

Pak's Oppn Accuses Imran Khan Govt Of Mishandling Coronavirus Crisis As Cases Rise To 31,684

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Opposition parties on Monday accused Prime Minister Imran Khan's government of mishandling the coronavirus crisis, as the total number of the COVID-19 patients in the country rose to 31,684.

During a National Assembly session convened after a gap of nearly two months, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former defence minister Khawaja Asif led the criticism.

Deputy Speaker Qasim Khan Suri chaired the session in the absence of Speaker Asad Qaiser who is recovering from the coronavirus. The meeting is the first since the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.

Asif said that the federal government was confused over the issue of how to handle the coronavirus crisis.

"The current situation that we are in is due to the approximately two months-long negligence showed by the government. When we had fewer deaths, the entire country was completely

shut down. Now that we are seeing a dangerous spike in cases, they are easing lockdown restrictions," he said.

He also lashed out at the government's inability to increase testing capacity. "Two weeks ago, we were told that our testing capacity will be increased to 50,000. But now we are being told that it is only 20,000, he said.

He said that the government was dividing the nation instead of uniting it on one platform as it had no strategy which also revealed the ineptitude of the Prime Minister.

Pakistan People's Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said that the federal government was impeding efforts of the Sindh government to address the coronavirus crisis. He said that an ordinance prepared by the provincial government was not allowed by the governor.

"We demand that the ordinance should be endorsed without any further delay, he said, adding that his party, which



rules over Sindh, wanted to support the prime minister to tackle the crisis.

"The federal government should've stood with us shoulder to shoulder. We're in the midst of a war, and the PM expects us to fight the war on our own?" he said in the National Assembly.

He also said that the centre was not providing kits to medi-

cal professionals and questioned whether the federal government wanted the provinces to fight the virus "without the weapons".

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi defended the government's handling of the pandemic, saying the situation of COVID-19 in Pakistan was different as compared to Europe and the United States.

"Our death and infection rate is 2.17 per cent. Across the world this percentage is 6.8. So we have been largely spared from the larger consequences of this pandemic, he said.

He also claimed that Pakistan was ahead of other South Asian countries in handling the coronavirus crisis.

Qureshi also accused India of using the coronavirus crisis to divide the people. He said that Iran sent 4,000-5,000 Pakistanis across the border despite requests to wait until a quarantine facility was developed.

Minister of Economic Affairs Hammad Azhar said hunger was as much a threat to Pakistan as the coronavirus itself. "Ours is not a western developed country where people can sit home and eat. We have to balance hunger and poverty with the virus," he said in the National Assembly.

He said that if the government continued with the lockdown, 20 million people would go below the poverty line.

Meanwhile, the coronavirus

cases in the country jumped to 31,684. Out of the 31,684 cases, Punjab registered 11,568 patients, Sindh 12,017, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 4,875, Balochistan 2,017, Islamabad 679, Gilgit-Baltistan 442 and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir 86 patients.

A total of 28 more people have died in the last 24 hours, taking the tally of COVID-19 deaths in Pakistan to 667. Another 8,212 recovered so far.

On Monday, Prime Minister Khan chaired a meeting on the crisis where he was briefed about the latest efforts to control the spread of the disease in the wake of easing lockdown.

According to an official statement, Khan said that lockdown is being eased in a phased manner according to the situation and to keep a balance between business and health needs.

Meanwhile, an army officer died due to coronavirus.

"Major Muhammad Asghar laid his life in the line of duty at Torkham border in fight against #COVID-19. Evacuated to CMH (com-

bined military hospital) Peshawar with breathing problems, was put on ventilator but succumbed to Corona Virus. There is no cause bigger than serving the Nation, an army spokesman tweeted.

Also, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) extended a ban on the domestic flights until May 13 as part of the government's instructions to minimize travelling of people. The earlier ban ended on May 10.

Minister for Information Shibli Faraz launched a campaign "Masks for All" as part of the government's measures to contain COVID-19. He said that five million free masks will be distributed across the country.

Separately, Special Assistance on Security Dr Moeed Yusuf told the media that the government was working hard to bring back all stranded Pakistanis at the earliest.

"We will try to do everything to bring our people back. We currently are trying to bring back 10,000 Pakistanis, most whom will be from Middle Eastern countries, he said.

3 Trains To Depart From New Delhi Station On Tuesday As Railways Resumes Passenger Services

NEW DELHI: As the Indian Railways resumes its passenger services on Tuesday, the first train chugging out of New Delhi at 4pm for Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh will mark the end of the national transporter's longest absence from its regular services in its 167-year-old history.

The New Delhi railway station, in the heart of the city, will see the departure of three special

trains for Dibrugarh, Bengaluru and Bilaspur on Tuesday, around 50 days after a nationwide lockdown caused suspension of all passenger train services.

The same day, five other trains bound for Delhi will leave from Patna, Bengaluru, Howrah, Mumbai and Ahmedabad, the railways said.

While its regular passenger services were stopped, several Sh-

ramik Special trains have run over the last week to transport thousands of migrant workers to their home states. Northern Railways said in a statement that entry to New Delhi station will be allowed only from Paharganj side for all confirmed ticket holders and no entry for passengers will be permitted from the Ajmeri Gate side. For now, the railways has issued a timetable for trains to be run be-

tween May 12 and May 20. These trains will have only AC classes i.e. first, second and third AC. The fare structure will be as applicable for the Rajdhani trains (excluding catering charges). On May 13, eight trains will depart from the national capital for Howrah, Rajendra Nagar, Jammu Tawi, Thiruvananthapuram, Chennai, Ranchi, Mumbai Central and Ahmedabad. Another train will leave Bhubaneswar for New Delhi.

Govt Issues Data Processing Rules For Aarogya Setu; Violators May Face Jail Term

NEW DELHI: The government on Monday issued a set of guidelines for processing of data collected through Aarogya Setu app that bar storage of data for more than six months and specify jail term for violators of certain rules.

Amid concerns expressed in certain quarters about data privacy of people who use the app, the guidelines provide an option to individuals to seek de-

letion of their data from the record within 30 days of making such a request while a senior government official asserted that "privacy is an important aspect of Aarogya Setu".

"Lot of work has been done over data privacy. A good privacy policy has been made to ensure that personal data of people are not misused," Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) Secretary Ajay Prakash Sawh-

ney told reporters.

"We provide these information to check an area from becoming a hotspot. Privacy is an important aspect of Aarogya Setu," he said.

The fresh guidelines allow collection of only demographic, contact, self assessment and location data of persons infected by the coronavirus or those who come in contact with the infected person

SC Refuses To Restore 4G Internet In J&K

Jammu & Kashmir administration, to take a call on the issue. With this direction, the court disposed of a batch of petitions challenging the imposition of restrictions on internet in Kashmir, legal news website Barandbench.com reported.

While passing its order, The Bench of Justices NV Ramana, Subhash Reddy and BR Gavai expressed a need to ensure balance between national security as well as human rights of people in the region.

The petitioners had submitted that the slow internet speed in Kashmir, as opposed to 4G speed available in the rest of the country, hampered the "Right to education" and "Right to healthcare" amid raging coronavirus pandemic in the region.

During the hearing, the government cited grounds of national security for the move to snap 4G internet in Kashmir.

NGO 'Foundation For Media' Professionals had filed a PIL seeking restoration of 4G services in Jammu & Kashmir and later the Private Schools Association of Jammu & Kashmir, an umbrella body of over 2,200 private schools across the region, challenged a series of government orders passed since January 18, 2020, restricting internet speed in Kashmir.

Another plea by Advocate Soayib Qureshi arguing as petitioner-in-person stated that if security is an issue, then social media sites can be restricted.

On April 27 this year, the Jammu & Kashmir administration had notified that presently prevailing internet access restrictions will continue to remain in force until May 11.

On April 30, the J&K administration had told Supreme Court that right to internet access is not a fundamental right and the state can curtail the freedom of speech and right to trade through internet.

The administration opposed the restoration of 4G services, saying a very reasonable quantum of restrictions have been imposed by reducing the speed of internet to protect the sovereignty, integrity and security of the country.

However, Senior Advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, arguing for Foundation for Media Professionals, asserted that the 2G internet speed was infringing upon the Right to Healthcare of citizens and was leaving doctors without access to technology needed to combat COVID-19. He said, "In J&K, as on today there are 701 COVID-19 cases and 8 deaths. When this petition was filed there were about 33 cases. Today it has escalated. 4G restriction has led to problems being faced by doctors who cannot access information about COVID treatment which is extremely necessary. Almost 75 doctors have also made a representation to the J&K govt flagging the same concerns".

In its reply to the petitions seeking faster internet connectivity, the government had replied stating that the "Right to access internet is not a fundamental right" and that the "Right to carry on trade and profession through internet can be curtailed."

Senior Advocate Ahmadi contended that students from J&K have to compete with students from across the country but could not do so, as "video conferencing was useless for them."

Senior Advocate Salman Khurshid, appearing for one of the petitioners, had argued that private schools are under government directions to provide education via video-conferencing. "We have an obligation under Right to education to provide education," said Khurshid.

However, the J&K government argued that the primary concern on which the internet speed restrictions were put in place was security. Attorney General KK Venugopal submitted that a faster internet speed like that of 4G would give the enemy information even about the "troop movements."

Low Speed Internet Restored After 5 Days...

split the state into two Union Territories.

Last Wednesday, mobile 2G internet and short messaging services (SMS) were suspended amid fears of widespread protests over the killing of Naikoo in a gunfight in his native Beighpora village of Avantipora.

The authorities had also cut-off cellular services, barring state-run BSNL amid fears of protests over Naikoo's killing.

PM Discusses Covid-19, Economic Activities ...

with Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, state chief secretaries told him that "while protection is required from COVID-19, economic activities also need to be stepped up in a calibrated manner", according to an official statement.

With thousands of migrant workers taking special trains to go back to their home states, the restarting of industrial activities will prove to be a challenge for states though several relaxations have been made in labour laws to increase factory output.

The meet is also likely to discuss efforts to convert 'red' zones with high COVID-19 case load into 'orange' or 'green' zones.

The prime minister interacted with the chief ministers last on April 27. Days after the meeting, the central government had extended the lockdown by two more weeks till May 17 to arrest the spread of the virus, but gave several relaxations in economic activities and movement of people.

The nationwide lockdown has been in force since March 25 to contain the spread of the virus, which has killed more than 2200 people, and afflicted more than 67,000 in the country.

18 More Test Positive, 44 Recover; J&K Tally ...

Of the total number of cases reported so far, 802 are from Kashmir and 77 from Jammu. Ten people (nine in Kashmir and one in Jammu) have died and 427 patients (372 from Kashmir and 55 from Jammu) have recovered. The number of active cases stands at 442 (421 in Kashmir and 21 in Jammu).

More than 95,000 people have been kept under surveillance including those who are either in government established quarantine facilities or in home isolation.

Meanwhile, the media bulletin issued by the government today said that 50455 samples out of 51334 have tested as negative till today.

The bulletin also carried an advisory informing people that stigma around COVID-19 can discourage people to take necessary steps to fight the virus.

"Break the stigma; Encourage patients to come forward for COVID-19 testing if they develop symptoms, as early detection of COVID-19 can prevent the spread of disease. Not disclosing symptoms like fever, cough and difficulty in breathing could put life of individuals and their families at risk. In case of symptoms report early and do not fear, call COVID-19 helpline numbers and seek medical advice," the advisory read.

Dispatch from Dubai: 'I'm Pregnant, Have an ...

of situation in the world.

Sensing the emergency, many expat Kashmiris have come to the rescue of their stranded brethren, numbered over 800, in Dubai.

They include elderly, kids, pregnant women and other patients suffering from different ailments including mental health issues and people losing their spouses to Covid-19.

"The number of people is increasing day by day," said one Kashmiri Samaritan working for evacuation plan for these stranded people.

"A lot of them need medical assistance urgently. There're pregnant ladies, unemployed people who have no money left, and are fighting their way out to live in one of the expensive countries."

These helpless people have pleaded with New Delhi to evacuate them from Dubai and other parts of the UAE and grant them with a direct flight to Srinagar.

But the Indian government officials, they say, have not made any statement or contacted them yet.

"I was informed by the Indian Consulate in Dubai that travel will be facilitated only up to New Delhi," Shakeel Ahmad, a representative of stranded Kashmiris, told Kashmir Observer.

"We fear that incoming Kashmiris will be quarantined in an 'unfavourable' atmosphere there and that would be beyond the patience of elders and pregnant women."

Moreover, he said, the high temperature in Delhi is an additional problem for many.

"These stranded Kashmiris should be airlifted directly to Srinagar after which they will voluntarily put themselves before authorities for medical formalities," Shakeel said.

Another welfare worker told Kashmir Observer that if the Indian government won't prioritize the issue despite approaching Indian Consulate in Dubai then these stranded Kashmiris will be forced to contact media in UAE about "this seemingly deliberate delay".

"Jammu and Kashmir administration doesn't seem to take any concrete steps so far," he said. "It's a matter of two or three flights only that could be operated from Dubai to Srinagar directly."

But as the official help remains elusive till date, most of these Kashmiris are becoming hopeless and losing their mental calm in the state of protracted lockdown away from the home.

Jamia Sends Stranded Hostellers Back To J&K...

to send them back to their homes in their respective states, it said.

Meanwhile, boarders of the girls and boys hostels wrote to the vice-chancellor stating it is impossible to vacate the hostels at this time with their belongings. They urged the administration to reconsider its decision asking the students to vacate their hostel rooms.

Admin Orders Strict Action Against Red Zone Violators

relevant guidelines.

"He issued instructions for strict adherence to guidelines and restrictions put in place in the area for containment of the disease and strict action against violators," the official spokesperson added.

Pertinently, the area has been notified as a Covid-19 containment zone after a positive case – who is a contact of another positive case who has since died from the disease – was reported there from.

Meanwhile the district administration has appealed to the residents of the surrounding areas in particular and the people in general to beware of risks and report to the administration instances of violations and assist the administration in its efforts to contain spread of COVID-19 in the district.

Recovered Covid-19 Patients Face Social ...

in the wake of the lockdown. My kids are asking many questions... I don't have answers, he said.

Such incidents have left recovered COVID patients frustrated as they are unable to carry out routine activities.

The plight of these patients has prompted Dr Naveed Nazir Shah, who is heading the COVID-19 hospital at Dalgate, to issue an appeal to the people not to discriminate against those who have recovered.

Unfortunately that the recovered COVID patients are being stigmatised by society and denied basic amenities. Please treat them as normal, Shah said in a tweet.

Kashmiri Doctor At AIIMS Takes 'Highest Covid-19...

May 8. When Majeed reached the ambulance, he noted difficulty in ventilating the patient and suspected accidental intubation'.

"I immediately decided to re-intubate. Owing to poor visibility through the PPE inside the ambulance, I decided to remove the goggles and face shield, and then re-intubated the patient as any delay would have led to imminent death of the patient," he said.

Majeed did not think twice before taking full-blown aerosol

exposure from the patient and got exposed to the highest possible viral load just to deliver his duty, Rajkumar said.

It is important that the people of this country understand that we have a common enemy in COVID-19 and we have to be united against the enemy and not fight among ourselves. Have empathy for patients, fellow workers, health care providers and every living being around you, the official said.

"Zahid Abdul Majeed has been a compassionate doctor dedicated to his work. The RDA AIIMS appreciates the dedication of all residents who have stood in solidarity in the fight against the virus in spite of shortcomings and less than ideal work conditions all over the country.

Senior doctors should appreciate their work and keep their morale high, take their feedback seriously and improve the working conditions," Rajkumar added.

Stranded Kashmiris Start Home Journey...

meant to prevent the spread of COVID-19," the official hand-out said.

The statement further reads that yesterday evening, another train, this time from Goa, left for J&K carrying persons, who had been unable to move from Goa since the lockdown began on 3rd March, 2020.

"Prior to boarding, the necessary screening was conducted as per the SOP. The train will take about 36 hours to reach Udhampur".

Similarly, 37 stranded persons including 11 students also left Monday morning from Agra towards J&K.

Migrants Workers Advised Not To Visit Hospitals...

unless advised by authorities.

"The stranded labourers have been advised to ensure that they are registered with the concerned Labour department," Pole said.

Regarding return to their respective destinations, the Divisional Commissioner's statement said that the labourers shall be informed about the date of their travel and medical checkup asking them to stay put at their current places till arrangements are finalized for their return to their native areas.

Shooting Stones Block Kashmir Highway...

near Ramban town around 9 am, forcing the authorities to halt trucks carrying essential commodities to the valley, the officials said.

They said more than 300 trucks and fuel tankers were left stranded between Ramban and Nashri tunnel due to the closure of the road.

However, light motor vehicles were allowed to move through a diversion, they said.

The officials said there was no let up in the shooting of stones and once the area is cleared, the stranded traffic would be restored.

CRPF Officer Shoots Self...

hospital by his colleagues where the doctors declared him brought dead.

Burglar Held In Baramulla..

Umar Mohiudin Najar of Bagh-e-Islam locality of the town. Meanwhile, police said that a case FIR No 50/2029 has been registered and further investigations started in this regard.

Lightening Strike Kills Soldier

in this regard, GNS reported.

Authorities In Baramulla Intensify Crackdown

50 Shops Sealed, 77 Vehicles Seized, 255 Arrested

BARAMULLA: With an aim to implement strict lockdown in order to control the spread of COVID-19 infection, Authorities in Baramulla have intensified the crackdown on all such elements who indulge in lockdown violations. District administration has scaled up anti-corona activities by mobilizing the available human resource and efforts are being made to keep public convenience especially facilitating the essential commodities under such circumstances on priority.

Deputy Commissioner Baramulla Dr G N Itoo, himself acts vigorously and conducted an array of inspections to several areas viz Sopore, Sangrama, Pattan etc besides checking the authenticity of movement passes on National Highway. According to DC, so far about 50 shops have been sealed, 77 vehicles have been seized among other strict initiatives that were taken in this regard. DC also said that 255 persons were arrested and 89 FIRs have been registered against the lockdown violators. Moreover, DC



File Pic

said that 125 Magistrates have been deployed for ensuring strict implementation of lockdown

and random checking is being done with regard to the movement of vehicles/persons.

Dr Itoo further said that lockdown was even implemented in villages where the services of PRLs was

utilized. "Drone Cameras have also been used to monitor the implementation of lockdown in vulnerable areas like Old Town Baramulla, Tangmarg and Uri", the DC added.

Regarding the hassle free supply of essential commodities amid lockdown, DC said that administration has formulated a viable mechanism wherein commodities including rice, atta, LPG and other vital items were delivered at peoples doorsteps. "In some areas, specific delivery points have been formed where the distribution of such items was made keeping in consideration the social distancing and other related norms", said Dr Itoo. He also added that certain relaxations have been given in some sectors which include medical emergencies, medical staff, agriculture and horticulture activities, poultry and telecom services. DC further said that use of face masks was made compulsory and any person found violating the order shall be imposed with fine or imprisonment.

Div Com Reviews Status Of Smart City Project

SRINAGAR:- Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, P.K Pole today reviewed the status of Srinagar Smart City Project here at a meeting of senior officers of concerned departments.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, VC SDA, Commissioner SMC, Director Urban Local Bodies, VC LAWDA, Chief Engineer, PWD, Kashmir, RTO Kashmir, SSP Traffic City, Chief Town Planner, Representatives of INTACH and other concerned.

The Deputy Commissioner apprised the Div Com that all the components have been incorporated in the draft Smart City proposal and new suggestions have also been incorporated in the project to make the Srinagar city more attractive. He informed that special focus has

been laid on the Smart components which will encourage consistency in urban design and signage, while recognizing the importance of the existing heritage and historical architecture besides the distinctive character within the community.

During the meeting threadbare deliberations were held to discuss various components of smart city project including Urban Mobility, Urban Environment, Disaster Management, Intelligent Traffic Management, Cycle Tracks, Smart Poles, Smart Bus Stops, Car Parking, Smart Waste Management, Flood Mitigation, Earthquake Resilience, Smart Fire Protection, Emergency Response, Non-Polluting Public Transport, Urban Design Moves and other components in detail through PowerPoint

presentations.

The meeting was also informed that a web portal is being developed for smart utility management and command control system for all utilities on a single platform. It was informed that there is need of Project Management Consultants for smart city project.

The Divisional Commissioner directed concerned officers to keep ambit of project for longer horizon and expedite work in a time bound manner so that tangible results are achieved on ground. He also asked the concerned departments to work in unison with more zeal and dedication for completion of Smart City Project to make Srinagar a model city. He also stressed on the identifying spots for car parking to overcome the problem of traffic jamming.

Samoon Urges Pvt Schools To Defer Fee Collection During Pandemic

SRINAGAR: Principal Secretary, Education and Transport Department, Dr Asgar Hassan Samoon today urged the private schools to defer the fee collection from the students during COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Samoon said that government has taken various measures to help students to continue their study during COVID-19 pandemic. He said education is also being provided to students through Television, Radio and Internet and added that teachers are volunteering to teach students through virtual and other media. Samoon also said the Mid-Day meals are provided to students at their homes in all the twenty districts of UT, to keep them safe and healthy. He said government will provide financial assistance to

the poor students so that they don't suffer during the pandemic.

Samoon said the school infrastructure, smart classes are being developed and teachers are being provided training. Meanwhile, Dr Samoon also said fumigation process was conducted in Civil Secretariat Srinagar in order to contain the spread of COVID-19 disease. He said the sanitization is being held on routine basis and all the precautionary measures have been put in place at the secretariat. Earlier, Srinagar Municipal Commissioner Srinagar informed the Principal Secretary about the sanitization campaign being done by the SMC.

He directed SMC commissioner to fumigate the education institutions and school toilets within the Srinagar municipality.

Hazratbal Fire Incident 6 Families Shifted To Govt Building

SRINAGAR: Following an incident of fire breaking out before dawn today at Hazratbal area the Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary visited the affected families to console them and assess the damage from the tragic incident. It is notable that 5 houses were damaged and a total of 10 families affected in the fire incident at the area. The DC spent a fair amount of time with the affected families during his visit to them and also took a firsthand assessment of the damage that this tragic incident had caused. He was informed that two houses were completely damaged whereas the remaining three houses as af-

fected had partial damages from the fire incident. Dr Shahid authorised an ex gratia of 15 lakh rupees for the affected families and also instructed for immediate provision of other relief requirements.

On his instructions 6 affected families whose houses were completely damaged in the fire incident were shifted to a government building where power and water supplies were reinforced and made available instantly. The affected families were also provided with household items like kitchen utensils and bedding as well items of food like rice and wheat. The families were assured that further assistance as possible will be extended to them from the district administration.

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

- 1328 - Holy Roman Emperor Louis IV and assembly of priests select Pietro Rainalducc as anti-Pope Nicolaas V
- 1328 - Antipope Nicholas V, a claimant to the papacy, is consecrated in Rome by the Bishop of Venice
- 1459 - Sun City in India founded by Rao Jodhpur
- 1525 - Battle at Biblingen: Zwabische Union beats rebel Wurttemberg farmers
- 1534 - German Duchy of Wurttemberg becomes Lutheran under Ulrich, Duke of Württemberg
- 1551 - San Marcos University in Lima, Peru, opens
- 1588 - Catholic League under duke Henri de Guise occupies Paris
- 1588 - Catholic League under duke Henri de Guise occupies Paris
- 1604 - Spanish garrison of Aardenburg surrenders to Mauritius
- 1640 - Uprising against Spanish king Philip IV
- 1689 - England & Netherlands form League of Augsburg
- 1777 - 1st ice cream advertisement (Philip Lenzi-NY Gazette)
- 1780 - British troops occupy Charleston, South Carolina (Revolutionary War)
- 1797 - First Coalition: Napoleon I of France conquers Venice.
- 1821 - The first major battle of the Greek War of Independence against the Turks occurs in Valtetsi.
- 1862 - Federal troops occupies Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- 1863 - Battle of Raymond, Mississippi
- 1864 - Battle of Drewry's Bluff, fought in Chesterfield County, Virginia (Peninsula Campaign), Confederate victory (US Civil War)
- 1864 - Battle of Spotsylvania, fought near Courthouse, Virginia (Overland Campaign), inconclusive result (US Civil War)
- 1864 - Battle of Todd's Tavern, cavalry battle fought near Todds Tavern, Virginia (Sheridan's Raid), inconclusive result (US Civil War)
- 1881 - Treaty of Bardo, Tunisia becomes a French
- 1890 - The first-ever official cricket County Championship match begins. Yorkshire beats Gloucestershire by eight wickets at Bristol.
- 1908 - Wireless Radio Broadcasting is patented by Nathan B Stubblefield
- 1925 - Uzbekistan & Kirgizistan become autonomous Soviet republics
- 1928 - Benito Mussolini ends women's rights in Italy
- 1940 - Nazi blitzkrieg conquest of France began by crossing Muese River
- 1941 - British forces march into Alexandria
- 1941 - Konrad Zuse presents the Z3, the world's first working programmable, fully automatic computer, in Berlin.
- 1942 - Russia occupies Crackow, until Aug 23, 1943
- 1943 - Axis forces in North Africa surrender
- 1943 - German troops in Tunisia North Africa surrender
- 1965 - Israel & West Germany exchange letters beginning diplomatic relations
- 1991 - A new cancer drug is announced which can only be found in bark of a rare tree in the Pacific Northwest



PRAYERS

FAJR
3: 57
ZUHR
12: 27
ASR
5:20
MAGRIB
7:26
ISHA
8:59

I&CC Clears Rs 127.62 Cr Ca Store Projects

SRINAGAR: In order to give fillip to the post harvesting facilities of horticulture produce in Kashmir, the Divisional Level Single Window Clearance Committee (DLSWCC) today cleared three Controlled Atmosphere Cold Storage projects worth Rs 106.62 crore.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Director Industries & Commerce, Kashmir, Mehmood A Shah whileas General Manager, DIC, Srinagar, General Manager, DIC, Pulwama, General Manager, DIC, Shopian, S.E. PDD and representatives of Pollution Control Board were also present in the meeting.

Besides, the meeting also cleared a project of Rs 21.00 crore of Hotel & Restaurant services of M/S Venos Continental Sanat Nagar coming up in unorganized sector.

The projects which were cleared also include M/S Crop Care Integrated Cold Chain Pvt. Ltd at Industrial Estate Shopian spread over 20 kanals of land having total project cost of Rs 38.33 crore; M/S Hamdan Agro Industries Pvt. Ltd. on 10 kanals of land having total project cost of Rs 31.90 crore and M/S Ambour Cold Chain & Food Processing CA Cold Storage on 15 kanals of land at Agthar, Shopian having total project cost of Rs. 36.39 crore.

These projects will provide employment opportunity to 162 skilled and unskilled youth of the area.

The meeting was informed that the establishment of these new CA units will open new era of opportunities to the apple growers of Kashmir. It was given out in the meeting that the facility of controlled atmosphere stores is being opted as a frontline choice in the Valley with many entrepreneurs coming forward for establishment of the same.

The meeting was also informed that more such proposals are in pipeline and storage capacities are expected to reach about 2 lakh metric tonnes.

Government Of Jammu And Kashmir J&K Service Selection Board

Sehkari Bhawan, Rail Head Jammu

(www.jkssb.nic.in)

Final Notice

The Board issued selection list of the candidates for the post of "Assistant Motor Vehicle Inspector" (Department of Disaster Management, Relief and Rehabilitation Reconstruction) Under Hon'ble Prime Minister's Special Package Item No. 021 (04 of 2017, Divisional Cadre Kashmir, for Kashmiri Migrants and was forwarded to the indenting Department vide letter No. SSB/Secy/Sel/01/(M)/2020/1006-12 dated 27.01.2020, for favour of further course of action.

The selection of below mentioned candidate was kept withheld at S.No. 06 under OM category for want certain clarifications. The office has received an undertaking in the shape of an affidavit duly signed by the **Judicial Magistrate 1st Class**, wherein it is mentioned that the said candidate has already joined the post of Mechanic in the State Motor Garage and not willing to join for the post of "Assistant Motor Vehicle Inspector."

| Name of the candidate with Parentage | category | Item No. |
|---|----------|----------|
| Rakesh Bhat S/o Avtar Krishan Bhat R/o Flat No. 18, Lane No. 08, Block No. 39, Jagti Town Ship Government Middle School Jagti Town Ship-181221, Jammu | OSC-1 | 153 |

The above said candidate has not submitted the requisite documents till date and hence the recommendation has not been cleared by the Board.

In view of the above position, the above said candidate is hereby given the Final Opportunity to submit the relevant papers in Central Office of JKSSB 2nd Floor, Sehkar Bhawan, Rail Head Complex, Jammu with in week's time for the date of issuance of the notice failing which his selection/recommendation against the post of "Assistant Motor Vehicle Inspector" Divisional Cadre Kashmir shall stand cancelled without further notice.

No: SSB/Secy/Sel/01/2020/3064-67

DIPK-646/20

(Ranjeet Singh) KAS, Secretary
J&K Service Selection Board Jammu

Prof Ramshoo Is New Dean Research KU

SRINAGAR: Professor Shakil Ahmad Ramshoo Department of Earth Sciences has been appointed as new Dean Research of Kashmir University.

As per an order issued by the Kashmir University, Zaffar Ahmad Department of Botany shall complete his term of three years as Dean Research. "Professor Shakil Ahmad

Ramshoo Department of Earth Sciences has been nominated by vice chancellor to function as Dean Research for a period of three years from May 13, 2020," the order reads.

Professor Ramshoo has research interests including in Hydrology, Glaciology, Geoinformatics and Climate Change. Similarly Professor Bashir

Ahmad Khan, Department of History has been appointed as Dean School of Social Sciences for a period of three years.

While Professor Shamim Ahmad Shah Department of Geography and Regional Development has been appointed as Dean School of Earth and Environmental Science for a period of three years.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION SHOPIAN

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CANCELLATION - NOTICE

It is notified for the information of all concerned that due to Administrative reasons, all the works advertised vide this office NIT No: 04/212-22/SPN/RnB/ e-Tendering/2020-21 Dated:- 22/04/2020 are hereby cancelled.

No: NIT/481-86
Dt: 08-05-2020

DIPK-643/20

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Man Hangs Self To Death In South Kashmir

SRINAGAR : A 26-year-old man allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself at his house in Koketnag area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district on Tuesday afternoon.

Reports said, a 26 year old man identified as Fayaz Ahamd Tantary son of Abdul Salam Tantary of Watnard, by professional a shopkeeper ended his life by hanging self at his home this afternoon. The family members of the man after spotting his hanging immediately rushed him to nearby hospital where doctors declared him brought dead on arrival reports added. Meanwhile a police officer also confirmed this incident to news agency and said a case under 174 Crpc has been registered to ascertain the cause of death.

From KO Archives

Bloody Start To May, 52 Dead In First Week

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR - New spurt in militant violence has left at least 52 people dead in the first week of May. The dead include lop militant commanders and a senior Army officer. Scores of people mostly civilian pedestrians were wounded during the week in various grenade attacks across the strife-torn state. A total of 33 militants, 11 security personnel and 8 civilians were killed in the week that saw a string of militant attacks in the Valley. A large cache of arms and ammunition was also seized. Atequallah Shah, Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's nephew, became the first victim of the week when he was fired upon by militants at Bijbehara in south Kashmir district of Anantnag on May one. Militants killed Mohammad Ramzan Mian, the Chairman of the Pattan Municipal Committee, and another politician Jabbar Khanday at Doru in Anantnag on May 3. Same day troops gunned down six top Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants, including four Pakistani nationals, in a six-hour-long gun battle near the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu region. With this, about 22 infiltrators had been killed by the Army and the Border Security Force (BSF) during the past two weeks in the state On May 4, Security forces achieved a major success when it killed 14 commanders of the Hizbul Mujahideen militants in a fierce encounter at Lawaypora in north Kashmir's Bandipora area. The gunfight erupted after security forces cordoned off the village where a meeting of Battalion and Company commanders of the Hizb was going on. Five houses were also damaged in the fierce gun-battle. Two minor girls were killed in a militant attack at a marriage party at Lohad Malah in Jammu's Udhampur district on May 5. On May 6, four militants and a soldier were killed in the Jammu region. The week was capped with the killing of senior Army officer, Major Salman Khan - by militants at Papipora in Trehgam of border district of Kupwara. There has also been a spurt in the militant violence since the launch of the bus service between the divided Kashmir after nearly 58 years. According to reports, more than 145 people, including 111 militants have been killed in different incidents across the Kashmir valley since the bus service was inaugurated on April 7,

(Kashmir Observer, 12 May, 2005)

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Without Even 2G Now

It is now a week since ordinary Kashmiris are once again without mobile internet. And this time the service has been denied in the midst of a pandemic without any thought about the havoc it could wreak on the efforts to counter the spread of Coronavirus. The fresh communication gag was imposed on May 6 when the Hizbul Mujahideen operational chief Riyaz Naikoo was killed. It momentarily disrupted the entire effort to control the Covid-19 that starts with tracing the virus suspects, quarantining them at a government facility and ends with testing them for the infection. And once the test of any quarantined person turns positive, he is moved to an isolation ward at a hospital where he is also asked about the people he might have come into contact in recent past. Thereafter the process begins anew.

Much of this exercise depends on contacting people on phone. For the three days after Naikoo's killing it was not possible to do so. Even though the phones have since been restored, the government seems in no mood to budge. The snapping of mobile internet, the administration has explained is "a precautionary measure" and will remain in force till the situation shows a visible improvement. Later Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Vijay Kumar also told media that the restrictions on the communication was important to maintain law and order. But at the same time, he added, that the protests and stone pelting over Naikoo's killing was "a localised affair" as it was limited to the areas around the site of encounter. Situation since has only gotten better by the day. In fact, it is now largely peaceful. This should have persuaded the government to restore the internet but this doesn't appear to be the case.

It is ironical that just when the people were looking forward to restoration of 4G, the administration has even denied them 2G. Sadly enough, the Supreme Court on Monday refused to restore 4G internet in Kashmir and instead directed the centre to form a special committee to examine the petitioners' demands. The special committee will comprise of the secretaries from the ministry of home affairs and the ministry of communications as well as the chief secretary of J&K. The court said it has to ensure that the national security and the human rights are balanced. "We do recognise that the union territory has plunged into crisis. At the same time the court is cognizant to the concerns relating to pandemic and hardships", the court said. It is now effectively up to the government to decide when to restore 4G. And considering the way the government has gone about it over the past nine months, it is unlikely that the 4G will be restored in near future. Least that the government can do, however, is to open up 2G service.

OTHER OPINION

Reform For Labour

That the archaic labour laws in India need to be amended is beyond debate. They have protected only a tiny section of the labour force, facilitated rent-seeking, and have laid the ground for the casualisation of the labour force, the phenomenon of the missing middle in manufacturing, and the substitution of capital for labour in a capital deficient and labour abundant economy. Rationalising labour laws has been on the policy agenda for decades. Yet, labour reform hasn't taken off because the debate has been framed in terms of empowering the management while curbing the rights of labour, as is evident from industry's often-demanded concession of the power to fire workers without seeking government permission. But now, a number of states have embarked on this politically contentious course again. While efforts to reform labour laws should be encouraged, coming at a time of acute economic distress and labour insecurity, in a crisis that has exposed the lack of safety nets and the limited access of workers to healthcare, they must keep the concerns of labour at the centre.

Initiatives taken by states such as Madhya Pradesh — which aim to reduce the frequency of inspections, ease the registration and licensing process, and enhance the thresholds of when the regulatory architecture kicks in — are steps in the right direction. As is the introduction of fixed-term employment to help companies sidestep the contractor system. But, removing firms' obligation to comply with provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act constitutes blatant disregard for workers' rights. To be sure, certain parts of the Act which deal with the hiring and firing of workers have rightly been seen as impediments to flexible labour markets. Yet, instead of rationalising or doing away with some chapters, giving firms a free pass over complying with the Act strips workers of any degree of protection or redressal mechanisms. It further reduces the bargaining power of labour, their right to negotiate. While fixed-term employment is a welcome half-step, states should ensure that these contract workers receive social security benefits similar to permanent workers, as is the case under the Centre's model law. If regulations designed to support labour are suspended, it can effectively remove the distinction between permanent and contractual workers. Such moves could trigger a race to the bottom. They also raise questions over the architecture of the labour market of the future. Will this temporary reprieve to industry translate to long-term benefits? Why not increase the number of shifts as opposed to increasing the hours of work?

Any shortsighted move now will only end up increasing workers' vulnerabilities at a time of acute distress, when unemployment is likely to be at all-time highs, and when the national consensus is veering towards providing labourers safety nets. Labour reform for long has framed labour as an adversary, now may be the moment to see it through their prism — this is the only way to make enduring progress.

(The Indian Express)

Lockdown! Some Questions Remain

Emran Khan

There is a psychological impact of lockdown too as normal routine is disrupted. Who wants to be locked, be it at home or outside. People do want things to get back to normal as soon as possible. In such a situation should we continue with a strict lockdown like the one we see in Kashmir? Or should we brainstorm for a smart lockdown?



KO- Photo by abid Bhat

It was evening hours. Sun was about to set. People were preparing for Iftar. My neighbour Gulam Mohammad opened his shop to sell Iftari items like semolina (suji), sugar, basil seeds, juice, fruits etc. There were not many people at his shop. Suddenly a police jeep on petrol duty came, caught hold of the elderly poor shopkeeper, thrashed him and ransacked his merchandise. Not only that they threw juice crates on the road and then ran their jeep over them. A scene that should send chills down ones spine. The incident took place on International Labour Day and irony just died a thousand deaths.

Imagine even on international Labour Day, labour has become a crime. This is the new norm of this lawless land. St. Augustine has said "An unjust law is no law at all". One may also ask should laws be seen in absolute black and white?

Many incidents of police high-handedness have surfaced since curfew disguised as lockdown was announced and yes many people have been caught violating administrative orders and neglecting precautionary measures. However some questions do remain there. Being locked and down is not that simple. Orders from the government and then their absolute implementations have consequences, far beyond pandemic. First, for poor people, how life looks like for them in this lockdown? How are they managing their daily life? And how long can they survive without work? What has been the condition of stranded labourers? What made certain stranded workers to travel in a cement mixer?

Second aspect to this lockdown is the extraordinary powers state machinery, specifically the police enjoys, and the manner in which lockdown is implemented. Why many, though not all, in the administration have become so arrogant in these tough times? Have certain institutions inherited colonial approach or is it in their genes? Aren't we living in a democracy under rule of law? Don't we have any rights as obedient taxpayers? What about a life of dignity?

Then there is the psychological impact of lockdown. Normal routine has been disrupted. Who wants to be locked, be it at home or outside. People do want things to get back to normal as soon as possible. In such a situation should we continue with a strict lockdown like the one we see in Kashmir? Or should we brainstorm for a smart lockdown?

Another aspect to it is that in view of the so called lockdown, how should violators be dealt with? Should violators be beaten to pulp? Should they be humiliated and then videos of such humiliations be posted on social media? Or should they be dealt as per law? Like fined or booked as per law. Under what law did police ransack my neighbourhood grocery store? Should my raising of these questions be also seen as a crime? When shall I be booked or intimidated? Should I be deemed as anti-national or seen as provoking people and threatening law and order? Or should it be seen just a citizens concern for the rule of law and not for institutional despotism. As it is said "absolute power corrupts and corrupts absolutely". No in-

stitution in democratic setup should be considered above law.

I am aware that the lockdown has been ordered for saving human lives. But if politicians and administrative officers are so concerned about human lives then questions do arise over the budget allocated to health and medical research over these years. Like in Kashmir how many ventilators are there in hospitals? In past have we done enough to improve our health infrastructure? Or has it been business as usual? Interestingly in times of pandemic like Covid-19 why are political agendas and contentious policies being advanced? Was new domicile law for Kashmir so badly needed that rulers did not even wait for pandemic to subside?

Society should be based on rights of citizens and rule of law. We do have certain rights, human and fundamental rights. Those rights are recognised by the society and should be enforced by the state. We do need checks and balances to prevent lawlessness and keep law enforcing institutions within the limits of law. Not all are violators or criminals and not all want to put lives of others at risk. We are just common people, with simple desire to live happily, without fear and without being subjected to humiliations. If we have right to life, let that be with honour and dignity. After all who wants to live a humiliated life? What about violators? Let all those be dealt and punished but only as per law.

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Kashmir's Spring Of Suffering

Nisar Ahmad Wani

Spring in Kashmir has its own and unique charm and elegance, precisely for its unique geographic positioning and that's what makes it to stand different from the rest of world. Spring comes breaking through the spell of chilly usually dull winter and eventually infuses a new life into everything particularly the plants, vegetation and the physical bearing. It psychologically resonates the signs of hope and cheerfulness among children, young and old. With opening of this season, schools, colleges and universities are thrown open, students yet again get the chance to reunite for schooling and other co-curricular activities which generally stand adjourned during the winters. Trade and other activities are resumed. The usual hustle and bustle of markets starts again.

Principally it marks the commencement of farmers season. Tourists' throng into Kashmir from across world to enjoy the scenic beauty and weather of what is called paradise on earth. Of all the seasons spring season is the most important season of Kashmir particularly it not only brings happiness but throws open the doors for numerous opportunities.

Since the beginning of this year, plenty of snow and rain was on cards and it eventually happened, and therefore, this spring was supposedly going to prove to be most effective season.

One would have anticipated consid-

erable increase in the production level of grains, fruit etc. Our misfortunate had it all, that this year spring broke out with darkness banqueting not only over Kashmir but almost the entire world. The virus that emerged from China has engulfed the world. No one and Kashmiris too were ready and or prepared to face this pandemic, particularly in this peak business and most cherished season. The Covid-19 brought literally everything to halt. It seems as if the time and world around has frozen. In context of Kashmir it devastated the whole natural time table that people would usually follow.

In the backdrop of the developed nations where mortality rate was too high to be even tackled, Kashmir automatically stood nowhere in race of tackling this contagion. Already Kashmir with snails' pace was pulling its legs out of that state enforced lockdown, with no virtual connectivity that this contagion hit us to put us again on the backfoot. The state is in total mess. People are living in the shadows of darkness in each and every aspect. The difficulties in daily lives of people are exponentially increasing. Only God is the last hope to bank on.

Health department of Kashmir was never ready for such lethal contagions, firstly because there is dearth of knowledge in this field and secondly there is absence of modern infrastructure and then you have internet at 2g speed. Even without that, normally our healthcare facilities are insufficient to meet slight crises

that emerge out. We are lacking at well- equipped hospitals, hi-tech labs, ventilators etc. The doctors in Kashmir had forewarned that there is not much in stock that we can protect our people, there is even a shortage of basic equipment's like masks, gloves, PPE kits, sanitizers etc. The government didn't act swiftly and wisely because when Covid-19 was spreading all over the world, the government of the day was busy enforcing laws, organizing summits and eventually passed it off without paying much heed. Despite knowing how contagious this virus can be, yet they did not restore the high speed internet at health care centers for doctors at least, possibly they would have understood via internet the lethality of this virus, and might have geared themselves up with early preparedness. In Kashmir doctors for any sort of negligence are not to be blamed, its administration of the day only. Besides healthcare facilities our economy too was subjected to follow the same suit. Kashmir is somehow is agriculturally dependent, due to coronavirus this sector has been the worst hit, we don't have modern techniques, infrastructure, management, technologies and tools to store our goods with which our resources would be prevented from getting deteriorated and would save our economy from sliding even deeper. Kashmir famous for its scenic beauty attracts the tourist which is really backbone of our economic is also badly affected. Every

years Kashmir's tourism spends a lot of money on the gardens were flowers in abundance are blooming. But this year the flowers will bloom without witnessing tourists which also poses a great threat to our economy. Our education sector is already in ruins particularly after center robbed Kashmir of its semi-autonomy, which resulted in lockdown in which students were worst hit, who couldn't join schools for half a year. All in all, from education to economic sector, Kashmir is the worst hit of all, only some divine help is pumping in some fuel for Kashmir to run. I would like to conclude with requesting the government if they are really concerned to help Kashmiris on the humanitarian ground, please do and put restoration of high-speed internet on priority, so that students can continue their online classes without undue interruptions. Moreover, it will also help Kashmiris to keep trace of happenings around the world vis-à-vis coronavirus, that can also subsequently help doctors to take advantage from the foreign scientists. At last but not least, I would suggest all saner voices around to keep the politics at bay as of now and focus on containing this pandemic. Don't use this virus as a political tool to suppress the people of Kashmir.

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The Viral Storm And Outbreak Control

Umar Majeed

“Detection” involves the development of an early warning system for epidemics such as acute watery diarrhoea, measles, and others using laboratory confirmation, or clinical diagnosis as well as epidemiology to assess if the statistical analysis of the cases meets outbreak standards. “Response” involves confirming the diagnosis, formulating a hypothesis for the source, pathogen, and method of transmission, writing an investigation report, and ultimately, controlling the event by treatment, but moreover, prevention specific to the disease. Lastly, “Evaluation” involves changing public health policies as needed, writing an outbreak report, and assessing the previous steps in de-tail in terms of success and appropriateness.



KO- Photo by Abid Bhat

COVID-19 can be defined as an illness caused by another living agent, or its products, that can be spread from one person to another. An emergency condition can be defined as a state of disarray that has occurred during or after a regional conflict, or a natural disaster (i.e. flood, earthquake, hurricane, drought). Infectious disease during an emergency condition can raise the death rates in comparison to other causes. Many deaths in emergency conditions occur by COVID-19 in few weeks. As of March 12, 2020, Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has been confirmed in 125 048 people worldwide, carrying a mortality of approximately 3-7%, compared with a mortality rate of less than 1% from influenza. Recently the total number of coronavirus cases topped 2.1 million worldwide as many countries, including the United States, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and others continued to report new cases. So far, the world has reported 2,242,868 coronavirus-affected cases and 154,142 deaths. A total of 3,557,493 have recovered from the Covid-19 infection. There is an urgent need for effective treatment. Current focus has been on the development of novel therapeutics, including antivirals and vaccines. Accumulating evidence suggests that a subgroup of patients with severe COVID-19. Of note, there is no dependable performance assessment tool in improving COVID-19 surveillance regarding outbreaks of infectious disease although the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has proposed viable mechanisms for public health in general. We recommend identification and treatment of hyper inflammation using existing, approved therapies with proven safety profiles to address the immediate need to reduce the rising mortality. The emergency department (ED) is the front-line response system in many developed countries and can act as the primary entry method for COVID-19 disease. The prevention of transmission is paramount in keeping the ED a safe environment and limiting spread. Hand hygiene prevents harbouring transient flora by reduction of Viral counts. The recommendation is to use alcohol-based materials such as foam with an alcohol by volume of 60-70%, or if suspected C. difficile, hand washing with vigorous physical manipulation to reduce

the number of spores of pathogens. This must be coupled with Standard Precautions, which involves the use of barriers such as gloves, gowns, masks, and eye wear, in order to prevent infection of the healthcare worker. Other safeguards such as airborne droplet, regular droplet, and contact precautions are necessary to prevent spread of unique vectors. Airborne particles are small (less than or equal to 5 micrometers) and remain in the air for several hours. N95 mask or powered air-purifying respirators are required. Isolation rooms that have high ventilation (several changes in the air system per hour), and negative pressure should also be used. Patients suspected of respiratory infection that does not qualify under airborne should wear a surgical mask, in addition to the provider, and this is usually enough to prevent major spread. If able, a separate room or at least an area blocked by curtains is preferred contact precautions are used for pathogens infecting mucosal or skin surfaces. Use of protective gowns and gloves is usually enough unless suspicion of a higher level of precautions exists. Vaccinating health care personnel against pathogens is highly efficient in decreasing the risk of transmission of many infectious diseases. This is not a replacement for standard precautions, airborne, droplet, contact precautions, or hand hygiene, but is another measure of safety to undertake. COVID-19 Control An epidemic, or outbreak, can occur when several aspects of the agent (pathogen), population (hosts), and the environment create an ideal situation for spread. Infectious agents are plentiful, mutate rapidly, and can become resistant to drugs if not destroyed completely. Low vaccination rates, poor nutrition, age (young and elderly), and immunosuppression all contribute to infectious risk. Overcrowding, poor regional design and hygiene due to poverty, dirty drinking water, rapid climate changes, and natural disasters, can lead to conditions that allow easier transmission of disease. Once it has been established that an emergency condition exists, there must be a prompt and thorough response for COVID-19 control. A camp should be created, and the disease managed rapidly. The overall goals are rapid assessment, prevention, surveillance, outbreak control, and disease management. For more detailed information on the logistics of COVID-19 control,

please view the World Health Organization (WHO) field manual. In addition to the COVID-19 prevention involves, Social distancing, Quarantine, Isolation, sanitation and cleanliness. First social distancing, also called “physical distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice social or physical distancing: Stay at least 6 feet (2 meters) from other people Do not gather in groups Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings Also, keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we must avoid being exposed to this virus and slowing its spread locally and across the country and world. Second, quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Someone in self-quarantine stays separated from others, and they limit movement outside of their home or current place. A person may have been exposed to the virus without knowing it (for example, when traveling or out in the community), or they could have the virus without feeling symptoms. Quarantine helps limit further spread of COVID-19. Third, isolation is used to separate sick people from healthy ones. People who are in isolation should stay home. In the home, anyone sick should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific “sick” bedroom or space and using a different bathroom (if possible). Fourth, cleanliness covers many aspects of what has already been discussed in the emergency room setting. Of note, full bio-hazard precautions should be taken with viral hemorrhagic fevers such as Ebola (to be discussed below). Water must be available for up to seven liters per person per day (in the most extreme situations), and it must be clean. This can rise to 20 liters per person per day if considering bathing as well as cooking. Diseases spread in contaminated water are plentiful, and their evasion is of utmost importance in emergency conditions. Biological quality (less than 10 fecal coliforms per 100 ml of water) is important. Chlorine can be used to disinfect water. Chemical quality is of less importance than biological quality. Areas for excretion should not be near water sources, and they should be maintained

with detail for sanitation. Pits to dispose of the contents should be created. Solid waste should be buried and/or burned. Liquid waste (i.e. bathing) should be diverted into either storm water drains, or if in a dry area, to an isolated, separate pond, for disposal later. Medical waste could be incinerated, preferably near the camp itself, making sure the contents do not travel to other dwellings. Otherwise, they should be buried after being sealed in a metal container. Moreover, the surveillance and early warning systems should be set up in emergency conditions. This involves watching diseases on a continuum, finding trends, and reporting outbreaks earlier rather than later. This is a data collection phase, similar to the rapid assessment phase, but on a larger scale, and primarily involves interpretation of the data collected in order to create an efficient and effective public health response to the threat. Preparation, detection, confirmation, response, and evaluation An epidemic can be defined as outbreaks and vice versa according to the WHO. The first step of “preparation” covers much of what we have already discussed: setting up camp with isolation wards, gathering stockpiles of treatment supplies (medicines, vaccinations, tools), and collecting competent healthcare workers as well as a laboratory. Next, “detection” involves the development of an early warning system for epidemics such as acute watery diarrhoea, measles, and others using laboratory confirmation, or clinical diagnosis as well as epidemiology to assess if the statistical analysis of the cases meets outbreak standards. “Response” involves confirming the diagnosis, formulating a hypothesis for the source, pathogen, and method of transmission, writing an investigation report, and ultimately, controlling the event by treatment, but moreover, prevention specific to the disease. Lastly, “evaluation” involves changing public health policies as needed, writing an outbreak report, and assessing the previous steps in detail in terms of success and appropriateness. Author is a Research Scholar at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He can be reached at: umarseer@gmail.com

Mrinal Pathak

WHEN the European Union delegates arrived in Kashmir Valley earlier this year to gauge the situation by having a ‘symbolic’ Shikara ride in the iconic Dal Lake, a journalist accompanying them walked through lanes of Srinagar to meet one of his college mates, Bilal Ahmed Dar, at the latter’s residence. While returning from Dar’s home, Arvind Mishra, an Indian journalist working with Economic Times, heard a voice coming from inside a house. The voice was of Dar’s cousin, Nafeesa Umar. After a brief introduction, Nafeesa’s words forced Mishra to think of the conversation he had with her, for several nights. The way Nafeesa expressed her agony, in spite of the paucity of time, deeply unsettled the scribe. Mishra has now come up with a short film called, ‘Kya Kashmir Ki Nafeesa Ki Dua Qubool Ho Gayi’ (Has Nafeesa’s wish been fulfilled), to detail the conversation with his friend’s cousin. It features Jasneet Kaur Kant and Sanju Ray as the main lead actors. Nafeesa, living in a curfewed zone, says in a sad voice, “A place where curfew is imposed for last seven months, one cannot even peep out of the window, so forget about going out.” Internet was shut for several months in the region. Even landline services were down for several days. “Everything is shut including schools and offices. How will people survive, what will happen to the

‘Kya Kashmir Ki Nafeesa Ki Dua Qubool Ho Gayi’



sick people?” asks sorrow-stricken Nafeesa. “No one is there to feel for us.” At a time when many Kashmiris are reeling under lockdown depression, disheartened Nafeesa exclaims, “There is no limit to the oppression we are facing and nobody cares.” To Nafeesa, everyone living outside Kashmir is like an onlooker. “We have suffered a lot,” adds Nafeesa, “and are still suffering.” The thing which pains Nafeesa the most is the casual attitude of people living outside Kashmir in this direction. “The thing which pains me most is when someone sitting in peace says, ‘Kashmiris deserve this,’” she continues. Nafeesa says, she never wished misfortune for anyone, but her sole wish to her Almighty is to cause something which locks people inside their homes and forces them to think what’s happening to an ordinary Kashmiri. And now when the entire world is under a lockdown, Nafeesa’s wish apparently has been fulfilled. While penning down his thoughts, Mishra vividly remembers each and every word Nafeesa said during the conversation he had with her. The conversation becomes more relevant in times when the desperation for coming out of their home is pouring out of every ordinary Indian’s soul. During the largest lockdown in the history of mankind, Nafeesa’s words still echo in every household where people justified the curfews imposed in Kashmir, while sitting in their lavish living rooms.



Press Trust of India

International tourism could decline by 60-80 per cent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the revenue loss of USD 910 billion to USD 1.2 trillion and placing millions of livelihoods at risk, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has said.

The global international agency said that the pandemic has caused a 22 per cent fall in international tourist arrivals during the first quarter of 2020.

According to the United Nations specialized agency, the global health crisis could lead to an annual tourism decline between 60 per cent and 80 per cent when compared with the 2019 figures.

"This places millions of livelihoods at risk and threatens to roll back progress made in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," it said.

"The world is facing an unprecedented health and economic crisis. Tourism has been hit hard, with millions of jobs at risk in one of the most labour-intensive sectors of the economy," UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said.

Available data reported by destinations point to a 22 per cent decline in arrivals in the first three months of the year, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. Arrivals in March dropped sharply by 57 per cent following the start of a lockdown in many countries, as well as the widespread introduction of travel restrictions and the closure of airports and national borders. This translates into a loss of 67 million international arrivals and about USD 80 billion in receipts (exports from tourism).

Although Asia and the Pacific shows the highest impact in relative and absolute terms (a decline of 33 million arrivals), the impact in Europe, though lower in percentage, is quite high in volume (-22 million), the agency said.

Prospects for the year have been downgraded several times since the outbreak and uncertainty continues to dominate. Current scenarios point to possible declines in arrivals of 58 per cent to 78 per cent for the year. These depend on the speed of containment and the duration of travel restrictions and shutdown of borders. The agency has given three scenarios for 2020 based on possible dates for the gradual opening up of international borders. According to scenario 1, there could be a decline of 58 per cent in arrivals based on the gradual opening of international borders and easing of travel restrictions in early July.

Scenario 2 could see a 70 per cent decline if international borders are gradually opened and travel restrictions are eased in early September. Scenario 3 states that there could be a 78 per cent decline in arrivals based on the gradual opening of international borders and easing of travel restrictions only in early December.

Under these scenarios, the impact of the loss of demand in international travel could translate into loss of 850 million to 1.1 billion international tourists, loss of USD 910 billion to USD 1.2 trillion in export revenues from tourism and 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk.

"This is by far the worst crisis that international tourism has faced since records began (1950). The impact will be felt to varying degrees in the different global regions and at overlapping times, with Asia and the Pacific expected to rebound first," the agency said. The COVID-19 pandemic, spread across every country on the planet, has so far infected 4.1 million people and killed 282,719 people. The US has been the worst-affected country with 1.3 million confirmed coronavirus cases and nearly 80,000 deaths.

Domestic demand is expected to recover faster than international demand, according to the

UNWTO Panel of Experts survey. The majority expects to see signs of recovery by the final quarter of 2020 but mostly in 2021. Based on previous crises, leisure travel is expected to recover quicker, particularly travel for visiting friends and relatives, than business travel.

The estimates regarding the recovery of international travel is more positive in Africa and the Middle East with most experts foreseeing recovery still in 2020.

Experts in the Americas are the least optimistic and least likely to believe in recovery in 2020, while in Europe and Asia, the outlook is mixed, with half of the experts expecting to see recovery within this year.

Staying Hygienic Cuts Risk Of Common Infections By 50%



Agencies

Researchers have found that improved everyday hygiene practices, such as hand-washing, reduces the risk of common infections by up to 50 per cent, thus reducing the need for antibiotics by up to 30 per cent.

As witnessed during the recent global efforts to delay the spread of COVID-19, hygiene practices, including hand-washing, have become an essential part of everyone's daily routine and are considered to be the first line of defence in reducing the spread of common infections.

"In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic and evidence presented in this study, it is more urgent than ever for policymakers to recognise the role of community hygiene to minimise the spread of infections, which in turn will help in reducing the consumption of antibiotics and help the fight against antimicrobial resistance," said study researcher Jean-Yves Maillard from Cardiff University in the UK.

The study, published in the American Journal of Infection Control, explored the role of targeted hygiene in the home and

everyday life settings to reduce antibiotic prescribing and its likely impact on antibiotic resistance.

It provides evidence that practising hand hygiene in homes and community settings can prevent infections and therefore reduce the need for antibiotics.

One intervention study demonstrated a 30 per cent reduction of antibiotic prescriptions for common respiratory infections in a group who used hand sanitisers compared with a control group.

The study also showed the increasing prevalence of multidrug-resistant bacteria in the home and community.

It is considered that 35 per cent of common infections occurring in healthcare and the community are already resistant to antibiotics and that in some low-and middle-income countries, resistance to antibiotics is as high as 90 per cent.

"With evidence to show that home and community hygiene urgently needs to be taken more seriously, it is time for the global community to collaborate and recognise that reducing the need for antibiotics is important," the researchers noted.

'Couples May Have Less Desire To Conceive During Lockdown'

Press Trust Of India

Lockdowns imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19 may not lead to a rise in birth numbers, according to a study which said over 80 per cent of people surveyed do not plan to conceive during the COVID-19 crisis.

The study, published in the Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology, looked at parenthood desires during the ongoing pandemic crisis using data from 1,482 interviews with people under lockdown, carried out online.

Based on their findings, the scientists, including those from the University of Florence in Italy, said nearly 1,214 (81.9 per cent) of the people did not intend to conceive during the pandemic crisis.

More than 260 participants

who were planning to have a child before the pandemic, but later abandoned the intention, the study noted.

According to the researchers, the main reasons that led people to this decision included worries related to future economic difficulties, and any potential consequences on pregnancy due to the infectious disease.

A questionnaire, carried out in the third week of the lockdown in Italy, surveyed 944 women, and 538 men aged between 18-46 years, and in a stable heterosexual relationship for at least twelve months.

Mental wellbeing during lockdown had an impact on the desire to have a baby, said Elisabetta Micelli, co-author of the study from the Assisted Reproduction Technologies Center in Italy.



"In our study sample, the majority of participants gave significantly higher total scores to their mental well-being before the pandemic, while lowest scores were reported in the answers referred to the COVID-19 period," Micelli said.

Although almost half of the people referred no interruption in their job activity, and

no variations of salaries, the scientists said, over 40 per cent of participants reported a worrying reduction of monthly profits.

Despite most people not wanting to conceive during the pandemic, 60 per cent of the 268 respondents already planning to conceive have carried on in their quest.

About 140 (11.5 per cent) of the

people revealed a new desire for parenthood during quarantine.

In most cases, the respondents referred "the will for change", and "the need for positivity" to be the main reasons of this intention.

Only six out of the 140 (4.3 per cent), however effectively tried to get pregnant in this period.

The study also measured people's reported levels of sexual activity.

About 60 per cent of the couples who were already involved in childbearing attempts, continued in this project and did not report a reduction in the number of sexual intercourse.

Commenting on the limitations of the study, the scientists said, "it is unknown whether these findings will result in a substantial modification of birth rate in the near future."

Hotter, Humid Weather May Not Halt Spread Of COVID-19: Study

Press Trust Of India

Temperature and latitude are not associated with the spread of COVID-19 disease, according to a global study that found school closures and other public health measures are having a positive effect on containing the novel coronavirus.

The study, published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal, looked at 144 geopolitical areas -- states and provinces in Australia, the US, and Canada as well as various countries around the world -- and a total of over 3,75,600 confirmed COVID-19 cases.

The researchers said China, Italy, Iran and South Korea were excluded because the virus was either waning in the case of China or in full disease outbreak at the time of the analysis in others.

"Our study provides important new evidence, using global data from the COVID-19 epidemic, that these public health interventions have reduced epidemic growth," said Peter Juni from the University of Toronto, and St. Michael's



Hospital in Canada.

To estimate epidemic growth, the researchers compared the number of cases on March 27 with those on March 20.

They determined the influence of latitude, temperature, humidity, school closures, restrictions of mass gatherings and social distancing measured during the exposure period of March 7 to 13.

The study found little or no association between latitude or temperature with epidemic growth of COVID-19, and a weak association between humidity and reduced transmission.

The results -- that hotter weather had no effect on the pandemic's progression

-- surprised the researchers. "We had conducted a preliminary study that suggested both latitude and temperature could play a role. But when we repeated the study under much more rigorous conditions, we got the opposite result," said Juni.

The researchers did find that public health measures, including school closures, social distancing and restrictions of large gatherings, have been effective.

"Our results are of immediate relevance as many countries, and some Canadian provinces and territories, are considering easing or removing some of these public health interventions," said Juni.

ipad-Generation Kids Good At Reading Facial Emotions Too

Agencies

In some good news for parents who are worried at their kids spending too much time with screens, researchers report that today's children are not bad at reading emotions and picking up cues from people's faces than children who didn't grow up with tablets and smartphones.

With the ubiquitous use of tablets and other devices today among toddlers as well as parents, the psychologists wanted to know: Have younger children missed the opportunity to understand social cues?

The team at University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA)

tested the ability of more than 50 sixth graders in 2017, and more than 50 sixth graders in 2012 -- both male and female, from the same school -- to correctly identify emotions in photographs and videos.

Most children from the sixth-grade class of 2012 were born in 2001, while the first iPhone came out in 2007, for example, and the first iPad in 2010 -- a time when the sixth graders from the 2017 class were in-

fant and toddlers.

The psychologists found that the 2017 sixth graders scored 40 per cent higher than the 2012 class at correctly identifying emotions in photographs and made significantly fewer errors than the 2012 students.

In addition, the 2017 students were better at identifying the emotions in a series of videos, but only slightly better, a difference the researchers said is not statistically significant.

"Perhaps our 2017 participants had more opportunities to see, communicate and learn nonverbal emotion expressed in photographs of faces than those from 2012 because of the time spent taking and reviewing photos of themselves and others," explained lead study author Yalda T Uhls in the study published in the

journal Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking. In today's world, young people use photos and, increasingly, video to communicate. In 2018, for instance, 69 per cent of teens reported they used Snapchat and 72 per cent used Instagram, both of which incorporate pictures and text messages.



Over 65s In Turkey Go Outside For First Time Since March

ISTANBUL: Turkish people aged 65 and over on Sunday described their joy after the government allowed them to go outside for the first time in nearly two months in an easing of the coronavirus restrictions.

While 24 provinces including Ankara and Istanbul are subject to a weekend lockdown, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said last week senior citizens could leave their homes between 0800 GMT and 1200 GMT on Sunday. They had not been permitted to go outside since March 21.

"Finally it is like we are on holiday as of 11 o'clock (0800 GMT) today. We are very happy," Istanbul resident Umit Avcı, 81, said.

was shining and spring was in full bloom.

Small parks in the capital were later packed with senior citizens, while police in one park walked around and used loudspeakers urging people to follow social distancing rules.

Some senior citizens called on the government to allow them to go out on weekdays when there is no lockdown. "What can we do now? Everywhere is closed, we cannot do anything. They should take this into consideration," Saim Ilker said in Istanbul.

The measure restricting senior citizens' movement was one of many taken by the Turkish government to stop the



"It's the first time I've come outside since March and I'm so happy, I'm filled with joy," Ankara resident Ayse said.

Minutes before the official start, people in masks, and some in gloves, were walking on the streets in Ankara where the sun

spread of the coronavirus including shutting schools.

Sunday's decision was the first to ease restrictions, with barbershops, hairdressers and shopping centres set to reopen on Monday as the daily death toll remains under 100.

Iran Missile Accidentally Hits Its Own Ship, 19 Sailors Dead



TEHRAN: An Iranian missile fired during a training exercise in the Gulf of Oman struck a support vessel near its target, killing 19 sailors and wounding 15, Iran's state media reported on Monday, amid heightened tensions between Tehran and the U.S.

The statement significantly raised the death toll in Sunday's incident from what was reported just hours earlier, when Iran's state media said at least one sailor was killed.

The Konarak, a Hendijan-class support ship, which was taking part in the exercise, was too close to a target during an exercise on Sunday when the incident happened, the reports said. The vessel had been putting targets out for other ships to target. The media said the missile struck the vessel accidentally.

The friendly fire incident happened near the port of Jask, some 1,270 kilometres (790 miles) south-east of Tehran, in the Gulf of Oman, state TV said.

A local hospital admitted 12 sail-

ors and treated another three with slight wounds, the state-run IRNA news agency reported.

Iranian media said the Konarak had been overhauled in 2018 and was able to launch sea and anti-ship missiles. The Dutch-made, 47-meter (155-foot) vessel was in service since 1988 and had capacity of 40 tons. It usually carries a crew of 20 sailors.

Iran regularly holds exercises in the region, which is closed to the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of the world's oil passes. The U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, which monitors the region, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Iranian media rarely report on mishaps during its exercises, signaling the severity of the incident. This incident also comes amid months of heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. since President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018 and imposed crushing sanctions on the country.



New Zealand To Reopen Malls, Cafes From Thursday As Covid-19 Curbs Eased

WELLINGTON: New Zealand businesses, including malls, cinemas, cafes and gyms, will be allowed to reopen from Thursday as tight restrictions put in place to stop the spread of the coronavirus were further eased on Monday.

The Pacific nation was locked down for more than month under "level 4" restrictions that were eased by a notch late last month. It has continued to enforce strict social measures on many of its citizens and businesses, helping prevent widespread community spread of the virus.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the move to "level 2" restrictions will mean retail, restaurants and other public spaces, including play-

grounds, can reopen from Thursday.

"I am announcing that Cabinet agrees we are ready to move into level 2, to open up the economy, but to do it as safely as possible," Ardern told a news conference.

Businesses will be required to have physical distancing and strict hygiene measures in place.

Schools can open from next Monday while bars can only reopen from May 21, Ardern said. Gatherings would be limited to 10 people.

"The upshot is that in 10 days' time we will have reopened most businesses in New Zealand, and sooner than many other countries around the world," Ardern said.

The country's borders would remain closed except for returning New Zealanders.

The measures would be reviewed again in two weeks, Ardern said.

Three new cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, were confirmed on Monday, the health ministry said in a statement.

The cases - two hospital nurses and one related to overseas travel - bring New Zealand's total confirmed COVID-19 infections to 1,147, the ministry said, adding that 93% of all confirmed and probable cases have recovered.

The government will unveil its annual budget on Thursday, and has warned the country would run fiscal deficits for years while debt will increase to levels well beyond previous targets due to its economic support measures. Reuters

Australian Children Slowly Resume School As Coronavirus Curbs Eased

SYDNEY: Children in some Australian states began returning to school on Monday after an extended break due to the new coronavirus, as the country's rate of new infections continued to slow.

Students of New South Wales, the most populous state, and the northern state of Queensland began going back to school on a limited basis to lessen the risk of spreading the illness, state leaders said.

The NSW government said it has delivered thousands of litres of soap and hand sanitiser to schools, as well as personal protective equipment and temperature monitors. Class sizes will be reduced and activities will involve minimal physical contact between the students, many of whom have not attended school since mid-March.

"I know this is a huge relief for families," NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian told reporters in Sydney.

"It is a huge relief for the state government because we know how important it is for students to receive that face to face teaching," she added.

Final year students, whose exams were interrupted by the virus response, would attend at least three days per week in class, Berejiklian said, with the plan to return to full-time class attendance for all students by the end of May.

NSW has suffered about 45% of the country's 6,941 confirmed cases and 97 deaths. But it has



said it will begin easing some restrictions on personal movement later this week as the rate of new infections remains low.

The state recorded just one new case in the 24 hours to Monday morning, out of 13 new cases nationally.

Australia's second most populous state, Victoria, has asked parents to keep their children home if possible until the middle of the year and plans to give an update on its social distancing measures on Monday.

After giving a three-stage plan on Friday to ease restrictions on Australian domestic movement by July, state and federal officials will meet on Monday to discuss ways of dealing with the risks of crowds on public transport as businesses start to reopen, the country's chief medical officer

said on the weekend.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer Nick Coatsworth said Australians would have to take responsibility for enforcing their own social distancing measures, as well as businesses and venue operators, to prevent a second wave of infections.

"A (second) wave across the country is unlikely but it's possible if we get out there and mingle too much," Coatsworth told Channel Nine television.

"We want people to get out, the shops to reopen, but they have to do it in a responsible way."

Australia has largely avoided the high COVID-19 casualty numbers of other countries after swiftly introducing nationwide stay-home orders and border closures, including closing the borders between states. Reuters

Covid-19 Effect: International Tourism Could Decline By 60-80% In 2020, Says UN

UNITED NATIONS: International tourism could decline by 60-80 per cent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the revenue loss of \$910 billion to \$1.2 trillion and placing millions of livelihoods at risk, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has said.

The global international agency said that the pandemic has caused a 22 per

cent fall in international tourist arrivals during the first quarter of 2020.

According to the United Nations specialized agency, the global health crisis could lead to an annual tourism decline between 60 per cent and 80 per cent when compared with the 2019 figures.

"This places millions of livelihoods at risk and threatens to roll back progress made in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," it said.

"The world is facing an unprecedented health and economic crisis. Tourism has been hit hard, with millions of jobs at risk in one of the most labour-intensive sectors of the economy," UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said.

Available data reported by destinations point to a 22 per cent decline in arrivals in the first three months of the year, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer.

Arrivals in March dropped sharply by 57 per cent following the start of a lockdown in many countries, as well as the widespread introduction of travel

restrictions and the closure of airports and national borders. This translates into a loss of 67 million international arrivals and about \$80 billion in receipts (exports from tourism).

Although Asia and the Pacific shows the highest impact in relative and absolute terms (a decline of 33 million arrivals), the impact in Europe, though lower in percentage, is quite high in volume (-22 million),

the agency said. Prospects for the year have been downgraded several times since the outbreak and uncertainty continues to dominate.

Current scenarios point to possible declines in arrivals of 58 per cent to 78 per cent for the year. These depend on the speed of containment and the duration of travel restrictions and shutdown of borders.

The agency has given three scenarios for 2020 based on possible dates for the gradual opening up of international borders. According to scenario 1, there could be a decline of 58 per cent in arrivals based on the gradual opening of international borders and easing of travel restrictions in early July.

Scenario 2 could see a 70 per cent decline if international borders are gradually opened and travel restrictions are eased in early September. Scenario 3 states that there could be a 78 per cent decline in arrivals based on the gradual opening of international borders and easing of travel restrictions only in early December.

Saudi Triples VAT, Suspends Handouts In Virus-Led Austerity Drive

Saudi Arabia's finance minister on Monday said the kingdom will triple its Value Added Tax (VAT) and halt monthly handout payments to citizens in new austerity measures amid record low oil prices and a coronavirus-led economic slump.

The measures, which could stir public resentment with the cost of living rising, come as the petro-state steps up emergency plans to slash government spending to deal with the twin economic blow.

"It has been decided the cost of living allowance will be halted from June 2020 and VAT will be raised from 5 per cent to 15 per cent from July 1," Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan said in a statement released by the official Saudi Press Agency.

Jadaan insisted the measures were necessary to shore up state finances amid a "sharp decline" in oil revenue as the coronavirus pandemic saps global demand for crude.

The government was also "cancelling, extending or postponing" expenditures for some government agencies and cutting spending on major state

projects introduced as part of an ambitious reform programme to diversify the oil-reliant economy, the minister added.

Jadaan last week warned of "painful" and "drastic" steps to deal with the double shock of the novel coronavirus and record low oil prices.

Saudi Arabia, the top crude exporter and the Arab world's biggest economy, has shut down cinemas and restaurants, halted flights, and suspended the year-round umrah pilgrimage in a bid to contain the deadly virus.

Saudi Arabia, along with other Gulf states, imposed a five per

cent tax on goods and services in 2018 in a bid to generate additional revenue.

The petro-state had also introduced handouts worth billions of dollars to citizens, known as the cost of living allowance, to cushion the impact of rising costs.

Huge budget deficit Jadaan has said he expected Riyadh could lose half of its oil income, which contributes about 70pc of public revenues, as oil prices have fallen two-thirds since the start of the year.



NEWS MAKERS

Iraq's New Pm Mustafa Kadhemi: Former Spy Chief With Friends On All Sides

Baghdad: Iraq's new prime minister Mustafa Kadhemi is a pragmatic operator and former spy chief whose ties to Washington and Tehran could help steer Baghdad through a laundry list of crises.

He formally took the reins early Thursday after Iraq's parliament granted his cabinet a vote of confidence, capping weeks of horse-trading over ministerial positions.

Kadhemi, who headed Iraq's National Intelligence Service (INIS), was nominated on April 9 by President Barham Saleh in a ceremony attended by a who's-who of the political elite, indicating broad support for the enigmatic figure.



Born in Baghdad in 1967, Kadhemi studied law in Iraq but then left for Europe to escape repressive ex-dictator Saddam Hussein, working as an opposition journalist.

After the US-led invasion of 2003 toppled Saddam, Kadhemi returned to help launch the Iraqi Media Network, archived crimes of the former regime

at the Iraqi Memory Foundation and worked as a human rights advocate.

But he made an unusual career jump in 2016, when then-PM Haider Al Abadi handpicked him to head the INIS at the height of the war against the Daesh jihadist group.

It was there, sources close to Kadhemi say, that he formed his uniquely close links with top players of key nations including in Washington, London and closer to home.

"He's got a pragmatic mindset, relationships with all the key players on the Iraqi scene and good ties with the Americans - and he was recently able to put his ties to the Iranians back on track," a political

source and friend told AFP.

The former journalist has a particularly close friendship with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman. In footage from a visit to Riyadh after his appointment, the Saudi royal could be seen warmly embracing Kadhemi.

But the clean-shaven man, his closely trimmed hair tinged by white around his ears, has otherwise mostly remained in the shadows.

'Unprecedented' consensus Kadhemi was first floated as premier in 2018 but political blocs instead opted for Adel Abdel Mahdi - the caretaker PM who resigned in December after months of protests, and whom Kadhemi would replace.

Saudi Cafe Owner Jailed For Touting 'Halal Wine'

CAIRO: A Saudi citizen, who owns a coffee shop in the city of Jeddah, has been sentenced to three months in jail for advertising what he called "halal wine", Okaz newspaper reported Monday.

The man had appeared in a paid online advert of nearly three minutes promoting his business, using phrases that the court deemed violating public morality and religious values. The defendant appeared in the video advert saying: "There is now a bar in Jeddah"; "All drinks are free of alcohol"; and described the drinks served in his cafe as "halal wine".

In investigations, the man defended his act, arguing that he



had promoted legal drinks at his licensed cafe and that the drinks were procured from suppliers in the Saudi market.

After several hearing sessions held remotely, the Jeddah-based court found him guilty and also ordered him to pay a fine of 10,000 Saudi riyals as part of the ruling based on an

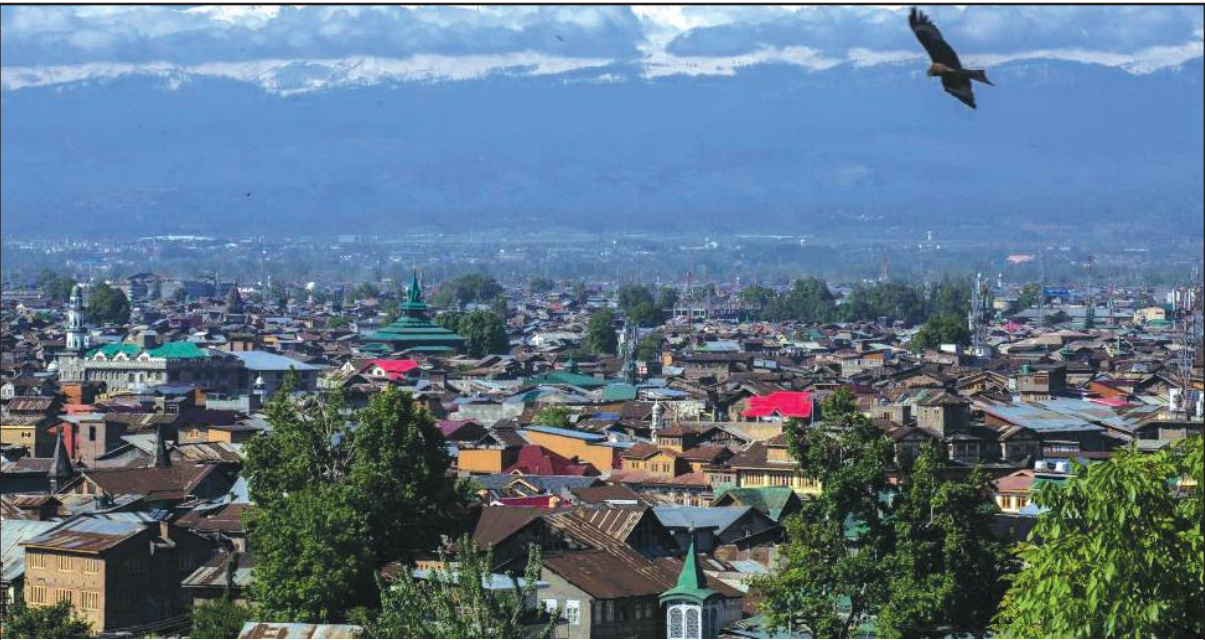
anti-cyber crime law. The court also ordered the "offensive" advert be banned. An appeals court later upheld the verdict.

Prosecutors, meanwhile, filed separate lawsuits against four social media celebrities involved in producing and propagating the contested video, according to the paper.

Pir Panjal Peaks Smile Over Sullen Srinagar



Beyond coils of concertina wire symbolizing another day of battered lockdown in Srinagar, the appearance of Pir Panjal peaks has come as a captive sight to behold amid pandemic. What used to hide behind the blanket of bad air has now emerged on the horizon to the delight of sightseers. Inside the iconic Dal Lake, it's a perpetual struggle between life and lifelessness. As a bunch of boatmen row their empty Shikaras ashore, the lake holds a vintage promise, even as desolation dominates the striking sight.



Carrying an archetypal reflection of Kohi-Maran fort and the Hazratbal Shrine in its lap, the lake looks uplifting, with the magnificent Pir Panjal Range as its background. Amid limpness of life, the sight turns many heads towards the sanctum standing on the horizon with reverence.

KO-Photos by Abid Bhat



On streets, life remains caught in the throes of restrictions. Behind drop-gates, the street regulars hold batons and guns, as motorists halt and produce travel passes, before making any move ahead. Pedestrians and hawkers wear masks on streets to signify the new mandatory routine.



In the face of the recent rattling strikes in frontier north, the law enforcers, mainly paramilitary men, apparently adhere to suspect all, inspect all motto, while enforcing the strict street order. Some of them turn 'whistle-blowers', if, by any chance, a biker pulls over nearby their line of duty.



Absence of signature Ramzan market has further unleashed a sorrow of lifelessness in Srinagar. In trade heartland, Lal Chowk, the clock tower, whirled with razor-wires, shades a sentry enforcing its writ in the middle of the deserted square.



Thoroughfares connecting the South Asia's second oldest city with countryside are witnessing no or least traffic. With Kashmir witnessing yet another digital curfew following the killing of Kashmir's most wanted insurgent commander recently, people are grappling with weary indoors, as mobile internet has been suspended again.



While work for home has gone for a toss, students are getting impatient for their online classes. And yet, as the basic connectivity remains hostage to drawn-out "security situation" in the valley, people have been left to fend for themselves in the state of lockdown. Many people, however, seem unrelenting, as they keep the 'Kashmir Spirit' alive in this crisis hour, by acting as pandemic barbers, community supporters, and Samaritans in all walks of life. But these everyday struggles for life conveniently get sidelined, as the uplifting landscape of the city takes precedence.



On the ground, as men and machinery are leading the official fight back response against Covid-19, the life seems signifying its importance through sacred and serene symbols. But these everyday struggles for life conveniently get sidelined, as the uplifting landscape of the city takes precedence. On the ground, as men and machinery are leading the official fight back response against Covid-19, the life seems signifying its importance through sacred and serene symbols.