremations of COVID-19 victims after it had been originally agreed for burials. Health officials said burials would be dangerous with the risk of transmission.

The Muslim Outfit assured the government that they would comply with the required standards such as preparing the grave 8 feet deep and the graves can be cemented or concreted to allay safety fears.

At least three Muslims are among the nine people who have so far died from the highly infectious disease in the country so far. Their bodies were cremated by the authorities despite protests from their relatives.

Sri Lanka has so far recorded 835 coronavirus positive cases. Of the total, 404 are Sri Lanka Navy personnel.

Having been under continuous curfew in the lockdown observed since March 20, the island nation is set to re-open from May 11. PTI



US President Donald Trump. (AFP)

US Prevents UN From Voting For Truce In Conflict Zones

WASHINGTON: The United States on Friday stunned other members of the UN Security Council by preventing a vote on a resolution for a ceasefire in various conflicts around the world to help troubled nations better fight the coronavirus pandemic, diplomats said.

Washington's reversal came a day after it agreed to the text, negotiators said under cover of anonymity.

"The United States cannot support the current draft," the country's delegation declared, without further detail, to the 14 other Security Council members, after nearly two months of difficult negotiation over the text.

The latest stalemate continues to leave the global peace and security body largely mute in the face of a once-in-a-century pandemic that has killed more than 270,000 people and raised further fears for the world's most vulnerable.

When asked for an explanation of the US move, a State Department official told AFP that China had "repeatedly blocked compromises that would have allowed the Council to move forward."

Diplomats told AFP that the language used in the draft to describe the World Health Organization was behind the US move to prevent the vote.

But other sources said Washington wanted the Council to return to an initial draft of the resolution which highlighted the need for "transparency" in global cooperation in tackling the pandemic.

"In our view, the Council should either proceed with a resolution limited to support for a ceasefire, or a broadened resolution that fully addresses the need for renewed member state commitment to transparency and accountability in the context of COVID-19," the State Department official said.

US President Donald Trump has accused the WHO of downplaying the seriousness of the outbreak in China.

The procedure blocked by the United States would have allowed the sponsors of the resolution, France and Tunisia, to put it to a vote.

The latest version of the text -- obtained by AFP -- called for a cessation of hostilities in conflict zones and a 90-day "humanitarian pause" to allow governments to better address the pandemic among those most suffering.

It called on all nations to "enhance coordination" in the virus fight and highlighted the "urgent need to support all countries, as well as all relevant entities of the United Nations system, including specialized health agencies, and other relevant international, regional, and sub-regional organization."

This wording, which implicitly refers to the WHO without explicitly mentioning it, was the compromise obtained from US and China on Thursday night, according to diplomats.

'Very bad news'

Washington had threatened to use its veto if there were any explicit reference to the WHO, while Beijing brandished its own veto if

the global health body were not mentioned, before, in the end, accepting that it would not be.

Diplomats said the US had let go more than a week ago of its demand for mention of transparency in the French-Tunisian text. The "ball was in the Chinese camp" now, one of them said previously.

The US turnaround "is a very, very bad news for United Nations, the Security Council and multilateralism," said one ambassador from a Security Council member.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has been pushing for a cessation of hostilities around the world since March 23, urging all sides in conflict to lay down arms and allow war-torn nations to combat the coronavirus.

French Ambassador Nicolas de Riviere told AFP that he would like "of course to continue to try to reach an agreement, if there is room for that."

His Tunisian counterpart Kais Kabtani said discussions are continuing "to convince the Americans." He vowed that the procedure for going to a vote would be taken up again.

Ironically, the Security Council was also engaged Friday in a major videoconference organized by Estonia, which holds the body's rotating presidency this month, on the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II.

More than 50 ministers from around the world participated, most of them issuing a "plea for multilateralism."

US Pulling Patriot Missiles From Saudi Oil Facilities: Report

The United States is pulling its Patriot missile systems from Saudi oil facilities as part of broader curbs on its military support for the Arab kingdom, a report says.

Citing unnamed US officials, The Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday that four Patriot surface-to-air missile batteries and dozens of military personnel will be removed from Saudi oil facilities.

The officials said the US will also reduce its Navy presence in the Persian Gulf, adding that two jet fighter squadrons have already left the region.

The US intensified its military presence in the region last year amid growing tensions with Iran. Part of the military hardware was deployed in September last year after a series of attacks on Saudi oil facilities.

The developments come over



two weeks after President Donald Trump said his administration will review a proposal to block Saudi crude oil shipments to the US to try to save its struggling shale industry suffering from an unprecedented slump in demand and prices due to the novel coronavirus, and as fuel storage runs short.

In mid-April, Frank Fannon, the US assistant secretary of state for energy resources, said the country could also impose tariffs on Saudi oil.

Trump had also warned Saudi Arabia earlier that month that he would end American military support for the kingdom if Riyadh did not end its oil price war with Russia and cut production.

In a phone call on April 2, the US president told Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman that unless his country started cutting oil production, he would be unable to stop lawmakers from passing legislation to withdraw US troops from the kingdom.

Son Of Late King Abdullah Detained In Saudi Arabia: Human Rights Watch

Saudi Arabian authorities have been holding a son of the late Saudi King Abdullah since March and have refused to disclose his whereabouts, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on Saturday.

Prince Faisal bin Abdullah is apparently being held incommunicado and may have been forcibly disappeared, the New York-based rights group said, citing a source with close ties to the royal family.

"Despite waves of criticism, the lawless behaviour of Saudi authorities during the de facto rule of Mohammed bin Salman continues unabated," said Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, referring to the Saudi crown prince.

"Now we have to add Prince Faisal to the hundreds detained in Saudi Arabia without a clear legal basis."

Security forces arrived on 27 March at Prince Faisal's compound northeast of Riyadh, where he had been self-isolating due to the coronavirus pandemic, and detained him without charge, HRW said.

Family members have been left in the dark as to his whereabouts and are particularly concerned about his health as he has a heart condition.

Educated in London and with close ties to the Saudi intelligence community, Prince Faisal once served as head

nor of Riyadh. Prince Turki remains in detention without charge.

Billionaire Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal, dubbed the "Arabian Warren Buffet" and one of the richest men in the world, was held for three months before reaching an agreement with authorities.

In March of this year, another twenty senior royals were detained in a purge, including Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz, King Salman's full brother and Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, a former crown prince and interior minister who was removed to make way for Mohammed bin Salman in June 2017.

Middle East Eye reported that the move was a preemptive effort to ensure compliance within the ruling al-Saud family ahead of the crown prince's intention to become king before the G20 summit in Riyadh in November.

'Blatant disrespect for the rule of law'

Last month, Princess Basmah bint Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, 56, who had been missing for a year after she was abducted along with her daughter, reemerged over Twitter, pleading with her uncle King Salman and her cousin, the crown prince, to release her from prison.

"I am currently being arbitrarily held at al-Ha'ir prison without criminal, or otherwise any charges against my person. My health is deteriorat-



of the Red Crescent society with the rank of minister in the kingdom.

'Anti-corruption' campaign

Prince Faisal was among hundreds of elite royals, businessmen and ministers held at Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton hotel in November 2017 in an "anti-corruption" campaign, who were then reportedly pressured into handing over their vast assets.

The kingdom claimed to have raised more than \$100bn in the purge, with some beaten into submission.

Among those detained were a number of Prince Faisal's other sons, including Prince Mishal bin Abdullah, a former governor of Mecca; Prince Mutaib bin Abdullah, former National Guard minister; and Prince Turki bin Abdullah, a former govern-

ing to an extent that is serve [sic], and that could lead to my death," she wrote in a statement on Twitter, adding that she had been abducted "without explanation".

Page said that Saudi authorities were displaying a "blatant disrespect" for international law with such arrests.

"Saudi Arabia's recent justice reforms have evidently not curbed rampant arbitrary detentions, including of prominent royal family members," Page said.

"The arrest and possible disappearance of Prince Faisal demonstrates again Saudi authorities' blatant disrespect for the rule of law and the need for a full overhaul of the justice system."

COVID-19 China's Socialist Political System Has Shown It Can Overcome Any Challenge Prez Xi

BEIJING: Mounting a strong defence of the ruling Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping has said the COVID-19 fight has once again shown that the CPC leadership and the country's socialist political system can overcome any challenge.

Xi's comments came as China faced global criticism for its initial inaction to act against the novel coronavirus, which according to Chinese officials emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in December last year.

Pressure is also mounting on Beijing to agree for an international probe on the origins of the vicious virus, including from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), as claimed by the US leadership.

China curbed the spread of the coronavirus in over a month and brought COVID-19 under control at its first epicentre in Wuhan in about three months, Xi, also the General

Secretary of the CPC, said at a symposium held on Friday to get suggestions from non-ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) parties on COVID-19 prevention and control.

He termed the curbing of the COVID-19 pandemic as "hard-won achievements" for the world's most populous country and the second-biggest economy.

The COVID-19 fight has once again shown that the CPC leadership, China's socialist system and its governance system can overcome any challenge and make big contributions to the progress of human civilisation, he said.

Xi said China had basically curbed the spread of the virus in over one month, managed to bring the daily number of new domestically-transmitted cases down to single digits in about two months, and secured decisive achievements in protecting epicentres Wuhan and Hubei province in about three months.

to the speech.

"But in the meantime, in spite of the sunny Bank Holiday, it is vitally important that we continue to abide by the current restrictions. Stay at home, protect the NHS, save lives," he said.

Meanwhile, the devolved administrations of Scotland and Wales have plans to effectively keep lockdown largely in place with some "very smallest and most modest steps" towards an easing.

From Monday, people in both regions will be allowed to go out to exercise locally more than once a day. "The only change that we're considering in the immediate term is the guidance on outdoor exercise and I will give you a

further update on that over the weekend," said Scotland First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

"The evidence that we heard from behavioural scientists in making our decisions was that if you can offer people a little bit more freedom at the margin it actually strengthens people's ability and willingness to abide with the major thrust of the restrictions that we still have to ask people in Wales to abide by," added Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford.

The British government has said that while it is keen on a UK-wide approach to the lockdown, every region will set timeframes based on their individual assessments. PTI

NEWS MAKERS

Belgian, US Scientists Look To Llamas In Search For Covid-19 Treatment

A llama called Winter could prove useful in the hunt for a treatment for Covid-19, according to US and Belgian scientists who have identified a tiny particle that appears to block the new coronavirus.

The scientists, from Belgium's VIB-UGent center for medical biotechnology and the University of Texas at Austin, published research on Tuesday in the journal Cell, with the llama in Belgium central to their studies. The group began four years ago looking into antibodies that might counter the Sars virus, which spread in 2003, and the Mers virus that flared up in 2012. "The work was a side project

in 2016. We thought maybe this was interesting," said Xavier Saelens, joint leader of the Belgian part of the collaboration. "Then the new virus came and it became potentially more crucial, more important." Winter, the llama, was given safe versions of the Sars and Mers viruses and samples of its blood were later taken. Llamas and other members of camel family are distinct in creating standard antibodies and smaller antibodies, with which scientists can more easily work.

The Belgian part of the research team, also led by Bert Schepens, identified fragments of the smaller antibodies, known as nanobodies,

to see which bound most strongly to the virus. Saelens describes the new coronavirus as the cousin of the Sars virus. Both have a corona, or crown, shape with protein spikes, onto which an antibody can latch. The team intend to begin tests on animals, with a view to allowing trials with humans to begin by the end of the year. Saelens said negotiations were under way with pharmaceutical companies. The research is not the first into nanobodies derived from camels or llamas.

French group Sanofi paid 3.9 billion euros (\$4.23 billion) in 2018 to buy Ghent-based nanobody specialist company Ablynx.

6-Week-Old Baby Dies Of Coronavirus In England

LONDON: A six-week-old baby has become the youngest victim of coronavirus in England as the official death toll across hospitals and the wider community linked to COVID-19 hit 31,241 in the UK.

The baby's death on Friday comes as Britain prepares for some easing in the strict lockdown measures in place to curb the spread of the deadly virus as it is believed that Britain is past the peak of the pandemic.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is to make a televised address on Sunday, during which he will lay out a "comprehensive plan" to start unlocking the economy.

However, Cabinet ministers have been warning against rais-

ing expectations beyond a "modest" easing of the social distancing rules in place to manage the pressure on the state-funded National Health Service (NHS).

There are some concerns that people would start flouting the "stay-at-home" message during a long Bank Holiday weekend to mark the 75th anniversary of the World War II Victory in Europe (VE) Day on Friday.

"I'm conscious that there is a great deal of speculation about what the Prime Minister might say on Sunday when he outlines a roadmap for the future and how we will evolve the current restrictions," said UK Environment Secretary George Eustice in reference

They Don't Want Our IT Guys, But They Want Our Nurses, Docs

WASHINGTON: Several American lawmakers have introduced a legislation in Congress to offer the 40,000 unused green cards to thousands of foreign nurses and doctors to meet the urgent needs of the overstretched healthcare sector in the US, the worst hit nation by the coronavirus pandemic.

The US has nearly 1,284,000 cases of confirmed COVID-19 cases and over 77,000 people have died due to the highly contagious disease.

The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act would allow for recapturing green cards that were approved by Congress but unused in past years, allowing thousands of additional medical professionals to serve permanently in the United States.



The legislation would send green cards to 25,000 nurses and 15,000 doctors during the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that states like Iowa have the professionals they need to serve patients for years to come, a media release said.

The move is likely to benefit a large number of Indian nurses and doctors in the US, who are either on H-1B or J2 visas.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

A Green Card, known officially as a Permanent Resident Card, is a document issued to immigrants to the US as evidence that the bearer has been granted the privilege of residing permanently.

In the House of Representatives, the legislation has been introduced by lawmakers Abby Finkenauer, Brad Schneider, Tom Cole and Don Bacon. The bipartisan Senate companion bill is led by Senators David Perdue, Dick Durbin, Todd Young and Chris Coons.

"We need all hands on deck to address this generational crisis," congresswoman Finkenauer said.

US To Temporarily Ban Work-Based Visas Including H-1B



WASHINGTON: The US is working to temporarily ban the issuance of some work-based visas like H-1B, popular among highly-skilled Indian IT professionals, as well as student visas and work authorization that accompanies them, amidst the high level of unemployment due to the coronavirus, according to a media report on Friday.

The H-1B is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers from countries like India and China in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Nearly 500,000 migrant workers are employed in the US in the H-1B status.

"The president's immigration advisers are drawing up plans for a coming executive order, expected this month, that would ban the issuance of some new temporary, work-based visas," The Wall Street Journal reported Friday.

"The order is expected to focus on visa categories includ-

ing H-1B, designed for highly skilled workers, and H-2B, for seasonal migrant workers, as well as student visas and the work authorization that accompanies them," it said.

More than 33 million Americans have lost their jobs in the last two months due to the coronavirus pandemic that has brought the US economy to a standstill.

The IMF and the World Bank have projected a negative growth rate for the country.

White House officials say that the US economy is likely to grow at negative 15 to 20 per cent in the second quarter.

The monthly jobs report on Friday said that the unemployment rate in the US for the month of April rose to 14.7 per cent.

This is the highest rate and the largest over-the-month increase in the history of the series, seasonally adjusted data are available back to January 1948, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics said.



THE CBI HAD RECENTLY BOOKED THE COMPANY ENGAGED in the export of basmati rice to the West Asian and European countries and its directors Naresh Kumar, Suresh Kumar and Sangita on the basis of complaint from the State Bank of India (SBI).

Another Bank Defaulter Flees Country, SBI Complains To CBI After 4 Years

NEW DELHI: Three promoters of Ram Dev International, who were recently booked by CBI for allegedly cheating six banks to the tune of Rs 411 crore, have already fled the country before SBI could reach the agency, officials said on Saturday.

The CBI had recently booked the company engaged in the export of basmati rice to the West Asian and European countries and its directors Naresh Kumar, Suresh Kumar and Sangita on the basis of complaint from the State Bank of India (SBI), which suffered the loss of more than Rs 173 crore, they said.

The company had three rice milling plants, besides eight sorting and grading units in Karnal district

with offices in Saudi Arabia and Dubai for trading purposes, the SBI complaint said.

Besides SBI, the other members of the consortium are Canara Bank, Union Bank of India, IDBI, Central Bank of India and Corporation Bank.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) did not carry out any searches in the matter because of the coronavirus-induced lockdown, the officials said.

The agency will start the process of summoning the accused, in case they do not join the investigation, appropriate legal action will be initiated, they said.

According to the complaint filed by SBI, the account had become non-

performing asset (NPA) on January 27, 2016.

The banks conducted a joint inspection of properties in August and October, nearly 7-9 months later only to find Haryana Police security guards deployed there, they said.

"On inquiry, it has been come to notice that borrowers are absconding and have left the country," the complaint filed on February 25, 2020, after over a year of account becoming NPA, the officials said.

The complaint alleged that borrowers had removed entire machinery from old plant and fudged the balance sheets in order to unlawfully gain at the cost of banks' funds, it said.

CISF Reports 13 Fresh COVID-19 Cases; Maximum In Delhi Metro Unit



The Central Industrial Security Force reported 13 fresh cases of COVID-19 among its personnel on Saturday with the maximum being in its Delhi Metro protection unit, officials said.

The 1.62 lakh personnel strong force has a total of 48 active cases of coronavirus with the addition of the new numbers.

Two of its personnel have succumbed to the disease over the last two days.

Among the 48 active cases, maxi-

mum 31 are in the unit that guards the Delhi Metro followed by 13 in the Mumbai international airport guarding unit.

The maximum rise in cases, at 10, over the last 24 hours has also been reported from the Delhi Metro guarding unit.

Coronavirus positive troops have also been reported at CISF units like Delhi airport (3), Ahmedabad airport (2), Kolkata Port Trust (3) and one at its VIP security unit

based at Greater Noida.

The force is tasked to guard civil airports (63 at present) in the country and vital infrastructure in the aerospace and nuclear domain.

The paramilitary forces or the Central Armed Police Forces have over 540 positive cases now and five personnel have succumbed to the disease. These forces, under the command of the Union Home Ministry, include the CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF and SSB.

Around 60 Protesting Migrant Workers Seeking To Return Home Arrested In Surat

SURAT: Nearly 60 migrant workers were arrested on Saturday for protesting at the Hazira industrial area in Surat today demanding they be sent back to their respective states, among other issues.

"At around 8 am today, around 500-1,000 people gathered, demanding they be sent back to their respective states. Reasonable force was used, around 55-60 were arrested, and around 50-60 have also been detained," Surat Joint Commissioner of Police DN Patel said.

Mr Patel said that a group also came out to protest on May 8 with the same demands but we handled them but they returned to protest again.

"Yesterday too, some of them came outside to protest so we told them to make

a list of people and they will be sent when their turn comes. We also informed the administration for an additional 5-7 trains for the migrant labourers," Mr Patel said.

He said that the police are also in touch with the contractors and telling them to make the labourers understand that they will be sent home and that they should await their turn.

According to the Union Health Ministry, Gujarat is the second most affected state due to coronavirus after Maharashtra with 7,402 COVID-19 cases and 449 deaths so far.

According to the Union Health Ministry, the total count of the country has reached 59,662 with 1,981 deaths.



Raghuram Rajan Bats For Monetisation, Higher Fiscal Deficit For Economy's 'Health'



Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan has suggested that the government should go in for monetisation and higher fiscal deficit in a 'measured' way to protect the health of the economy in these 'abnormal times'.

The government is trying to garner resources to combat the impact of coronavirus on the economy and the finance ministry on Friday decided to raise market borrowing programme by 54 per cent to Rs 12 lakh crore for 2020-21, up from Rs 7.8 lakh crore estimated in February.

Monetisation, which is loosely referred to as printing of currency by the Reserve Bank, need not be a constraint on government spending, Rajan said in a blog, adding, "government should be concerned about protecting the health of the economy and should spend what is needed."

However, he added that efforts should be made to prioritise expenditure and cut back unneeded spending.

As regards fiscal deficit, which will go up on higher spending and lower revenue, Rajan said the government "should also worry about getting the fiscal deficit and its debt back in shape over the medium term, and the more it spends now, the harder that will be".

"However, its inability to finance itself or fears of monetisation should not be a constraint. Monetisation will neither be a game-

changer nor a catastrophe, if done in a measured way. In fact, India is already doing it! However, the caveat it should be measured is key."

In the blog titled Monetization: Neither Game Changer nor Catastrophe in Abnormal Times, Rajan said there is a lot of concern in some quarters about central banks printing money to finance large budget deficits, while in other quarters, the concern is that central banks are doing too little of it.

"...so called monetisation is neither a game-changer in stressed times nor a catastrophe. It helps a little at the margin, but does not solve the government's fiscal problems nor does it lead to runaway inflation. If used in the wrong way, it could however be problematic," he wrote.

Rajan said that direct RBI financing is sometimes loosely termed money printing and thought to be free.

"This is misleading. As we have seen, the government finances itself from the RBI, and the RBI finances itself from the banks at the reverse repo rate of 3.75 per cent," Rajan, who is currently working as a professor at the University of Chicago, said.

He also pointed out that the larger government spending will directly ignite demand.

However, he said that "in abnormal times when demand is depressed and the environment is disinflationary, this should not be a central worry".

NEWS MAKER

Google Dumps Dream Of Tech City Where Smart Streets Melt Snow, Sensors Steer Traffic

TORONTO: Google said Thursday it is abandoning its smart-city development in Toronto and blamed unprecedented economic uncertainty.

A unit of Google's parent company Alphabet had been proposing to turn a rundown part of Toronto's waterfront into a wired community, but Sidewalk Labs chief executive Dan Doctoroff said in a statement that it is no longer financially viable.

"As unprecedented economic uncertainty has set in around the world and in the Toronto real estate market, it has become too difficult to make the project financially viable without sacrificing core parts of the plan," Doctoroff said.

Sidewalk Labs had partnered with a government agency known as Waterfront Toronto with plans to erect mid-rise apartments, offices, shops and a school on a 12-acre (4.9-hectare) site — a first step toward what it hoped would eventually be a 800-acre (325-hectare) development.

Heated streets would have melted ice and snow on contact. Sensors would have monitored traffic and protected pedestrians, and driver-less shuttles would have carried people to their doors.

But some Canadians balked at the privacy implications of giving one of the most data-hungry companies on the



planet the means to wire up everything from street lights to pavement. Changes were since made to make it more palatable but some celebrated Google's decision to scrap it.

"This is a major victory for the responsible citizens who fought to protect Canada's democracy, civil and digital rights, as well as the economic development opportunity," said former BlackBerry chief executive Jim Balsillie, a smartphone pioneer. "Sidewalk Toronto will go down

in history as one of the more disturbing planned experiments in surveillance capitalism."

Doctoroff had said the company was not looking to monetize people's personal information in the way that Google does now with search information. He had said the plan was to invent so-far-undefined products and services that Sidewalk Labs could market elsewhere.

Concerns in Canada intensified following a series of privacy scandals at Facebook and Google.

“THIS IS A MAJOR VICTORY FOR THE responsible citizens who fought to protect Canada's democracy, civil and digital rights, as well as the economic development opportunity,”