




SCIENTISTS DECODE HOW COVID-19 DISEASE KILLS PEOPLE

COVID-19 mostly kills through an overreaction of the immune system, whose function is precisely to fight infections, say scientists who have decoded the mechanisms, symptoms, and diagnosis of the disease caused by the SARS-Cov-2 coronavirus. In a study published in the journal *Frontiers in Public Health*, the researchers explained step-by-step how the virus infects the airways, multiplies inside cells, and in severe cases causes the immune defences to overshoot with a “cytokine storm”. This storm is an over-activation of white blood cells, which release too-great amounts

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News Digest

21 TH RAMAZAN		
IFTAR	SEHRI	
TODAY	TOMMOROW	
FIQAH HANAFIYA	07:28	03:53
FIQAH JAFARIYA	07:36	03:51



Police Gets Anti-Narcotics Task Force

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday approved creation of anti-narcotics task force (ANTF) wing in Jammu and Kashmir police to fight the drug menace in the Union Territory. The Home Department today accorded sanction to setting up of ANTF under the overall superintendence and control of Inspector General of Police, Crime Branch J&K. The new wing will have strength **● P-02**

Hurriyat Condemns Beerwah Youth's Killing

Srinagar: Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on Thursday demanded punishment for the CRPF personnel responsible for the “cold-blooded murder” of a youth in Kawoosa area of Budgam district on Wednesday morning. In a statement issued here, a Hurriyat spokesperson expressed grief and sorrow over the killing of 24-year-old Mehraj-ud-din Peer of Budgam by CRPF in the holy month of Ramzan. **● P-02**

Landslides Block Kashmir Highway

Srinagar: Fresh landslides triggered by heavy rains disrupted traffic on the strategic Srinagar-Jammu highway on Thursday, leaving hundreds of vehicles stranded. According to the reports, the 270-km-long Srinagar-Jammu highway, the only surface link connecting Kashmir valley with the rest of the country, was closed yet again today after heavy rains triggered fresh landslides and shooting stones. A police official said that the vehicular movement on the **● P-02**

CASO Carried Out In Sopore

Srinagar: Despite heavy rainfall, government forces on Thursday carried out acordon and search operation (CASO) in a village in Sopore area of Baramulla district. According to reports, a joint team of Army's 22 RR, SOG Sopore and 179 and 92 Battalion CRPF conducted door-to-door searches in Thakkund Behrampora village of Sopore this evening. The operation, according to local news agency KNO was launched after receiving inputs about the presence of militants in the area. **● P-02**

Govt Forms Panel For Speedy Recruitments In J&K

Agencies
SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday accorded sanction to the constitution of a committee in order to accelerate recruitment to government vacancies and to ensure certain principles of transparency in the staffing process. The four member committee would be headed Navin K. Choudhary (IAS), Chairman and Nodal Officer Principal Secretary to Government, Agriculture and Horticulture Department. Its members include Saurabh Bhagat (IAS), Commissioner Secretary Labour & Employment Department, Farooq Ahmad Lone (IAS), Secretary GAD and Achal Sethi Secretary Department of Law, Justice & PA. The committee has been **»PAGE 02**

Tracking The Fallen Guns: A Plagued Pattern Tailing The Suicide Note

Mrinal Pathak

WHEN Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Sub-Inspector Fatah Singh wrote the final words, “I am afraid, I may have Corona,” before committing suicide in his barack, it became yet another curt ending of a central policeman in Kashmir Valley.

A native of Jaisalmer Rajasthan and posted in Mattan Anantnag, Singh ended his life with his service rifle on May 12. Later that day, an Assistant Sub-Inspector of CRPF Bangali Babu of Madhya Pradesh posted in Neelam Cinema Karan Nagar also killed himself.

While the sample of Singh has already been sent for Covid-19 testing, the reason for suicide committed by the latter has still not been ascertained.

But those who track suicide and fratricide cases of Indian paramili-



Representation Image

tary forces in Kashmir see an old plaguing pattern in the recent twin self-killings.

Dismal Data

Last year, on January 07, 2019, the central government informed Rajya Sabha about the “suspected” suicide of over 80 soldiers, out of which a large number of cases were

reported in J&K.

Earlier, in July 2014, the government informed Rajya Sabha that 597 armed forces personnel committed suicide in a period of five years – 2008-2013.

Madness behind the Method

Sewadani system under ineffec-

tual leadership and humiliation at the

hands of the senior officers are known to create resentment among forces.

In past, many reports blamed these factors for soldier suicide.

However, many defence experts suggest that the major reason behind suicides is the living condition of these paramilitary personnel, posted in the tough terrains of the J&K.

In recent times, former Border Security Force (BSF) Constable Tej Bahadur Yadav triggered a massive controversy when he uploaded a video on his Facebook handle in January 2017, alleging that the government had failed the forces and the facilities provided to the troops were “substandard”.

The video became an internet sensation. Later, the BSF denied the allegations and sacked Yadav after a three-month-long proceeding at a summary court-martial held in Samba. **»PAGE 02**

STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO PREVENT SUICIDE INCLUDE PROFESSIONAL psychological counseling, workshops on mental health, meditation being made part of the unit routine, yoga classes, improvement in living conditions and liberalised leave policy,”

India Slams Pak Over Gilgit-Baltistan Infra Projects

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: India on Thursday took strong note of Pakistan awarding for a mega contract to build a dam in Gilgit-Baltistan, saying carrying out of such projects in territories under Pakistan's ‘illegal occupation’ was not proper.

The Pakistan government has signed a whopping Rs 442 billion contract with a joint venture of a Chinese state-run firm and a commercial arm of Pakistan's powerful military for construction of the Diamer-Bhasha dam.

“Our position is consistent and clear that entire territory of the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have been, are and will



Representation Image

continue to be integral and inalienable part of India,” MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said.

“We have consistently conveyed our protests and shared concerns with both Pakistan and China on all such projects in the Indian ter-

ritories under Pakistan's illegal occupation,” he said.

Last week, India conveyed its strong protest to Pakistan for its efforts to bring “material change” after the country's top court allowed holding of elections **»PAGE 02**

Militants Flee After Overnight Gunfight In Kulgam

SRINAGAR: Unidentified militants gave slip to government forces after engaging them in a brief gunfight in Yamrach area of South Kashmir's Kulgam district on Thursday.

The militants, believed to be two to three in number, escaped taking advantage of darkness, a police officer told news agency GNS.

Earlier a joint team of Police, army's 34RR and CRPF had launched a joint cordon-and-search-operation in Yamrach village following specific inputs about the presence of militants. **● P-02**

Srinagar Airport Ready To Resume Flight Operations: Director

Touch Free Arrangements To Be Made In View Of Covid-19

Izhar Nazir Ali

SRINAGAR: The Srinagar International Airport is ready to resume upto 40 percent touch free flight operations after receiving a nod from the government of India, a senior official said Thursday.

“As far as Srinagar Airport is concerned, we are ready to resume the operations. Social distancing marking has been completed between 50-60 percent. And by Sunday, rest of the work will be completed. Touch free operations will be started. From entry in the terminal till boarding, the passenger will not come into physical touch with anyone.” Director Srinagar International Airport, San-



tosh Dhoke told Kashmir Observer.

The airport officials, he said were constantly following the guidelines issued by the Ministry of civil aviation and the MHA. According to these guidelines, Dhoke said, 30-40 percent flight operations might be resumed initially, subject to the directives of the government of India.

“Web cameras have been installed where tickets and boarding passes will be produced. **»PAGE 02**

CIC To Hear RTI Applications From J&K, Ladakh Today

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Central Information Commission will start hearing appeals and complaints of RTI applicants pertaining to Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh from Friday, nearly nine months after the transparency provisions of the erstwhile state were revoked and the central act was enforced there, officials said on Thursday.

The commission is hearing appeals and complaints via video and audio links.

While the country had enacted the Right to Information Act in 2005, the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state had its own law, the Jammu and Kashmir RTI Act, 2009. The Centre had bifurcated the state into two Union Territories --

Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh -- from October 31, 2019 after passing of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019 in August last year.

Consequently, the Jammu and Kashmir Right to Information Act 2009 and the Rules thereunder were repealed and the Right to Information Act 2005 and the Rules thereunder were enforced from October 31, 2019.

The Personnel Ministry had given an action plan to the Central Information Commission asking it to take over all the pending appeals and complaints pending before the Jammu and Kashmir State Information Commission.

While states have their own Information Commissions, the matters pertaining to Union Territories are handled by the Central **»PAGE 02**

In Pandemic, Contemporary Kashmiri Writers Getting Added Audience

Rakshanda Afrin

FOR last five years, Seerat Wani would wrestle with her procrastinating personality to read *Curfewed Night*, the book she bought from New Delhi's famed bookstore, Baharsons, tucked in legendary Khan Market. But the 28-year-old MBA degree holder from Srinagar's Peer-bagh would always find distractions, until the pandemic lockdown came and ended her impasse.

“We aren't new to lockdowns in Kashmir,” Wani said, with an assertive tone. “But then, this lockdown is different. It's about mandatorily home sitting, and maintaining social distancing. And



this is when I finally found time for Basharat Peer's acclaimed book.”

Calling it a “time machine trip”, Wani said that *Curfewed Night* took

her back to her ancestral home in downtown Srinagar, where as a kid in nineties, she would often peek through her window to witness the turbulent streets.

“The book maps your feelings and circumstances without resorting to make-believe literary twists,” she said. “I'm happy to finally read it.”

Wani is not alone to break ice on her tardy reading willpower in viral lockdown.

Like her, Hubaib Aslam, 29, would hardly pick up a book to read, despite having his father's rich library at home.

“Honestly, I was never a book person,” Aslam, a contractor from Srinagar's Bemina, said. **»PAGE 02**

J&K Tally Reaches 983 As 12 More Test Covid-19 Positive

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus cases inched closer to thousand on Thursday as twelve more people tested positive for virus in Jammu and Kashmir, taking the number of infected people across Union Territory to 983.

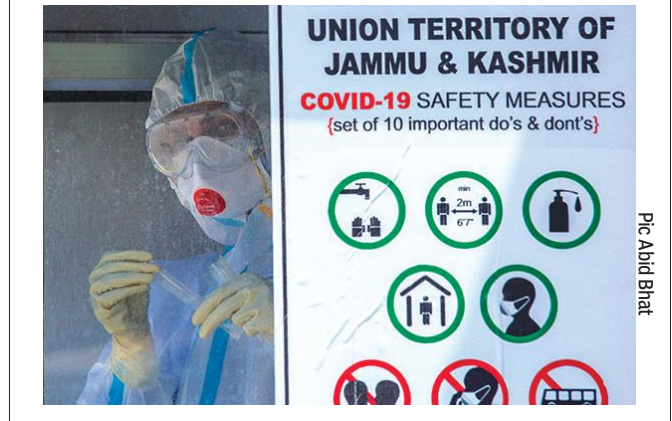
“Twelve new cases have been reported from Jammu and Kashmir in the last 24 hours,” the officials said, adding that nineteen more patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals.

Among the new cases, eight are from Valley while four oth-

ers are from Jammu region.

Among the 12 cases, five were reported from Srinagar, three from Rajouri—all men aged 24, 28 and 56 respectively—two from Shopian—25-year-old woman from Heerpora and 28-year-old man from Urpora—and one from Pulwama—25-year-old woman.

One among the Srinagar cases is a 50-year-old woman from Kanipora Srinagar and her test came positive at SKIMS. The tests of four other residents of this capital city came positive at a private laboratory, they said. Udhampur resident's case was confirmed at SKIMS. **»PAGE 02**



Pic: Abid Bhat

13 More Recover From Covid-19

The SKIMS Medical College and Hospital, Bemina today discharged thirteen more patients after recovering from covid-19. They include eight from district Bandipora, four from Budgam, one from Baramulla. The patients had been admitted in the hospital after testing positive more than two weeks back at various referral centers. The hospital informed that the number of patients who recovered reached to one hundred thirty-six out one hundred seventy eight with the recovery percentage 76%.

Jammu Receives First Special Train With 1018 Passengers

Observer News Service

JAMMU- As part of government's initiative of bringing back the stranded people of J&K to their homes in the wake of COVID-19 Lockdown, Jammu today received first COVID special train carrying 1018 passengers while 7 buses carrying 175 people including 11 minors stranded in Jammu have left from Bhatindi to Kashmir.

Deputy Commissioner, Sushma Chauhan along with other senior officers received the Rajdhani

train and had a brief interaction with the passengers.

Chauhan, while wishing safe and comfortable further journey to the passengers, appealed them to cooperate with the district authorities in ensuring strict adherence to the guidelines issued by Ministries of Home Affairs and Health & Family Welfare regarding COVID-19. “Following the guidelines is the only option to contain the spread of this Pandemic”, she added.

She informed that the administration has ensured that **»PAGE 02**

613 Gurez Residents Return Home

As many as 613 residents of picturesque Gurez Valley returned to their homes on Thursday after remaining stranded for a long time in north Kashmir's Bandipora district. A cavalcade of 75 vehicles carried these 613 people to their homes in Gurez after a team of doctors at Lal Quila Morh at Pethkoot village screened them and cleared their travel, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Reyaz Ahmad Beigh said. He said the vehicles were also thoroughly fumigated before allowing them to proceed towards their destination. He said **● P-02**

Kashmiri Woman Dies In Tragic Dubai Road Accident

Car Burst Into Flames After A Four-Car Smash On Sheikh Zayed Road

Observer News Service

DUBAI: Daughter of a prominent Kashmiri businessman was among three people killed in a horrible multi car crash in Dubai on Wednesday.

“A man and two women were killed when their car caught fire after a four-vehicle smash on Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai”, police said.

The accident occurred on Shaikh Zayed Road after Dubai Parks and Resorts area on Dubai- Abu Dhabi border.

The accident happened when the victims' vehicle halted due to another traffic accident on the road and another vehicle crashed into their car from behind which caused the fire.



“One car burst into flames and three people in it were killed”, Dubai police said.

Those who died in the tragic accident included daughter of a renowned Kashmiri business man Abdul Rashid Mir, reports said.

Mir, is the founder Chairman, of Cottage Industries Exposition Limited, (CIE). **»PAGE 02**

Troops Maintaining ‘Posture’ Along China Border: Army Chief

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Indian troops were maintaining their “posture” along the border with China while infrastructure development in the frontier areas was on track, Army Chief Gen M M Naravane said on Thursday, days after personnel of the two countries were locked in two separate incidents of violent face-offs.

Gen Naravane said the incidents in Eastern Ladakh and North Sikkim involved aggressive behaviour by Chinese and Indian troops resulting in minor injuries to personnel from both the sides.

The Army Chief said both sides “disengaged” after dialogue and interaction at the local level.

“It is reiterated that both these incidents are neither co-related nor do they have any connection with other global or local activities,” he told journalists when asked about the face-offs.



“All such incidents are managed by established mechanisms where-in local formations from both sides resolve issues mutually as per established protocols and strategic guidelines given by

the prime minister after the Wuhan and Mamallapuram summits,” Gen Naravane said.

He said Indian Border troops have always been upholding peace and tranquillity along with

the border areas.

“I can say with confidence that the development of infrastructure capabilities along our northern borders is on track. Our force posture will not suffer due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” he said.

It is learnt that the situation in the Eastern Ladakh region remained tense with troops of the two countries maintaining a close watch on each other demonstrating aggressive posturing, even nine days after the violent clash involving 250 soldiers from both sides.

The confrontation began on the evening of May 5 and both sides decided to “disengage” the next day.

In a separate incident, nearly 150 Indian and Chinese military personnel were engaged in a face-off near Naku La Pass in the Sikkim sector of the Sino-India border on Saturday. At least 10 soldiers from both sides sustained injuries in the incident

Schools Told Not To Hike Fee During Academic Session

Charge Tuition Fee On Monthly Basis, Not Quarterly: Samoon

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday directed private schools not to hike fee during the academic session and charge tuition fee for the lockdown period on monthly basis, instead of quarterly.

In an order issued by the Principal Secretary to Government School Education Department, Dr Asghar Samoon today, the private schools have been directed not to charge tuition fee on quarterly basis. Apart from it, Samoon has also issued five other directions to the schools and asked them to comply with it.

The fresh directions have asked schools not to hike fee during academic session 2020-2021. The order also says that annual fee, if any, can be charged monthly on pro-rata basis, after schools re-open.

“No school shall deny access



to online education, material, classes to poor/deserving students unable to pay school pay due to prevailing situation”reads the order, a copy of which is in possession of Kashmir Observer.

It further adds that reg-

istration of private schools, which have expired during lockdown period, shall be deemed valued till lockdown period is over.

“A view regarding transport charges shall be taken separately,” the order adds.

Tracking The Fallen Guns: A Plagued Pattern Tailing

But the figures clearly show that the number of suicides is considerably higher in “poorly-budgeted” paramilitary, than the moneyed military.

Mental Toll

The slender time spent alone in the conflict-ridden Kashmir has proven to taking a toll on the mental health of these government gunmen.

Some reports suggest that advancement of technology is acting as a bane for forces away from home.

It's believed that the issue of domestic problems conveyed to them by their families at home is another reason for adding stress.

Security Support

To help the distressed force, former Defence Minister AK Antony in 2006, constituted a committee of psychiatrists to examine the alarming rate of suicide in forces.

Soon a team of 400 psychiatrists was sent to J&K to help soldiers in coping with stress resulting in surge of self-killings.

“Steps taken by the government to prevent suicide include professional psychological counseling, workshops on mental health, meditation being made part of the unit routine, yoga classes, improvement in living conditions and liberalised leave policy,” the official report claimed.

A Grim Reality

But as one after another suicide case is being reported in the paramilitary ranks, defence experts term the existing arrangements “far from satisfactory”.

Even as they were dismissed “showpiece” by a top cop in Kashmir recently, CRPF's role in counter-insurgency operations is well-documented.

The frequent firepower exposure at encounter sites is also seen as the reason behind the escalating mental unrest in some of them.

J&K Tally Reaches 983 As 12 More Test Covid-19 ..

The officials said that the total number of positive cases in Jammu and Kashmir has now risen to 983.

Of the total number of cases reported so far, 882 are from Kashmir and 101 from Jammu. Eleven people (nine in Kashmir and two in Jammu) have died and 482 patients (428 from Kashmir and 57 from Jammu) have recovered. The number of active cases stands at 487 (445 in Kashmir and 42 in Jammu), they added.

More than 1 Lakh people have been kept under surveillance including those who are either in government established quarantine facilities or in home isolation.

Jammu Receives First Special Train With 1018...

during the boarding and de-boarding process the passengers observe social distancing and wear masks. Besides, 100 per cent sampling of all passengers has also been done and complete protection of the administrative staff and others on duty has been ensured. The district administration has made elaborate arrangements for receiving these stranded people, she added.

Meanwhile, the government has deployed a fleet of buses, since last evening, for shifting of J&K residents stranded in various parts of Maharashtra to Nagpur. In this regard, about 900 J&K inhabitants including 400 students are being brought back by the special Shramik train scheduled to leave Nagpur for Udhampur this evening.

613 Gurez Residents Return Home ...

the decision to put them in administrative or home quarantine will be done by the civil administration in Gurez in consultation with the doctors.

The senior official further said the vehicles are allowed to move between 5:30 am to 11 am and urged the stranded passengers to reach Lal Qilal Morh during this time to proceed to their destinations.

Though Gurez-Bandipora road was opened for traffic earlier this month but the entry of people into the Gurez valley was banned as a precautionary measure amid covid-19 pandemic.

India Slams Pak Over Gilgit-Baltistan Infra ...

in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The MEA issued a demarche to a senior Pakistani diplomat lodging a strong protest over the court ruling and clearly conveying that the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of India.

In a recent ruling, the Pakistan Supreme Court allowed Islamabad to amend a 2018 administrative order to conduct

general elections in the region. The Gilgit-Baltistan order of 2018 provided for administrative changes, including authorising the Prime Minister of Pakistan to legislate on an array of subjects.

CIC To Hear RTI Applications From J&K...

Information Commission, according to the RTI Act.

The commission will start hearing matters pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh from Friday, Chief Information Commissioner Bimal Julka told PTI.

Julka also met Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh on Thursday, according to a government statement.

Applicants from Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh can file RTI applications from home and no one has to travel outside even for appeals to the CIC, Singh said.

This will usher in a new culture of “justice from home”, he said.

The applicants from the two union territories can file first appeal before the officers designated and can avail the facility of hearing from home for second appeal before the CIC, he said.

Moreover, people can file RTI applications anytime through the online mechanism, he said.

“Any citizen of India can now file RTI pertaining to matters related to J&K and Ladakh, which was reserved to only Citizens of erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir, before the Reorganisation Act of 2019,” he said.

The minister said till May 10, 2020, 111 second appeals and complaints (fresh cases) from the UT of Jammu and Kashmir have been registered in the CIC consequent to the Reorganisation Act, 2019.

“Training for CPIOs (central public information officers) and FAAs (first appellate authority) is being planned and registration/alignment of Public Authorities of Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on RTI online portal of DoPT is also being taken up with DoPT,” he said.

Srinagar Airport Ready To Resume Flight Operations.

And the CISF personnel behind the shelter will check the authenticity of the tickets/ passes before allowing the fliers to proceed,” Director Srinagar International Airport said.

He said that the airport administration had a meeting with representatives of all private airline companies, CISF, CRPF, police, health department and the divisional administration in which SOPs and guidelines issued from time to time were discussed at length.

“On the basis of it, we have framed an SOP for here (Srinagar Airport) and same has been shared with the stake holders so that when the flight operations resume, the SOP is followed in letter and spirit by all,” he said.

When asked about the arrangement of Covid-19 screening made by the airport authorities, Dhoke said that the first screening of the passengers will be conducted by the health department officials at the drop gate number 1.

“At drop gate, we are exploring the possibility of setting up a tunnel, where doctors in full PPE will check the passengers. Passenger's temperature and Aarogya Setu will be checked there. And in case, the passenger shows high temperature or a sign of positivity, he will be sent back.

As many as 23 flights of different airline companies operated daily from Srinagar International Airport before the government of India imposed nation-wide lockdown to combat coronavirus pandemic.

Meanwhile, a sales officer of a private airliner told Kashmir Observer that booking of tickets for various domestic sectors have been started for June 1 onwards. He said it was likely that flight operations might resume by June 2.

“Our engineering team examined our facility at the Srinagar international airport. Other airlines are also bracing up,” he added.

Kashmiri Woman Dies In Tragic Dubai Road ...

Reports said besides Ms Mir her driver and a staff member also died in the crash.

This is the second untimely death in Mir family. Earlier in 2005 Mir's only son Mujeeb was found murdered in Mauritius.

In Pandemic, Contemporary Kashmiri...

“But then, I recently read Mir Khalid's Jaffna Street on the recommendation of my friend. It was such a delight as well as a dread to relive my childhood through this book. I read it from cover to cover.”

Capturing some of the starkest stories of the nightmarish nineties in Kashmir, Jaffna Street, Aslam said, makes an attempt to humanize the otherwise demonized stories of the valley.

“At a time when Indian media is unabashedly spewing venom on Kashmir and hides its realities with their biased coverage, book like Jaffna Street reassures you that truth can't be silenced with shouts and screams.”

Even as many Kashmiris, especially youth, can be seen today reading and discussing the classic and fashionable writers of the world, most of them are picking up the native authors for understanding their troubled past. The trend, it seems, has only grown in lockdown.

“As I'm reading The Collaborator by Mirza Waheed these days, I'm literally reliving our harrowing past,” said Sajad Bhat, a media graduate from Baramulla. “Though fiction, the book transports you into the dark underbelly of the valley and makes you wonder of the place you live in.”

To gauge the literary mood of Valley in lockdown, Kashmir Observer spoke to many valleyites to know about their reading preferences. They named the following contemporary Kashmiri authors, for their “unbiased, truthful depiction of Kashmir events”.

Basharat Peer

Author of the much-acclaimed book, Curfewed Night: A Frontline Memoir of Life, Love and War in Kashmir, Peer started his career as a reporter in New Delhi but had lived and seen much of the turbulent time in the valley during nineties.

Winner of the Crossword Prize for Non-Fiction, Peer wrote a firsthand eyewitness experience to the constant conflict and crossfire the ordinary people from the valley are caught in.

Curfewed Night, which won many International accolades and reception, is a moving memoir and ode to Peer's strife-battered homeland, where he tries to bring forward a poignant yet brutally honest and grim realities of people facing the tensions and insurgency for nearly decades now.

Though he identifies himself as a Kashmiri, Peer claims that his 'nationality is a matter of dispute'.

Currently working as the Opinion Editor of The New York Times, the author of Curfewed Night has written extensively on South Asian politics in many reputed international publications like The Guardian, Foreign Affairs, The New Yorker, among others.

Nitasha Kaul

London-based academician, Kaul is an author of Kashmiri-origin. Her debut novel, Residue was published in 2009. It marks the first novel written in English by a Kashmiri woman.

Nominated for the 2009 Man Booker Prize, Residue is a tale of two young Kashmiris who meet and their lives get intertwined by their shared history and identities outside Kashmir. It is a story of startling discovery and explorations.

Her latest work is 'Future Tense' published in 2020 based on the political fiction of Kashmir.

Currently, Kaul is an Associate Professor at the University of Westminster and her other interests include issues concerning Kashmiri women, political economy, neoliberalism, economic violence. She is the co-editor of a recent special volume on 'Women and Kashmir', which is the first ever such collection by Kashmiri women scholars themselves.

Mirza Waheed

Born and raised in Srinagar, Mirza Waheed is a celebrated novelist and scribe of International repute who has authored three books.

His debut novel, The Collaborator (2011), was the Guardian First Book Finalist, where Waheed wrote about war-torn Kashmir and the devastating times during the early 1990s through the first person narration of its unnamed protagonist. The writer tells a striking tale of Kashmir caught in violent conflict.

His second novel, The Book of Gold Leaves (2014), a love story between a Sunni and Shia set in the 1990s Kashmir, was Shortlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2016.

The author's third novel, Tell Her Everything (2019), is a compelling, dark story of an Indian doctor's letter to his daughter. Currently based in London, Waheed is now devoted to his writing career full-time.

Shahnaz Bashir

Author of two award-winning novels, Shahnaz Bashir is an academician based in Srinagar. His maiden novel, The Half Mother published in 2014, won Muse India Young Writer Award 2015. Widely reviewed and critically acclaimed, the book is a heart wrenching, deeply troubling story of Haleema who does not know whether her son is alive or not.

With the French version of it published in March 2020, The Half Mother is the “first novel from Kashmir to be translated in a foreign language”.

Scattered Souls, published in 2016, marks the second novel of Bashir. It follows the hard-hitting, troubled stories of the Kashmiris during the violent nineties. It has been reported to be “the best selling fiction book (English) in Kashmir till date”. Currently, Bashir teaches Narrative Journalism and Conflict Reportage in the Central University of Kashmir.

Mir Khalid

A modish medico from Downtown Srinagar—the tag he wears as a badge of honour—came out with his Kashmir memoir, Jaffna Street, in early 2017. The book written in a stirring narrative style captures the lives of the people who suffered history in Kashmir.

It offers deep insights into the characters caught in the throes of the drawn out discord in Vale.

Mir's Jaffna Street, borrowing title from a faraway hotspot, captures the pulse of the times through different personalities who found themselves at a crossroads of the history. Despite getting brickbats for his “brutally tell all” book, the doctor's storytelling prowess won him many admirers.

A voracious reader known for sharing his readings on social media, Mir is working on his new book capturing human crisis

far away from his home.

Feroz Rather

Doctoral student at the Florida State University, Feroz Rather has already made a remarkable name for himself in the world of literature through his stories, essays, and interviews published in many international journals.

As a Kashmiri novelist, he marked his debut with The Night of Broken Glass (2018) which won widely acclaimed reviews from all corners.

His novel is about the horrors and violence in Kashmir which the author tries to bring forward through a series of interconnected stories in a work of fiction.

Govt Forms Panel For Speedy Recruitments...

tasked to identify the vacancies for being filled up on immediate basis with priority to Class-IV vacancies, finalizing the procedure to be followed for recruitment so that the principles of transparency and inclusiveness are maintained and the process of recruitment is concluded speedily.

It asked been also asked to ensure that necessary sanctions or approvals are obtained (wherever required) for enabling Services Selection Board to commence the process of recruitment immediately.

Lastly, it has been tasked to remove hitches in the recruitment process, if any, as per the order.

“ The Chairman/Nodal Officer shall be responsible for the tasks assigned to the Committee and he shall be assisted by other officers of the Committee.”

The Committee has been asked to meet frequently, if necessary on daily basis, and interact with Administrative Secretaries to ensure that the indent(s) for recruitment(s) is forwarded to Service Selection Board by May 22

“The Committee will continue to monitor the process till the recruitment process is completed,” the order added. (GNS)

Police Gets Anti-Narcotics Task Force...

of 100 police personnel, including one Superintendent of police, One Deputy Superintendent of Police, Nine Inspectors, 18 Sub-Inspectors and 52 Constables, reads an order issued today.

“It is further ordered that while effecting transfers/postings it shall be ensured that 50% of Sub-Inspectors, to be posted to ANTF shall be direct recruits,” reads the order issued by Sha-keel Ur Rehman, Special Secretary to the Government.

Meanwhile, Director General of Police Dilbag Singh has thanked the Lt. Governor G C Murmu and his administration and said that the creation of force on police proposal will help in fighting the drug menace in the UT.

“This will be yet another special wing within the police department to deal with crimes related to drugs and their trafficking,” Singh added.

Hurriyat Condemns Beerwah Youth’s Killing...

He said the killing of youth in presence of his uncle at point blank range is chilling and inhuman, to say the least.

“For the past thirty years Kashmir keeps witnessing such brutality from time to time with no accountability,” the Hurriyat spokesperson said.

APHC demanded that the “perpetrators of this brutal crime” should be held accountable and punished. It also condemned the use of force on people protesting the killing.

The Hurriyat spokesperson said at a time when the entire world is grappling with coronavirus pandemic for the people of Kashmir the pandemic is only an addition to the already existing uncertainty and fear that people are subjected to live under for the past decades.

“Leadership is under arrest while thousands of youth and Kashmiris from various walks of life are languishing in jails, local media is functioning under tremendous pressure and there is a repeated internet and communication gag,” the spokesperson added.

Landslides Block Kashmir Highway...

highway was suspended this afternoon after fresh landslides and shooting stones at Trishul Morh in Ramban.

Hundreds of Kashmir-bound vehicles, including SRTC buses ferrying stranded people and trucks carrying essential commodities, were stranded at various places on the highway due to the closure of the highway, reports said.

The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has pressed into service sophisticated machines and men to clear the landslides and to make the highway motorable, reports added.

CASO Carried Out In Sopore

“So far, no contact has been established with the militants,” the officials said.

Press More Mobile Pumps In City For Speedy Dewatering: Div Com To SMC

SRINAGAR, MAY 14: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole on Thursday conducted tour of Srinagar city to review dewatering exercise across the city areas.

During his visit, Pole visited Lal Chowk, Rajbagh, Sonwar, Gogji Bagh, Radio Kashmir, Jawahar Nagar, and other dewatering stations to take first hand appraisal of the dewatering exercise in view of the rainfall.

Divisional Commissioner, who was accompanied by Commissioner SMC, Gazanfar Ali, S.E Drainage along with Executive Engineers Drainage Circle and other officers inspected the functioning of various permanent

dewatering stations and portable mobile pumps across the city.

On the occasion, he directed SMC to press into services more mobile pumps across the city, particularly at the vulnerable points for a speedy dewatering of numerous submerged areas.

A live demonstration of high capacity dewatering pumps with ranging capacity from 2 lakh to 5 lakh litres per hour per unit was presented before Divisional Commissioner.

SMC has procured 12 high capacity dewatering units have already pressed into services at most inundated points. Commissioner SMC updated Mr Pole



that SMC's men and machinery are working round-the-clock to ensure that people should not face any inconvenience due to

the rain water.

SMC Commissioner further informed that 85 permanent dewatering stations having capacity

of 1300 cusecs and 115 mobile pumping units with a capacity ranging from 75000 litres to 5 lakh litres per unit are in place to dewater inundated areas.

Mobile dewatering pumps have been set up at different points in the city, he informed.

Besides, SMC has put pressed into Sucker Machines and high pressure mobile dewatering units for quick results.

Div Com was also briefed about the present scenario of drainage networking highlighting low lying and vulnerable areas and was briefed about the various ongoing drainage schemes and the future plans in drainage networking as well.

Div Com Directs improving of sample collection/ labeling, testing procedures

SRINAGAR, MAY 14: In wake of COVID-19 Pandemic, the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Pandurang K Pole Thursday chaired a meeting to review the measures for streamlining and further improving the functioning of the Corona virus testing laboratories at SKIMS Soura, GMC Srinagar and SKIMS Medical College Bemina besides sample collection centers at District/Subdistrict hospitals in kashmir division.

During the meeting several measures were discussed threadbare which include 24x7 functioning of labs, pool testing of samples, timely collection of samples in each districts, daily release of individual reports, walk-in testing by individuals, unnecessary re-testing of the suspects, usage of such machines having testing capacity of hundred samples per day, consolidated test reporting, regular supply of RNA extraction kits & CBNAT cartridges and other COVID-19 related measures.

The Divisional Commissioner directed for improving sample collection, labeling and testing procedures. He asked the concerned to ensure proper database of samples taken besides handing/taking of samples with proper receipts.

While interacting the Chief Medical Officers of Kashmir Division through Video Conferencing, the Div Com received first hand appraisal about the

present situation in their respective districts and directed them to ensure visible improvement with regard to Covid-19 containment by adopting target sampling. He further directed the CMOs to take samples of all goods and service providers in their respective jurisdiction besides all returnees.

The Divisional Commissioner also stressed the importance of increasing the capacity of COVID-19 laboratories, in terms of number of tests done per day and timely reporting. He said that this is very vital for overall COVID-19 control and mitigation operations across valley like Isolation, Administrative Quarantine, Home Quarantine, Contact Tracing, Sampling and other appropriate daily planning of these activities at highest level.

Mr Pole stressed for strict adherence to the Covid-19 protocol and guidelines while dealing with the Corona virus situation and exhorted officers to put in joint efforts in containment of the COVID-19 pandemic in a collective manner.

Principal GMC Dr Saima Rashid, Director Health Services Kashmir, OSD H&ME, HoDs of Microbiology SKIMS Soura, SKIMS Bemina & GMC, Registrar Academics GMC Srinagar, Medical Superintendents of SKIMS Soura, SKIMS MC Bemina and Associated Hospitals, Lab Coordinator SMHS and NHM were present in the meeting.

DC reviews arrangements at Quarantine Centres, Interacts with arriving residents



SRINAGAR, MAY 14: Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar Shahid Iqbal Choudhary visited more than two dozen quarantine centres in Panthachowk, Nowgam, Shalteng, South, Khanwar and North Tehsils to review the arrangements and interacted with residents arriving from different states.

More than 90 hotels across the city have been taken over by the administration and designated as quarantine centres. Another batch of 1214 persons from Udhampur, Jammu and Kathua arrival points reached Srinagar taking the number to more than 4000 in last one week.

Dr Shahid interacted with management staff of quarantine centres, field officials and house-keeping staff. He also visited the premises to oversee the facilities and requirements in place.

He inspected the basic facilities at quarantined centres and also reviewed implementation of safety protocol by the staff. He interacted with the residents and obtained feedback about arrangements. In view of requirements baby food, medicines and other items were dispatched to respective hotels.

It is pertinent to mention here that hoteliers in Srinagar have provided their hotels as quarantine centres and packed food is being provided to more than 4000 guests. Health department has conducted sampling of 1800 persons and more than 2000 test reports have been made available. The issue raised by residents about delay in test reports was also discussed threadbare during the visit of Deputy Commissioner and the procedure involved in the process

in view of huge numbers of arrivals in various districts being catered by SKIMS and GMC was informed.

Earlier the Deputy Commissioner, accompanied by ADCs Syed Hanief Balkhi, Masarat Hashim, Jt Director Planning Mohammad Yaseen Lone, Chief Medical Officer Dr Jahangir Bakhshi and other officers visited TRC where arrangements have been put in place for registration and screening in arrival from Udhampur, Jammu, Kathua as well as Srinagar airport. They interacted with the residents reporting at TRC after travel from various states. In many cases of old-age, serious ailments and diseases special arrangements were allowed for such persons. A dedicated team has also been deployed for logistics in such cases.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION KATHUA

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

e-NIT No. 02 of 2020-21/400-19/G

Dtd:- 02-05-2020

Executive Engineer PW(R&B) Division Kathua on behalf of Lieutenant of J&K Union Territory, invite tenders by e-tendering mode from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K Union Territory Govt. for the following works:-

S.No	Name of Work	Name of Division	Cost of document (In Rs.)	Security amount in shape of CDR / FDR (In Rs.)	Time and date of opening of tender	Class of Contractor	Type of contract
1.	General Maintenance/Up-Keeping of Govt. residential quarters, PWD office complex, PWD Dak Bunkglow Kathua for the year 2020-21 upto ending of March 2021	PWD (R&B) Division Kathua	600.00	50,000/-	18/05/2020 (1300 hrs.)	ABCD	Stage Contract 2020-21
2.	General Maintenance/Up-Keeping of DC Residence, DC Office Complex and District Court Complex at Kathua for the year 2020-21 upto ending of March 2021.	PWD (R&B) Division Kathua	600.00	50,000/-	18/05/2020 (1300 hrs.)	ABCD	Stage Contract 2020-21

Note:-

The tender documents can be seen and downloaded from website www.jktenders.gov.in.

1. Date of Publishing :-02.05.2020.

2. The Bidding documents can be downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in from 1000 Hrs on 02.05.2020 to 17.05.2020 (1600 Hrs)

3. a. The Bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the website www.jktenders.gov.in from 03.05.2020 to 17.05.2020 upto 1600 Hrs. The bids received will be opened at 1300 Hrs on 18.05.2020 on line.

b. The complete bidding process will be on line.

c. The bids of bidders shall be opened online in the office of Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Kathua on 18.05.2020 at 1300 Hrs.

4. List of tender documents to be scanned and uploaded within the period of bid submission.

(i) EMD in the form of CDR/FDR (pledged in favour of Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Kathua.

(ii) Registration card duly renewed for the current financial year viz. 2020-21.

(iii) PAN Card.

(iv) Treasury Challan/Receipt towards the cost of tender documents mention the name of work as well as NIT No. for which work fee was deposited.

(v) Complete address of Contractor/Firm/Agency with Mobile Nos.

5. As per the Govt. of Jammu and Kashmir Civil Secretariat Finance Department order's No. vide O.M. No. A/24(2017)-453 dtd 07.06.2018 and Superintending Engineer's order No. SE/1/859-45 dtd.14.06.2018 regarding Dispensing with the requirement of furnishing hard copies while submitting bids through E-tendering, the LI bidder should deposit the original EMD in the form of CDR/FDR in the office of the Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Kathua during working hours with in three days. If LI bidder fails to submit the original documents/Treasury challan/receipt/EMD with in three days, the Department will cancel the tender and action shall be taken against the contractor to debar in future tendering process as decide by the Engineer-in-charge.

6. The bid for the work shall remain open for acceptance for a period of 90 days from the date of Opening of bids. If any bidder/tenderer withdraws his bid/ tender before the said period or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid, the said earnest money shall stand forfeited.

7. Instructions to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

a. The interested bidder can download the NIT/bidding document from the website www.jktenders.gov.in

b. To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get (DSC) "Digital Signature Certificate" as per Information Technology Act-2000, to participate in online bidding. This certificate will be required for digitally signing the bid. Bids can get above mentioned Digital Certificate from any approved vendors. The Bidders, who already possess valid (DSC) Digital Signature Certificates, need not to procure new Digital Signature Certificate.

c. The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with Digital Signature. The bids cannot be uploaded without Digital Signature. No proposal will be accepted in physical form.

d. Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para 3(c).

e. Before submission of online bids, bidders must ensure that scanned copies of all the necessary documents have been attached with bid.

f. The department will not be responsible for bid in online submission of bids whatsoever reasons may be .

g. All the required information for bid must be filled and submitted online.

h. The details of cost of documents, EMD specified in the tender documents should be the same , as submitted online (scanned copies) otherwise bid will not be accepted.

i. Bidders can contact the undersigned for any guidance for getting DSC or any other relevant details in respect of e-tendering process.

8. No extra lead, lift , water allowance, dewatering and carriage of materials beyond whatever is provided in the BOQ shall be allowed.

9. All other items and conditions shall remain same as already advertised for similar nature of work in e-tendering system.

10. If extra items require to complete the work then the Payment for these items shall be made on overall appreciation/depreciation of allotment over SSR-2012.

11. Rate quoted by the contractor shall be inclusive of all Taxes.

12. The contractors may purchase material on his own however, Material can be had from Divisional Store on the rates applicable at the time of issuing material.

13. The terms & conditions shall be applicable based on Pay Account Office (PAO) System/ Treasury.

14. Time of completion is binding on the contractors and penalty shall be imposed for late completion.

15. Nothing on account for disposal of dewatering shall be paid what so ever reason i.e. construction of under ground Bunkers. The contractors/firms are advised to inspect the site before tendering for the work.

16. Nothing on account for disposal of Mulba/Material from the site shall be paid to the contractors and disposal of the Mulba/material as per the direction of Engineer-in-Charge.

17. Contractor should also get his staff/labourer and others assets including staff of PWD(R&B) Division Kathua associated with this work fully insured from a reputed Insurance Company in order to compensate any sort of loss by the insurance companies.

18. MATERIALS LIKE CEMENT AND STEEL :- The approved brands of cement/steel for this work shall be as under :-

a) CEMENT : ACC, Ultra Tech, Ambuja and Bangur or equivalent.

b) TOR STEEL of grade Fe : 550D: SAIL, Tata Tisco, Jindal & Rashtria Ispat or equivalent.

Special conditions:-

1. The work will be taken up at once as directed by Engineer in charge.

2. If the contractor fails to deploy the men and machinery for restoration of the buildings within four hours for Repair/Renovation/Improvement of Infrastructure, the Deptt. Reserves the right to execute the work departmentally at the risk and cost of the contractor on advertised rates and the contract get terminated automatically and his security deposit shall be forfeited for which no claim of the contractor shall be entertained at any level.

3. Photographs of pre execution and post restoration of all activities will need to be maintained and this will be the responsibility of the concerned contractor to maintain them.

4. The validity period of the contract will be upto 31-03-2021.

5. The rates to be quoted by the contractor for the item are as per unit basis and the quantities so executed shall be paid on the rates quoted by the contractor

19. Performance Security

a) Within 21 (twenty one) days after the date of receipt of the letter of Acceptance, the successful bidder/ contractor shall deliver to the Employer/concerned authority, a Performance Security in any of the required forms for an amount equivalent to 5% of the contract price plus additional security for unbalanced bid.

Additional Performance Security for Unbalanced Bids.

b) In Supersession to all the previous orders issued by this office, it is hereby directed that the successful bidder shall have to deposit as Additional Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG only before award of contract, in case bid of the successful bidder is found to be unbalance and the following scale shall apply thereto:-

S.No	Percentage of unbalance bid viz. advertised cost	Additional performance Security
1	Upto and including 15%	Nil
2	More than 15% Below	5.00% of advertised cost

No:- e-NIT No. 02 of 2020-21/400-19/G

Dtd:-02-05-2020

DIPK-722/20

Sd/-

Executive Engineer

PWD(R&B) Division, Kathua

DIAL-EMMA

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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

RAILWAYS

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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI
CALENDAR

21 Ramazan
1441

PRAYERS

FAJR

3: 54

ZUHR

12: 27

ASR

5:20

Magrib

7:28

ISHA

9:02

This Day In History

- 756 Abd-al-Rahman I becomes emir of Cordova, Spain
- 1213 - King John of England names Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury
- 1492 - Cheese & Bread rebellion: German mercenaries kill 232 residents of Alkmaar, Netherlands
- 1514 - Jodocus Badius Ascensius publishes Christiern Pedersen's Latin version of Saxo's Gesta Danorum, the oldest known version
- 1525 - The battle of Frankenhausen: German peasant army surrounded, 5,000 slaughtered ; ends the peasants' uprising
- 1572 - Louis van Nassau & huguenots occupy Valenciennes
- 1618 - German astronomer Johannes Kepler discovers the third of his three planetary laws his "harmonics law"
- 1648 - Treaty of Munster ratified by Spain & Netherlands
- 1701 - The War of the Spanish Succession begins
- 1718 - James Puckle, a London lawyer, patents world's 1st machine gun
- 1796 - France & Sardinia sign Peace treaty of Paris
- 1796 - First Coalition: Napoleon enters Milan in triumph with French troops
- 1862 - Battle of Drewry's Bluff (Fort Darling), Virginia
- 1864 - Battle of New Market, Virginia
- 1883 - Italy signs military treaty with Austria-Hungary & Germany
- 1897 - The Greek army retreats with heavy losses in the Greco-Turkish War.
- 1916 - Asiago, Italy, falls when Austrian troops attack the Italian front
- 1917 - The first officer's training camp is opened in the US, as the country prepares for war
- 1918 - Greeks troops land at Smyrna
- 1918 - The Finnish Civil War ends
- 1922 - Germany turns over the Upper Silesia region to Poland under Allied pressure and despite a plebiscite in favor of merging with Germany
- 1940 - German armoured division moves into Northern France
- 1943 - Joseph Stalin dissolves the Comintern (or Third International)
- 1941 - British attack Halfaya-pass & Fort Capuzzo in Egypt and Libya
- 1943 - Joseph Stalin dissolves the Comintern (or Third International)
- 1944 - Eisenhower, Montgomery, Churchill & George VI discuss D-Day plan
- 1945 - World War II: The final skirmish in Europe is fought near Prevalje, Slovenia
- 1948 - 28 years old British Mandate over Palestine ends
- 1948 - Troops from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia attack Israel
- 1955 - Vienna Treaty: Britain, France, US & USSR restore Austria's independence
- 1955 - The first ascent of Makalu, the world's fifth highest mountain.
- 1957 - 18,000 people at Madison Square Garden for Billy Graham launching his crusade
- 1957 - 1st British H-bomb explosion (over Christmas Island)
- 1960 - Sputnik 4 launched into Earth orbit; later recovery failed
- 1966 - South Vietnamese army battle Buddhists, about 80 die
- 1970 - France performs nuclear test at Mururoa atoll
- 1972 - Bus plunges into Nile River killing 50 pilgrims in Minia, Egypt
- 1981 - Soyuz 40 carries 2 cosmonauts (1 Romanian) to Salyut 6
- 1989 - Soviet President Gorbachev in Beijing for 1st Sino-Soviet summit in 30 yrs
- 1991 - Edith Cresson becomes France's 1st female premier
- 1991 - Nepal premier Bhattarai resigns
- 1995 - China performs nuclear test at Lop Nor, PRC
- 1997 - STS 84 (Atlantis 19), launches, 6th Shuttle-Mir Mission

From KO Archives

'School Bomb'

Rumours Harass City

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR - Rumors about bombs planted in schools created panic in many parts of the city today, causing anxiety and tension among students and parents.

The rumour mill went into overdrive in the morning with "reports" off a bomb having been placed in the government girl's higher secondary school in Chanpora. Police and the security forces immediately threw a cordon around the school and adjacent areas, and the bomb disposal combed the premises to detect the explosives.

Traffic on the Srinagar-Chanpora road came to a halt for several hours because of the operation, but the bomb disposal squad found no bombs in the school. Students, who sat petrified in their classrooms all through, were later evacuated out of the building.

Panic gripped the Kral Khud area of the city this afternoon after rumours began making rounds about bombs in the Hindu High and Vasanta schools. School authorities immediately sent the children home, but in this case also no bombs were found.

Another rumour that created fear in the city was that schools were receiving telephone calls threatening that the school would be blown up with explosives.

Asking people not pay attention to such "reports." a police spokesman said that the rumours were being circulated by "vested interests" with a view to create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity.

(Kashmir Observer, 15 May, 2005

KASHMIR OBSERVER

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Civilian Deaths

One more civilian was killed in CRPF firing on a vehicle in central Kashmir's Budgam district on Wednesday. Earlier in this month, a 14 year old mentally challenged boy Hazm Shafi Bhat was shot dead in Handwara. The latest killing took place at a checkpoint at Kawoosa, where Police said the civilian vehicle jumped at least two barricades following which CRPF opened fire. He was identified as 25 year old Merajuddin Shah, youngest of seven siblings.

But this version was contested by the uncle Ghulam Hassan Shah, an Assistant Sub-inspector in J&K Police, who accompanied Shah. According to him, they were stopped at a checkpoint by the CRPF and allowed to go after he showed his police card. But just when they were about to leave, a soldier came forward and fired at Shah. He died on way to hospital. The killing has stunned the Valley. It triggered protests in Shah's village. Predictable spectacle followed. In no time the news was in circulation across social media. The pictures and videos of the wailing women at Shah's home went viral. So did the anti-government slogans in the consequent protests. This was followed by reports in local media and the condemnations and demands for probe by the politicians and civil society groups

What the killing of Shah has done is to let slip the screen from a basic failure of the state' apparatus in J&K. The truth is that there is little that the state is expected to do so far as the security of the lives of the people is concerned. The killing of the civilians has been the single-most agonising feature of the life in Valley over the past many years. It is routine for the security personnel to fire at protesting youth and get away with it.

The parties might condemn, they might wring their hands, but it hardly generates a deep sense of outrage over the state of affairs. Beyond a day or two after the incident the state of affairs returns to normal. No action follows.

There is no introspection as to why it is that jumping a check point, if at all, it is true, needs to be responded with bullets. And why it is that the hundreds of such killings since 2008 have gone unprobed and unpunished. This has generated so deep a cynicism in Kashmir about the system that now an announcement of a probe or talk of accountability attracts scorn. This is very dangerous. The deepening loss of faith in the institutions has already forced people to turn away from them. And if nothing is done to redress this situation, it will not be before long that the simmering frustration would once again make the situation to get out of hand.

OTHER OPINION

Building Trust

From claiming that the Aarogya Setu app is unhackable, to suggesting that it must be the safest app ever because millions are downloading it — they are compelled to, actually — to issuing fresh guidelines to safeguard the privacy of users, the government has come a long way, tacitly acknowledging the trust deficit and the need to address it.

Trust is an essential ingredient for the success of Aarogya Setu in helping to contain the pandemic, because it must acquire a critical mass of users to be of any use. On Monday, an order by the empowered group on technology and data management, set up by the national executive of the Disaster Management Act, established the protocol for handling data by the various bodies involved in the management of the COVID-19 outbreak. Outside that circle, the data may be shared only with the research community in anonymised form. Breaches will attract penalties according to relevant sections of the Disaster Management Act, besides other applicable laws.

The government has fixed security flaws in data handling detected by a French white hat hacker, limited the purpose of data collection to dealing with the pandemic, and restricted the types of data which may be collected and the period for which it may be held. And crucially, by promising punitive measures, the order sets to rest public anxieties about privacy. Problems about technology are not adequately addressed by technology — by claiming that software is hacker-proof, for instance. It is best addressed by the law, by the certainty of liability and the penalties thereby attracted.

But perhaps this order should be read as a first step towards a law, as a letter of intent rather than a compact. Justice BN Srikrishna, who headed the committee which had produced the first draft of the Personal Data Protection Bill, has pointed out that the order is not lawful — supportive legislation is required by Aarogya Setu, rather than merely an order by the executive. On May 1, the ministry of home affairs had made the app mandatory for employees in the public and private sector, and in government. Local authorities were urged to secure complete coverage in containment zones. The Noida police then extended it to everyone, threatening imprisonment and fines for non-compliance. These may be emergency interventions, but the app now requires legislative backing. In the absence of an underlying law, it would remain vulnerable to legal challenge.

The Indian Express

Why 'Kerala Model' Is A Huge Success Against COVID-19

Indian state's unique social compact reflects very high levels of trust in institutions

SHASHI THAROOR

In achieving such impressive results, Kerala has built on its tradition of decentralised governance, transparency, public trust, and governmental accountability. It offers clear lessons for the rest of India, both in responding to the current crisis and in preparing for the next one.

As India's 1.3 billion people struggle to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the country's 28 states stands head and shoulders above the rest. Kerala, in southwestern India, has been so successful in "flattening the curve" that many now speak admiringly of a "Kerala Model" for handling public-health emergencies.

Kerala was the first Indian state to report a case of COVID-19 — a medical student who had arrived from Wuhan, China, at the end of January. When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a nationwide lockdown on March 24, Kerala had the most cases of any state.

Yet today, it ranks low on the list of confirmed cases, and high on the list of COVID-19 recoveries. Moreover, the state's fatality rate (0.53%) is the lowest in India, and it has managed to limit the spread of the virus without inflicting any of the human suffering seen in other parts of the country.

In addition to having the highest literacy rate in India (94%), Kerala also boasts a declining birth rate, higher life expectancy, more empowered women, and stronger welfare support for the indigent and the marginalised. People do not beg or starve in Kerala

- Shashi Tharoor

Kerala's formula for success has been straightforward. Public-health authorities have prioritised early detection through extensive testing, widespread contact tracing, and 28-day quarantines for all those infected (the rest of India, following the World Health Organisation's guidance, has required only 14 days).

Screening all arrivals

Since issuing its initial COVID-19 alert on January 18, the state has screened all arrivals at its four international airports, and immediately hospitalised or quarantined suspected cases. On February 4, Kerala declared COVID-19 a state-level disaster, and shut schools, restricted public gatherings, and instituted lockdowns in early March.

By the time the central government had followed suit weeks later, Kerala had already deployed more than 30,000 health workers and placed tens of thousands of people in quarantine.

Kerala's COVID-19 response emerged from a template that long preceded the current crisis. Among Indian states, it is unique for having allocated significant resources to public-health infrastructure, devolved power and funding to village-level bodies, and established a social system that promotes community participation and public cooperation.

In addition to having the highest literacy rate in India (94%), Kerala also boasts a declining birth rate, higher life expectancy, more empowered women, and stronger



welfare support for the indigent and the marginalised. People do not beg or starve in Kerala.

Rights-bearing citizens

The state offers universal access to health care and medical information, and respects all residents as rights-bearing citizens. No one is treated as a mere subject. Throughout the current crisis, Kerala's educated populace has behaved responsibly, limiting community transmission, cooperating with authorities, and seeking prompt treatment as needed.

This institutional and political culture is not the result of some one-off policy. Kerala has spent generations creating the infrastructure to support social development, placing it far ahead of the rest of India on many key indicators.

In addition to its rights-based welfare system, it has a vibrant civil society, free and independent media, and a competitive political system. Its robust form of social democracy reflects the contributions of alternating coalitions of Communist and Congress-led governments over time.

As foreign observers have noted, the state's social compact reflects extremely high levels of trust in institutions and elected representatives.

As a result, Kerala was able to impose restrictive measures far more humanely. When Keralans under home quarantine reported that they had no one to bring them essential supplies, the police promptly delivered what they needed.

When schools were closed, poor parents who rely on school lunches to provide their children with proper nourishment received the meals at home. Before the central government had even declared a lockdown, Kerala had announced a comprehensive economic relief package for citizens in need.

Meanwhile, Kudumbashree, a Keralan grass roots network of local organisations and women's self-help groups, has helped the state's

containment strategy by producing two million masks and 5,000 litres of hand sanitiser in the first month of the national lockdown.

Some 1,200 community kitchens were established to feed the indigent and unemployed, and Kudumbashree has already served 300,000 meals a day.

Kerala has maintained regular communication with the public about health risks, broadcasting precautionary messages through official channels to dispel fake news. Unlike other states, Kerala's response has centred on people's participation.

When migrant labourers became restive, they were given free accommodation and food, and urged to wait in place. These instructions were delivered in migrants' own languages, and duly followed.

Kerala is among India's most densely populated states, which makes its success in combating the pandemic all the more remarkable.

Moreover, an estimated 17% of its population works or lives elsewhere (their remittances account for 35% of the state's annual income), more than one million tourists visit each year, and hundreds of Keralan students study abroad, including in China.

All of this mobility makes the state more vulnerable to contagious outbreaks, and yet it is weathering the crisis with flying colours.

In achieving such impressive results, Kerala has built on its tradition of decentralised governance, transparency, public trust, and governmental accountability. It offers clear lessons for the rest of India, both in responding to the current crisis and in preparing for the next one.

Shashi Tharoor, a former UN under-secretary-general and former Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Human Resource Development, is an MP for the Indian National Congress.

Gulf News

No Joy For Kids As School Year Ends At Home

GEOFFREY GRIEF

Rituals provide societies honoured methods of coming together to celebrate accomplishments, to mark commitments, and to say goodbye. We know to throw our caps in the air at graduation, to walk down an aisle at a wedding, and to shed tears and bow heads at a funeral.

Today, graduations from high school, college, and graduate school are taking on a virtual patina. But even the time-honored transitions from one grade to the next - with the ritual cleaning out of a cubby, the thank you note to the teacher, the hallway hug of friends, and the end-of-the-year picnic - are cancelled.

Ambiguous loss is a term coined by Pauline Boss, a University of Minnesota professor, to describe significant losses that cannot be resolved, such as a loved one who is missing in action in war or a child who has been abducted and is still missing. In the current context, ambiguous loss can be considered as a lens for what we are going through now. We like to have certainty and now we do not.

Receiving one's degree will not feel the same. We will all - students, teachers, staff, and parents - be left feeling unfinished and separated, deprived of our rituals.



prived of our rituals.

How can families support their children in responding to the ambiguity of these endings? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Discuss the ambiguity. In Pauline Boss's writing, she emphasises that coping with ambiguous loss often requires us to recognise that it is not possible to be in control of the situation or to resolve the sense of uncertainty. Instead, we can learn new ways to live with both the virtual presence of people and their physical absence. We can agree that we are missing milestones while, at the same time, accepting new opportunities.

For children, sitting with this ambiguity and uncertainty is often a challenge (as it is for many adults). But families can talk about it with their children and acknowledge a range of emotions that may ensue, including a sense of loss, even as we build relationships and traditions in new ways. More celebrations will come our way.

2. Explore opportunities for gratitude. Researchers have repeatedly found that expressing gratitude is associated with improved mental health, well-being, and stronger relationships. Parents can model for children opportunities to identify

things they are grateful for, even in the context of unpredictable change and loss. A small moment, like connecting with a school friend virtually can be something for which to be thankful. Showing gratitude towards others can build on this.

3. Engage your child in decision-making. While there are many issues that children and teens don't have control over right now, there are also things that they can control - such as the order in which they do their schoolwork, which friends they talk to in the evening, and how they want to spend free time. Work with your child to identify decisions that they can make, so in moments when they feel vulnerable, they can focus on what they can do.

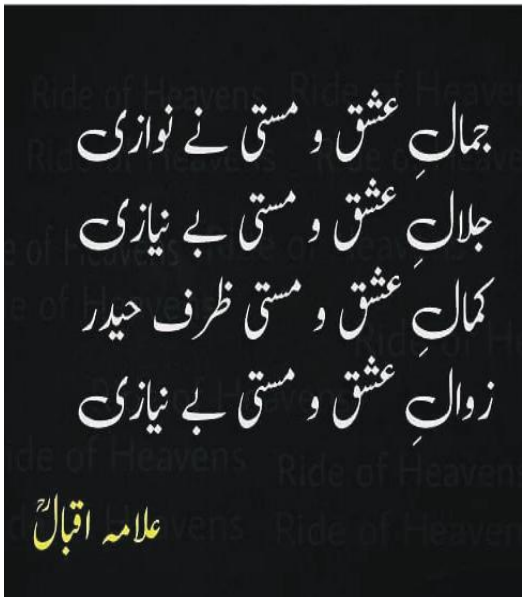
4. Approach yourself and your children with love. There is no blueprint for how to manage this time. A nonjudgmental lens of love and support may be the best way to enhance your connections and build feelings of value and worth.

As painful and as ambiguous as these losses are, we are going through them together. And with this shared experience, we can look to ourselves and to others for ways to build communities inside and outside of our homes.

Psychology Today

Muslim-e-Awwal Shahe Mardan Ali: Dr Iqbal On Hazrat Ali

Ko WEB DESK



21ST Ramazan is the martyrdom anniversary of Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the first Imam and fourth Caliph of Muslims. Thinker of The East, Allama Muhammad Iqbal who spear-headed the Muslim Renaissance in British India had a profound love for the progeny of Prophet (Pbuh). In one of his books, Asrar-e-Khudi, Iqbal had expressed his respectful love and admiration for Imam Ali (AS). Some of its extracts are reproduced below:

*Muslim e awwal shahe mardan Ali
Ishq ra sarmaya e iman Ali*

Ali is the first Muslim and the king of men, In Love's eyes, Ali is the Treasure of the faith.

*Az wilae dood manish zinda um
Dar jahan misle guhar tabinda um*

Devotion to his family inspires me with life, so I am shining like a pearl.

*Az rukhe uo faal Paighambar grift
Millat e Haq az shikohish far grift*

From Ali's face, the Prophet drew many a fair omen, by his majesty the true religion is glorified.

*Quwwat e deen e mubeen farmudaish
Kainaat aen pizeer az doodaish*

His commandments are the strength of Islam, all things pay allegiance to his House.

*Mursal e Haq kard namish Bu Turab
Haq Yad Allah khawnad dar Ummul Kitab*

The Apostle of God gave him the name Bu Turab (Father of soil), God in the Quran called him The Hand of Allah

*Sher e Haq ien khaak ra taskheer kard
Ien gile tareek ra akseer kard*

Ali, The Lion of God subdued the body's clay and transmuted this dark Earth to gold.

Murtaza kaz taigh e uo Haq raushan ast



Najaf al Ashraf, the resting place of Imam Ali (AS)

Bu Turab az fathe aqleem e tan ast

Murtaza(a), by whose sword the splendor of truth was revealed, is named Bu Turab from his conquest of the empire of body (clay).

*Hark e dar afaaq gardad Bu Turab
Baaz gardamad za maghrib aftaab*

Whosoever in the world if become a Bu Turab, turns back the Sun from West.

*Zaire paish inja shikohe Khyber ast
Dast e uo Unja khaseem e Kauser ast*

Here the Might of Khyber is under his feet and in Hereafter his hand will distribute the water of Kauser.

*Az khud aagahi Yadullahi kunad
Az Yadullahi shahinshahi kunad*

Through self-knowledge, he acts as God's Hand and by virtue of being God's Hand/ he reigns over every thing.

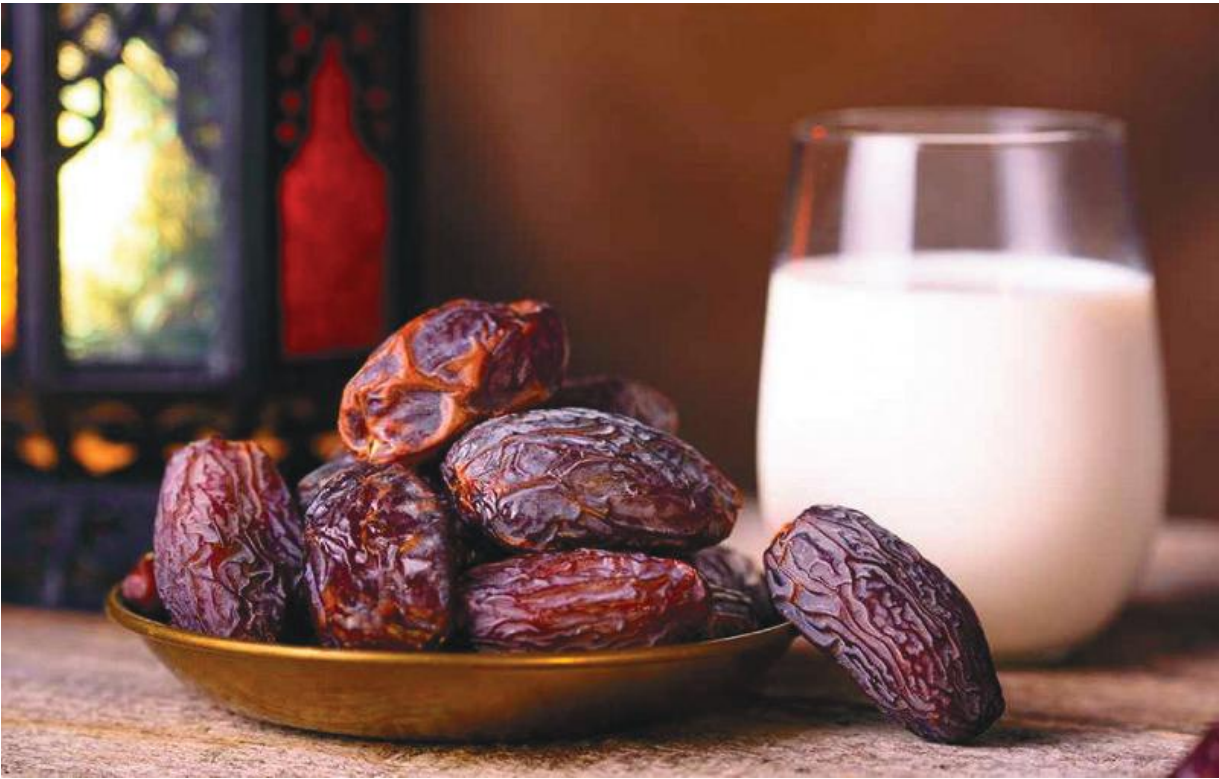
*Zaat e uo darwaza e shahre uloom
Zair e farmanish Hijaz o Cheen o Room*

He is the Gateway of the City of Knowledge; Arabia, China, and Greece are under his governance.

Ramazan Reminds Us Of Our Responsibilities

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

“The practice of compassion is central to the teachings of Islam, but sadly Islam is often hijacked by those who seek to spread violence and intolerance. Confucius is thought to be the pioneer who formulated what is known as the golden rule: “Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you.”



At a moment when so many people around the world are suffering, Ramazan reminds us of our common obligations to pursue justice and peace and to uphold the dignity of every human being, regardless of faith or background. While it is true that Ramazan is a time when families and friends gather and meals are shared, Ramadan is also a time of intense devotion and reflection.

I think that sometimes people tend to forget that Ramazan is more than just a month of refraining from food and drink, it is a time to make a steadfast commitment to living a morally upright life.

Ramadan is that momentous month that is incredibly special and deeply spiritual. The Quran states that the ultimate purpose of the fast is to attain piety. The Arabic word for fasting, sawm, literally

means restraint and self-control. Abstinence is a catalyst for self-discipline, for patience, good manners and good speech.

Fasting also inculcates the qualities of empathy and compassion towards those who are less fortunate than ourselves and who may be suffering because of poverty, famine or inequality.

For example, when a fasting person feels the pangs of hunger and thirst, this evokes a sense of solidarity and social responsibility, because it encourages them to be charitable. At the same time, it reminds them of the shared responsibility to treat others the way they themselves wish to be treated.

Compassion requires us to look into our own hearts, discover what gives us pain and refrain from inflicting that pain on anybody else.

The practice of compassion is central to the teachings of Islam, but

“For some people, faith is a remote and abstract entity though, and does not necessarily have any bearing on the outer character. However, the Quran consistently describes true believers as those having faith and performing righteous actions

sadly Islam is often hijacked by those who seek to spread violence and intolerance. Confucius is thought to be the pioneer who formulated what is known as the golden rule: “Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you.”

The important characteristics of compassion and selflessness are

scarce today. This is, perhaps, a consequence of the rampaging materialism that may have taken over our lives and compels us to succumb to the desires of our soul, plunging us into a state of spiritual deprivation. It is unfortunate that in our postmodern society we tend to overlook the fact that our actions have consequences and the liberties we enjoy come with responsibilities towards others.

This month is quintessentially about refining the character and taming the soul by purifying it from bad characteristics such as arrogance, selfishness, dishonesty and intolerance and increasing it with praiseworthy and good characteristics. Islam is inclusive in dealing with the human being. There is profound emphasis on the soul, because it governs the actions of the body.

For some people, faith is a remote and abstract entity though, and does not necessarily have any bearing on the outer character. However, the Quran consistently describes true believers as those having faith and performing righteous actions. Hence, adhering to the five pillars of Islam and having faith should be interwoven with outward morality. Morality is a core principle of Islam and needs to be perfected on a two-fold level.

On an individual level, we can do this by striving to adopt certain universal principles such as sincerity, honesty, justice and compassion into our daily lives. On a communal level we can try to interact with other people in a positive manner, such as showing kindness and justice to all people, regardless of race or religion.

Ramadan reminds us of the basic principles that bind people of different faiths together: peace, justice and equality; it also reminds us of our shared responsibility of treating others as we wish to be treated. This spirit of responsibility, peace and compassion is desperately needed in today's challenging and fearful world and hence, this spirit must be relentlessly upheld in the months and years to come.

SCIENTISTS DECODE How COVID-19 Disease Kills People



Press Trust Of India

BEIJING- COVID-19 mostly kills through an overreaction of the immune system, whose function is precisely to fight infections, say scientists who have decoded the mechanisms, symptoms, and diagnosis of the disease caused by the SARS-Cov-2 coronavirus.

In a study published in the journal *Frontiers in Public Health*, the researchers explained step-by-step how the virus infects the airways, multiplies inside cells, and in severe cases causes the immune

defences to overshoot with a "cytokine storm".

This storm is an over-activation of white blood cells, which release too-great amounts of cytokines — inflammation-stimulating molecules — into the blood, they said.

"Similar to what happens after infection with SARS and MERS, data show that patients with severe COVID-19 may have a cytokine storm syndrome," said study author Daishun Liu, Professor at Zunyi Medical University in China.

"The rapidly increased cytokines attract an excess of

immune cells such as lymphocytes and neutrophils, resulting in an infiltration of these cells into lung tissue and thus cause lung injury," Liu said.

The researchers explained that the cytokine storm ultimately causes high fever, excessive leakiness of blood vessels, and blood clotting inside the body.

It also causes extremely low blood pressure, lack of oxygen and excess acidity of the blood, and build-up of fluids in the lungs, they said.

The researchers noted that white blood cells are misdirected to attack and inflame even

healthy tissue, leading to failure of the lungs, heart, liver, intestines, kidneys, and genitals.

This multiple organ dysfunction syndrome (MODS) may worsen and shutdown the lungs, a condition called acute respiratory distress syndrome, (ARDS), they said.

This, the researchers explained, happens due to the formation of a so-called hyaline membrane — composed of debris of proteins and dead cells — lining the lungs, which makes absorption of oxygen difficult.

Most deaths due to COVID-19 are therefore due to respiratory

failure, they said.

The researchers explained that in the absence of a specific antiviral cure for COVID-19, the goal of treatment must be to the fight the symptoms, and lowering the mortality rate through intensive maintenance of organ function.

For example, an artificial liver blood purification system or renal replacement therapy can be used to filter the blood through mechanical means, they said.

The team noted that especially important are methods to supplement or replace lung function, for example with non-invasive mechanical ven-

tilation through a mask, ventilation through a tube into the windpipe, the administration of heated and humidified oxygen via a tube in the nose, or a heart-lung bypass.

The researchers stressed the importance of preventing secondary infections.

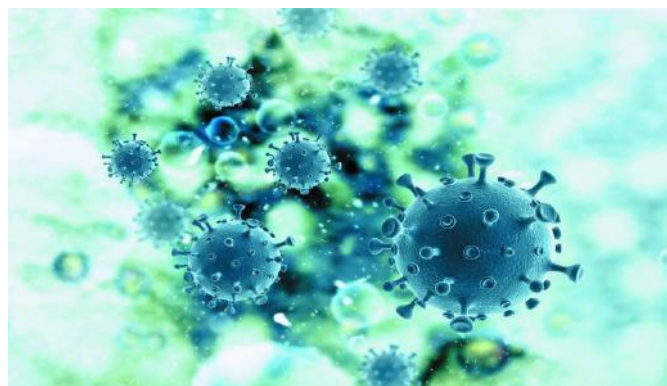
They noted that SARS-Cov-2 also invades the intestines, where it causes inflammation and leakiness of the gut lining, allowing the opportunistic entry of other disease-causing microorganisms.

The researchers advocate that this should be prevented with

nutritional support, for example with probiotics — beneficial bacteria that protect against the establishment of harmful ones — and nutrients and amino acids to improve the immune defences and function of the intestine.

"Because treatment for now relies on aggressive treatment of symptoms, preventative protection against secondary infections, such as bacteria and fungi, is particularly important to support organ function, especially in the heart, kidneys, and liver, to try and avoid further deterioration of their condition," Liu added.

Novel Coronavirus May Infect Human Intestines As Well: Study



BEIJING- The SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 may be capable of infecting human intestinal tract, in addition to the respiratory system, according to a study.

The study, published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, was conducted on human and bat organoids — miniaturised and simplified versions of the intestine produced in the laboratory.

In addition to reporting the creation of the first bat intestinal organoid, the study also included clinical isolation of the virus from a human stool sample, said the researchers from the University of Hong Kong.

Genetic analysis has revealed that SARS-CoV-2 is closely related to SARS-related coronaviruses found in horseshoe bats, they said.

However, the absence of laboratory models that can be used to study bat viruses limits study in this area, according to the researchers.

It is thought that bat organoids could potentially help in elucidating the origins of SARS-CoV-2, they said.

The researchers noted that the first bat organoid was derived from the horseshoe bat species *Rhinolophus sinicus* and simulated the cellular makeup of the intestinal epithelium.

They then assessed whether the organoids were susceptible to infection with SARS-CoV-2, and found that they were capable of sustaining viral replication.

The findings suggest that SARS-CoV-2 can infect bat intestinal cells, and thus, recapitulate the natural infection in bat intestine.

The researchers also investigated whether human intestinal organoids were susceptible to the virus and observed that viral replication took place here too.

They were also able to isolate SARS-CoV-2 from the stool specimen of a female patient diagnosed with COVID-19, which suggests that intestinal infection may have occurred.

The researchers note that the precise route by which human intestinal infection may take place is unclear, but that this could represent an additional route of viral transmission.

Absence May Increase Fondness For The Other, Study Suggests

Agencies

When it comes to forming or lasting bonds, longing for the other may be as important as being together, shows the results from a new brain imaging study of prairie voles — which are among only about 5 per cent of mammalian species besides humans who are monogamous.

The results of the study can be a cue to develop new therapies to treat conditions like autism, depression, and other disorders that make such emotional connections hard to come



by. The study also sheds light on why it's so hard to social distance.

"In order to maintain relationships over time, there has to be some motivation to be with that person when you are away from them," said lead author Zoe Donaldson, an assistant professor of behavioral neuroscience at the University of Colorado Boulder.

"Ours is the first paper to

pinpoint the potential neural basis for that motivation to reunite," Donaldson added.

Published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the study is a years-long effort of prairie voles by Donaldson. By observing the behavior and brain activity of the monogamous rodents, she seeks to better understand what brain regions — down to the cellular level — drive the instinct to form lasting bonds.

"We are uniquely hardwired to seek out close relationships as a source of comfort, and that often comes through physical acts of touch," she said.

Global Air Quality Significantly Impacted By COVID-19 Lockdowns: Study

Pres Trust Of India

Scientists have found that the levels of two major air pollutants drastically reduced globally since lockdowns began in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but a secondary pollutant — ground-level ozone — has increased in China. Two new studies, published in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, found that nitrogen dioxide pollution over northern China, Western Europe and the US decreased by as much as 60 per cent in early 2020 as compared to the same time last year.

One of the studies also found that particulate matter pollu-

tion — particles smaller than 2.5 microns — decreased by 35 per cent in northern China.

Such a significant drop in emissions is unprecedented since air quality monitoring from satellites began in the 1990s, said Jenny Stavrakou, an atmospheric scientist at the Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy in Brussels, and co-author of one of the research papers.

The researchers noted that improvements in air quality will likely be temporary, but the findings provide a glimpse into what air quality could be like in the future as emissions regulations become more stringent.

Social Media Influencers Could Encourage Teens To Follow Social Distancing Guidelines

Agencies

In a breakthrough study, researchers suggest that public health bodies should consider incentivising social media influencers to encourage adolescents to follow social distancing guidelines. They say that peer-to-peer campaigns are likely to be more successful in changing attitudes, given the fact that adolescents are choosing to ignore the guidelines set out by governments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Jack Andrews at the UCL Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, and first author of the paper, "For many people, adolescence — between the ages of 10 and 24 — is when you want to be making more social connec-

tions, not losing them. It's also a time of increased risk-taking and sensitivity to peer influence. For some adolescents, it's a challenge to stick to social distancing rules, particularly if their friends aren't following the rules." The study was published in the journal *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*.

Breaking social distancing rules is a risk-taking behaviour, putting at risk the health of the rule-breaker and of others — in many places with legal or financial consequences. But adolescents are particularly sensitive to the negative effects of social exclusion and may prefer to risk breaking the rules rather than lose their friends, say the researchers.

Campaigns led by adults that try to influence adoles-



cent behaviour often have mixed success. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the widespread implementation of social distancing measures, led by governments, which are likely to be in place in some form for the foreseeable future. But media reports of large student gatherings in the US in March demonstrated the challenge of stopping young people from meeting their friends face-to-face.

Social distancing guidance could be more effective if adolescents are allowed to develop and deliver their own campaigns, focused on changing peer attitudes around the importance of social distancing. With the current restrictions on face-to-face interventions, social media is expected to be particularly effective in promoting social distancing behaviours amongst adolescents.

"Adolescents look to their peers to understand social norms and align their behaviour with the group they want to belong to. The speed and extent of peer influence online are likely to amplify, because social media has such a wide and immediate reach," said Professor Sarah-Jayne Blakemore at the University of Cambridge's Department of Psychology, who led the report.

Previous studies have shown that adolescents are more likely to take certain risks, such as experimenting with drugs or posting sexual content online, when peers are present or doing the same things. Adolescents are also more likely to get involved in beneficial activities, such as volunteering in the community, if they know others who are doing them.

Truck Bomb In Eastern Afghan City Kills 5, Taliban Claim Responsibility

Agencies

Kabul: A truck packed with explosives blew up near a court in the eastern Afghan city of Gardez on Thursday, killing at least five people in an attack claimed by Taliban insurgents.

The explosion comes two days after at least 56 people were killed in attacks elsewhere in the country, including women and newborn babies, dealing a setback to peace plans in the war-ravaged nation.

"A car bomb explosion took place near a military court in Gardez city, which is a populated area. Dozens of civilians are feared to be dead and wounded," said Tariq Arian, an inte-

Arian blamed the militant Haqqani network, which has ties to Taliban rebels and the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba. These groups rarely publicly claim responsibility for attacks.

The blast comes after gunmen attacked a maternity hospital in Kabul, killing 24 people, including new mothers and newborn babies, on Tuesday. A suicide blast claimed by the Islamic State at a funeral in eastern Nangahar on the same day killed 32.

President Ashraf Ghani condemned the attacks and said he had ordered the military to switch to offensive mode rather than the defensive stance it had adopted as the United States withdraws



rior ministry spokesman.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid in a statement said the rebel group was responsible for the attack.

Emal Khan Momand, a military spokesman in Paktia province where Gardez is located, said the attack was carried out by a truck packed with explosives. Five people were killed and 14 were wounded, he said.

troops and tries to broker talks with the Taliban.

The Taliban denied any involvement in those attacks, but the government accused the group of fostering an environment in which terrorism thrives or of working with other militant groups who could have been involved, straining efforts by the United States to bring the insurgents and the Afghan government together.



'Major' Mental Health Crisis Looming From Pandemic: UN

Agencies

Washington: The coronavirus outbreak risks sparking a major global mental health crisis, the United Nations warned on Thursday, calling for urgent action to address the psychological suffering brought on by the pandemic.

While protecting physical health has been the main concern during the first months of the crisis, it is also placing huge mental strains on large swathes of the global population, the UN said in policy brief.

"After decades of neglect and underinvestment in mental health services, the Covid-19 pandemic is now hitting families and communities with additional mental stress," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned in a video message launching the brief.

"Even when the pandemic is brought under control, grief, anxiety and depression will continue to affect people and communities," he said.

The UN brief highlighted the mental strains on people fearing that they or loved ones will be infected or die from the novel coronavirus,

which has killed nearly 300,000 people worldwide since it first emerged in China late last year.

It also pointed to the psychological impact on vast numbers of people who have lost or are at risk of losing their livelihoods, have been separated from loved ones or have suffered under drastic lockdown orders.

'Tremendous stress'

"We know that the current situations, the fear and uncertainty, the economic turmoil — they all cause or could cause psychological distress," Devora Kestel, head of the World Health Organisation's mental health and substance use department, told a virtual briefing.

Health care workers and first responders — operating under "tremendous stress" — are particularly vulnerable, Kestel said, pointing to news reports indicating rises in suicides among medical workers.

A whole host of other groups also face particular psychological challenges brought on by the crisis.

Children being kept out of

school, for instance, face uncertainty and anxiety.

Along with women, they also face a heightened risk of domestic abuse as people spend lengthy amounts of time cooped up at home.

The elderly and people with pre-existing conditions, who are considered particularly at risk from the virus, meanwhile face increased stress over the threat of infection.

And people with pre-existing psychological issues could see them exacerbated, while accessing their usual treatment and face-to-face therapy may no longer be possible.

Thursday's policy brief pointed to a range of national studies indicating that mental distress is mounting rapidly.

One study conducted in the Amhara region of Ethiopia showed that 33 percent of the population were suffering from depression-linked symptoms — "a three-fold increase" from before the pandemic.

Other studies indicated that mental distress prevalence amid the crisis was as high as 60 percent in Iran and 45 percent in the United States, Kestel said.

Saudi To Be In Full Lockdown During Eid al-Fitr

Agencies

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia says it will go into a full lockdown during the days of celebration that follow the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan.

The Interior Ministry made the announcement early Wednesday morning, saying the lockdown would be in effect from May 23 through May 27.

Those days mark the start of Eid al-Fitr, the holiday that comes at the end of Ramadan. That holiday typically sees families invite loved ones over for meals and go out to eat and drink during the day.

Meanwhile, in the neighbouring United Arab Emirates, the federation of seven sheikhdoms says it will offer free coronavirus testing for all citizens beginning next week.

Foreigners in the country with coronavirus symptoms, pregnant women, those over 50 and those in contact with those who fell ill with COVID-19 also will be among those able to be tested for free.

Foreigners in the country with coronavirus symptoms, pregnant women, those over 50 and those in contact with those who fell ill with COVID-19 also will be among those able to be tested for free.

Private beaches at hotels also are beginning to reopen in Dubai, even as the number of confirmed cases and deaths continue to rise in the country.

Pakistan Reports 1,452 New Infections, 33 Deaths

Press Trust Of India

Islamabad: Pakistan's total number of coronavirus cases reached 35,788 after 1,452 new infections were reported, while the death toll rose to 770 with 33 fresh fatalities, the health ministry said on Thursday, as the spread of the deadly disease through local transmission showed a dangerous upward trajectory.

According to the Ministry of National Health Services, Punjab province reported 13,561 cases, Sindh 13,341,

followed by Sindh (92 per cent), Punjab (85 per cent), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (84 per cent) and Gilgit-Baltistan (63 per cent), local media reported.

Meanwhile, the Peshawar High Court (PHC) has been closed until May 31 after some of the staff members tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

According to a notification of the PHC Registrar, except the necessary staff, all the offices, branches, bar rooms, advocate general block, consultation room, library and bookshop of the high court will



The total number of COVID-19 cases in the country reached 35,788 after 1,452 patients were added in the last 24 hours,

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 5,252, Balochistan 2,239, Islamabad 822, Gilgit-Baltistan 482 and Pakistan-administered Kashmir 91 cases.

With 33 more deaths, Pakistan's death toll due to COVID-19 reached 770 on Thursday.

The total number of COVID-19 cases in the country reached 35,788 after 1,452 patients were added in the last 24 hours, the ministry said.

A total of 9,695 people have fully recovered, it said.

So far, 3,30,750 tests have been conducted, including 13,051 in the last 24 hours.

According to a report published by the World Health Organisation Pakistan chapter, the spread of the infection through local transmission showed a dangerous upward trajectory.

Balochistan province showed the highest rate of local transmission at 93 per cent,

remain closed.

The Pakistan government announced last week that it would begin a phased lifting of the lockdown due to its effect on the economy and the workforce.

As the lockdown was eased, trade activities were resumed with Iran at Tافتan after two trade gateways were reopened. They were closed for two-and-a-half months due to the coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

In another development, Ferozsons Laboratories, a local Pakistani company, announced that its subsidiary BF Biosciences Ltd (BFBL) has signed a non-exclusive license agreement with Gilead Sciences Inc for manufacturing and selling remdesivir, an experimental antiviral drug allowed by the US authorities to be used to treat coronavirus patients.

'Virus Eminently Capable Of Spreading Through Speech'

Agencies

Microdroplets generated by speech can remain suspended in the air in an enclosed space for more than ten minutes, a study published Wednesday showed, underscoring their likely role in spreading COVID-19.

Researchers at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) had a person loudly repeat the phrase "Stay healthy" for 25 seconds inside a closed box.

A laser projected into the box illuminated droplets, allowing them to be seen and counted.

They stayed in the air for an average of 12 minutes, the study published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS) showed.

Taking into account the known concentration of coronavirus in saliva, scientists estimated that each minute of loudly speaking can generate more than 1,000 virus-containing droplets capable of remaining airborne for eight minutes or more in a closed space.

"This direct visualisation demonstrates how normal speech generates airborne droplets that can remain suspended for tens of minutes or longer and are eminently capable of transmitting disease in confined spaces," the researchers conclude.

The same team had observed that speaking less loudly generates fewer droplets, in a work published in the New England Journal of Medicine in April.

If the level of infectiousness of Covid-19 through speech can be confirmed, it could give a scientific boost to recommendations in many countries to wear a face mask, and help explain the virus's rapid spread.

CORONAVIRUS WHO Warns 'This Virus May Never Go Away'

Agencies

Geneva: The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 could become endemic like HIV, the World Health Organization said on Wednesday, warning against any attempt to predict how long it would keep circulating and calling for a "massive effort" to counter it.

"It is important to put this on the table: this virus may become just another endemic virus in our communities, and this virus may never go away," WHO emergencies expert Mike Ryan told an online briefing.

"I think it is important we are realistic and I don't think anyone can predict when this disease will disappear," he added.

"I think there are no promises in this and there are no dates.

This disease may settle into a long problem, or it may not be." However, he said the world had some control over how it coped with the disease, although



this would take a "massive effort" even if a vaccine was found — a prospect he described as a "massive moonshot".

More than 100 potential vaccines are being developed, including several in clinical trials, but experts have underscored the difficulties of finding vaccines that are effective against coronaviruses.

Ryan noted that vaccines exist for other illnesses, such as measles, that have not been eliminated.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus added: "The trajectory is in our hands, and it's everybody's business, and we should all contribute to stop this pandemic."

NEWSMAKERS

Wellington: New Zealand's government plans to borrow and spend vast amounts of money as it tries to keep unemployment below 10% in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Finance minister Grant Robertson on Thursday unveiled a budget unlike any in the nation's history. Debt would shoot up from just over 20% of GDP to 54% by 2023, and thousands of jobs created by putting people to work building homes and improving the environment.

Still, the increased spending will not be enough to offset the economic devastation caused by the pandemic. Unemployment is expected to rise from just over 4% to nearly 10% by June.

Robertson acknowledged that tourism, which had accounted for about 10% of the economy, was not going to be the same for many years to come.



New Zealand plans spending spree to counter virus job losses

"We face a global economic and health crisis not seen since the Great Depression," Robertson said.

The budget was released on the same day the nation lifted most of its lockdown restrictions. Malls, retail stores and restaurants all reopened, and many people returned to their workplaces. That reflected the country's success to date in its

attempts to eliminate the virus. Health authorities on Thursday reported zero new infections for the third day in a row. New Zealand has reported a total of about 1,500 confirmed infections and 21 deaths.

Under the budget plan, the government will spend 50 billion New Zealand dollars (\$30 billion) over four years to help boost the economy.

The government had entered the crisis running a surplus and with its books in good shape compared to many other countries. Robertson said the crisis called for increased spending rather than cutting back.

"I'm not a fan of austerity," he said.

More than half of all workers in New Zealand are currently being subsidized by the government under a program that was quickly set up as the nation went into a strict lockdown in March. The budget would extend the scheme for hard-hit businesses. The plan also calls for 11,000 environmental jobs to be created, some of them temporary. People would be put to work killing pests and restoring wetlands. And up to 8,000 new homes would be built, creating thousands of construction jobs. Spending would also be increased on everything from health care and education to school lunches and the postal service.

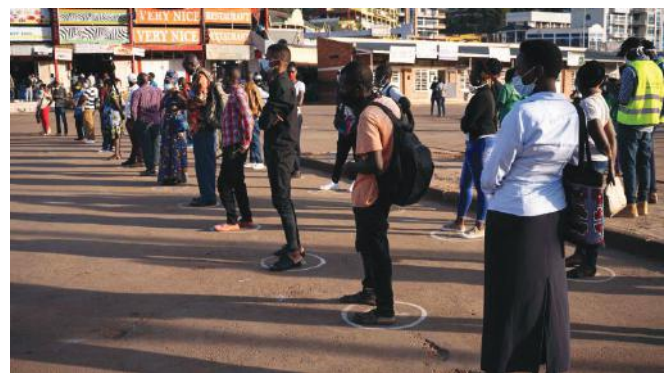
Burundi kicks out WHO officials as they raise concern over mass political rallies

Kigali, Rwanda: Burundi is kicking out the World Health Organisation's top official in the country just days before the presidential election and after the WHO raised concerns about crowded political rallies.

A foreign ministry letter seen by The Associated Press says the WHO representative to Burundi, Walter Kazadi Mulombo, has been declared persona non grata and must leave the East African nation by Friday.

The letter says three WHO experts also must go.

The letter has no explanation for the expulsions. Reached by phone and asked for details, Foreign Minister Ezechiel Nibigira hung up Thursday morning.



The WHO representative, Mulombo, did not immediately respond to phone calls.

The day that election campaigning in Burundi began late last month, images circulated online of crowded political rallies.

The head of the WHO Af-

rica region messaged the head of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about it, the Africa CDC chief has said.

Burundi has 27 confirmed cases of the coronavirus, but some have raised concerns that more cases exist.

Indian Troops Maintaining 'Posture' Along Border With China: Army Chief

NEW DELHI: Indian troops were maintaining their "posture" along the border with China while infrastructure development in the frontier areas was on track, Army Chief Gen M M Naravane said on Thursday, days after personnel of the two countries were locked in two separate incidents of violent face-offs.

Gen Naravane said the incidents in Eastern Ladakh and North Sikkim involved aggressive behaviour by Chinese and Indian troops resulting in minor injuries to personnel from both the sides.

The Army Chief said both sides "disengaged" after dialogue and interaction at the

after the Wuhan and Marmallapuram summits," Gen Naravane said.

He said Indian Border troops have always been upholding peace and tranquillity along with the border areas.

"I can say with confidence that the development of infrastructure capabilities along our northern borders is on track. Our force posture will not suffer due to the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

It is learnt that the situation in the Eastern Ladakh region remained tense with troops of the two countries maintaining a close watch on each other demonstrating aggressive posturing, even nine days after the vio-



local level.

"It is reiterated that both these incidents are neither co-related nor do they have any connection with other global or local activities," he told journalists when asked about the face-offs.

"All such incidents are managed by established mechanisms where-in local formations from both sides resolve issues mutually as per established protocols and strategic guidelines given by the prime minister

lent clash involving 250 soldiers from both sides.

The confrontation began on the evening of May 5 and both sides decided to "disengage" the next day.

In a separate incident, nearly 150 Indian and Chinese military personnel were engaged in a face-off near Naku La Pass in the Sikkim sector of the Sino-India border on Saturday. At least 10 soldiers from both sides sustained injuries in the incident. PTI

Railways To Cancel All Bookings Till June 30; Shramik, Special Trains To Continue



The Railways has decided to cancel all old bookings for regular trains scheduled till June 30 and provide full refund for them.

However, the Shramik Special trains, which started from May 1, and the special trains, which started operations from May 12, will continue to operate, an order from the Railways said.

The tickets, which are to be cancelled, were booked during the lockdown period when the Railways was allowing bookings for journeys in June.

Regular mail, express, passenger and suburban services of the Railways had been suspended from March 25 due to the coronavirus-triggered lockdown.

Earlier, all bookings for regular trains were stopped till May 17, till lockdown 3.0

remains in force.

'Refund for passengers barred from travelling due to COVID-19 symptoms'

Passengers who are disallowed from travelling on trains because of symptoms associated with the novel coronavirus will receive full refund for their tickets, the Railways has said.

According to the guidelines issued by the ministry of home affairs, all passengers shall be compulsorily screened and only asymptomatic passengers shall be allowed to enter/board trains.

"If, during screening, a passenger has very high temperature/symptoms of COVID-19 etc, he shall not be allowed to travel despite having confirmed tickets. In such case, full refund shall be provided to the passenger," the order stated.



Work From Home a reality for Central government employees soon?

Post Lockdown, 'Work From Home' Could Be An Option For Central Government Employees

NEW DELHI: Asserting that central government employees may have to work with staggered attendance and variable working hours, the Personnel Ministry has come out with a draft framework for 'work from home' for the staff post-lockdown.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) may provide option for work from home to the eligible officers/staff for 15 days in a year as a matter of policy, it said.

There are 48.34 lakh central government employees. In a communique to all central government departments, the Personnel Ministry said the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated many ministries to operate from home to maintain social distancing.

"Many of the ministries/departments in Government of India have successfully managed and rendered exemplary results in combat against the ongoing pandemic outbreak during the lockdown period by leveraging e-office and video conferencing facilities of National Informatics Centre (NIC). This was the first-of-its-kind experience in the Government of India," it said.

It is quite likely that for the near future, the central secretariat will

continue to go for staggered attendance and variable working hours to maintain social distancing at workplace, the ministry said.

"Therefore, a broad framework for work from home is important to standardize the operating procedure even post lock down situation and to ensure safety and security of information, while accessing government files and information remotely from home," it said.

Accordingly, a new set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been finalised for the employees to ensure smooth and seamless functioning of the government for continuity of the office works besides imparting resilience in the ecosystem even post lock down situations.

Employees will be provided with the logistic supports in the form of laptop/ desktop by the respective ministries/departments.

"Ministries may use the inventory of laptops on rotational basis for the officers who are working from home and needed such logistic support, the draft guidelines said.

They may also get reimbursement for internet services that they would use while working from home.

"Department of Expenditure may

consider reimbursement for data uses to the officers working from home and if required may issue separate guidelines in this regards," the draft guidelines said.

It proposed extra protocol for all VIP and Parliament matters that require utmost attention.

"Therefore, SMS alerts be sent for all such receipts and files to the next officer in the channel," it said.

The draft guidelines said ministries/departments concerned, who are not yet using the e-office module, would make endeavour for its expeditious implementation in their secretariat, attached and subordinate offices in a "time bound manner".

Presently, about 75 ministries/departments are actively using e-office platform of which 57 have achieved more than 80 per cent of their work. E-office refers to digitization/computerization of office working.

However, "classified papers/files" cannot be processed while working from home.

"As per instructions of the Ministry of Home Affairs no classified information shall be handled through e-office. Therefore, classified files shall not be processed in e-office during work from home," it said.

Plea Seeks Declaration Of Amount Received, Spent By PM CARES Fund

NAGPUR: The Bombay High Court has sought the Centre's response to a petition seeking declaration of the funds received by the Prime Minister's Citizens Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situation (PM CARES), a public charitable trust created by the government amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Justice Madhav Jamdar of the high court's Nagpur bench was, on May 12, hearing a petition filed by advocate Arvind Waghmare, seeking a direction to the government to declare funds received and the expenditure of the same on the government's website periodically.

The court asked the Union Government to file an affidavit in response to the plea and posted the matter for further hearing on May 15.

As per the plea, the PM CARES trust, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as its chairperson and ministers from the Departments of Defence, Home and Finance as its members, was created with the prime objective of dealing with the emergency or distress posed by the outbreak of COVID-19.

The trust was created in order to have financial assistance from



people in the country and also from overseas, to provide relief and assistance to those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As per the guidelines of the PM CARES Fund, apart from the chairperson and three other trustees, the chairperson had to appoint or nominate three more trustees. However, since the formation of the trust on March 28, 2020, till date no appointment has been made, the petition claimed.

The petition has sought a direction

to the government and the trust to appoint or nominate at least two members from opposition parties to have a proper check and transparency.

"In order to fortify and strengthen the general public's faith and confidence, it is necessary to issue a direction to the government to declare the funds collected by the PM CARES Fund to date, and how the same have been used for the benefits of citizens affected by COVID-19," the plea said. PTI

14 Migrant Workers Killed In 2 Road Accidents In UP, MP

GUNA: Eight migrant workers were killed and nearly 50 others injured when the bus in which they were travelling collided with a truck near Guna town in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday morning, police said.

The accident took place between 3 am and 4 am when the victims were on their way to Uttar Pradesh border from Maharashtra, Cantt police station in-charge Madan Mohan Malviya said.

The injured were rushed to a nearby district hospital. Policemen involved in the rescue work were later quarantined in the wake of the COVID-19 scare, another police official said. PTI

Bus runs over 6 migrant workers in UP's Muzaffarnagar

Muzaffarnagar: Six migrant workers, who were walking to their homes in Bihar from Punjab, were killed and five others seri-

ously injured when a speeding bus ran over them on the Delhi-Saharanpur Highway in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district, officials said on Thursday.

The incident took place on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday between Ghauli checkpoint and Rotimata Toll Plaza, about 20 km from here, Senior Superintendent of Police Abhishek Yadav said.

The bus driver had been arrested, the SSP said.

Locals suspect that the driver was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident.

Two of the deceased persons were identified as Bijender, 25, and Harsh, 20. The rest were yet to be identified, police said.

The injured -- Sushil, Nathu Saini, Pawan Saini, Pramod and Ramji Rai -- were rushed to hospital, they said. PTI



Sensex Skids 886 Pts As Stimulus Euphoria Fizzles Out RIL HDFC Twins Top Drags

MUMBAI: The BSE Sensex plummeted 886 points on Thursday as concerns over the efficacy of the government's stimulus package and grim global cues hampered investor confidence.

After crashing over 955 points during the day, the 30-share index settled 885.72 points or 2.77 per cent lower at 31,122.89.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty tanked 240.80 points, or 2.57 per cent, to close at 9,142.75.

Market players were disappointed as the immediate spend out of the government's Rs 20 lakh crore fiscal stimulus package was seen to be relatively small, raising doubts about the revival of growth any time soon, experts said.

Further, global markets tanked following the WHO's comments that the novel coronavirus "may never go away".

Tech Mahindra was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, cracking 5.24 per cent, followed by Infosys, HDFC, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries and NTPC.

On the other hand, Hero MotoCorp, L&T, Maruti, UltraTech Cement and Sun Pharma led the gainers' chart, climbing up to 2.28 per cent.

The government released truncated data for April wholesale price-based inflation, which showed deflation in primary articles was 0.79 per cent, while fuel and power basket saw a deflation of 10.12 per cent last month amid the nationwide lockdown.

"Indian benchmark indices wiped out all the previous session gains with Nifty ended below 9150 level due to unenthusiastic response to the relief package announcements made on Wednesday amid weak global cues.

"Capital goods and me-

dia stocks were up while IT, metals, financials, and telecom shares were down. All eyes are now on the balance two announcements by FM over Thursday and Friday," said Deepak Jasani, Head Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

Announcing the second tranche of economic stimulus measures post market hours, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said these will be for the benefit of migrant workers, street vendors and small farmers.

BSE IT, energy, teck, finance, metal, bankex, oil and gas, power and realty indices lost up to 3.60 per cent, while healthcare, FMCG and capital goods closed with modest gains.

The broader midcap and smallcap indices dropped up to 0.63 per cent.

Asian markets were in the red after the World Health Organization warned that the novel coronavirus "may never go away".

On top of that, US Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell warned of a "highly uncertain" outlook for the world's top economy.

Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul closed with losses. Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading on a negative note in early deals.

International oil benchmark Brent crude futures surged 3.85 per cent to USD 30.32 per barrel.

On the currency front, the rupee slipped 10 paise to provisionally close at 75.56 against the US dollar.

In India, the death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 2,549 and the number of cases climbed to 78,003, according to the health ministry.

Globally, the number of cases linked to the disease has crossed 43.47 lakh and the death toll has topped 2.97 lakh. PTI

NEWS MAKER

BCI Asks Lawyers Not To Wear Coat Long Gowns During COVID-19

NEW DELHI: The Bar Council of India asked lawyers across the country on Thursday not to wear coats and long gowns during the hearings through video conferencing before any court or tribunal as a "precautionary measure to check the spread of coronavirus infection".

The apex bar body's direction came a day after the Supreme Court issued a notification asking lawyers appearing before it via video conferencing not to wear coats and long gowns.

"It is notified for information of all advocates of the country, that considering the medical advice and also the circular dated May 13, 2020 issued by the Supreme Court, all lawyers may wear 'plain white shirt/white salwar-kameez/white saree with plain white neck band' during hearing/ proceed-

ings before all high courts and all other courts, tribunals, commissions and all other forums and no coat or gown/ robes are/is required to be worn during such time period during which the threat of spread of corona virus looms large and/ or till such time the council further issues another administrative order modifying/ overriding this order.

"This administrative order is being issued as a precautionary measure to check the spread of corona virus infection under the present situation. This order will come into force with immediate effect and will be operative until further orders of the council," BCI's secretary Srimanto Sen said in the notification.

The apex court on Wednesday came out with a similar notification

for the lawyers appearing before it following one such observation by the Chief Justice of India S A Bobde.

The apex court has been conducting hearing through video conferencing only since March 25 due to the nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). It had even suspended the entry of advocates and other staff into the high security zone on the basis of their proximity cards, till further orders.

During the proceedings on Wednesday, the CJI and Justices Indu Malhotra and Hrishikesh Roy were not wearing their coats and gowns when they assembled in the courtroom here for the hearing through video conferencing.

The bench, which was hearing arguments of senior lawyer Kapil Sibal

in a case, observed that the judges and the lawyers should not wear coat and gown for the time being as they make it easier "to catch virus".

The impact of the observation was instant as the lawyers were seen appearing without coat and gown in cases heard after that through video conferencing.

Earlier, the apex court had said on Tuesday that as part of a pilot project, the judges may come to the courtrooms in the apex court premises from next week to hold proceedings through video conferencing.

During the lockdown, the benches usually assemble at the residences of the judges and the lawyers are allowed to join the video conferencing from their homes or offices. PTI

Please Take My Money Unconditionally And Close Case: Vijay Mallya To Govt

NEW DELHI: Embattled liquor baron Vijay Mallya, who is fighting against his extradition to India, on Thursday asked the government to accept his offer to repay 100 per cent of his loan dues and close case against him.

While congratulating the Indian government over the Rs 20 lakh crore economic package, Mallya lamented that his repeated offers to repay his dues have been ignored.

"Congratulations to the Government for a Covid-19 relief package. They can print as much currency as they want BUT should a small contributor like me who offers 100% payback of State owned Bank loans be constantly ignored?" he

said in a tweet.

Mallya, promoter of the defunct Kingfisher Airlines, who is wanted in India on alleged fraud and money laundering charges amounting to estimated Rs 9,000 crore, added, "Please take my money unconditionally and close."

Earlier this month, Mallya had filed an appeal in the UK Supreme Court after losing an appeal in the London High Court against an extradition order to India on alleged charges of fraud and money laundering related to uncovered loans to Kingfisher Airlines.

In the past, Mallya had tweeted that he had offered to pay 100 per cent of the amount borrowed by



Kingfisher Airlines to the banks but neither banks were willing to take the money nor the Enforcement Directorate was willing to release his attached assets at the behest of the banks. PTI