



SCIENTISTS
CREATE WASHABLE COATING
FOR PPES THAT REPELS VIRUSES

Researchers have created a textile coating that can prevent viruses from adhering to the surface of masks, gowns, and other personal protective equipment (PPE), an advance that may lead to better protection of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
According to the scientists, including those from the University of Pittsburgh in the US, textiles and materials used in PPEs can absorb and carry viruses and bacteria, inadvertently spreading disease the wearer sought to contain. They said the coating, described in the journal ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces, provides.....

News Digest

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‘Sleep-Deprived, Stigmatised, Sidelined’: The Covid Chronicle Of Kashmiri Nurses

Swati Joshi

Taking care of Covid-19 patients “24 hours at a stretch” for over a month now, Rubina (not her real name) badly misses her home while serving her homeland at the war-front against the invisible enemy. Shuttling between her quarter and ward, the sleep-deprived staff nurse at Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura, remains on toes while attending the sulking and sorrowing patients. And yet, she feels sidelined in the current Covid limelight on the

healthcare workers.

“We nurses already lack the visibility in the health sector,” Rubina, the 26-year-old nurse from Baramulla, said. “It feels good if someone writes about us.”

Her tribe is on the emergency calling since March 18, when Kashmir reported its first viral case. Till May 15, Jammu and Kashmir had already reported 983 confirmed cases of Covid-19 with 11 casualties. Since the vaccine for the disease is still work in progress, the healthcare workers treating Covid-19 patients are the most vulnerable group.



Pic:Abid Bhat

“To tell you honestly,” said Shaheena Ismail, a nursing officer at GB Pant hospital, Srinagar, “we fear whether or not we’ll be able to go back home safely, while tackling this war-

like situation in our hospitals.”

Despite taking every precaution, she said, the nursing staff doesn’t know which patient will be positive and which will be negative.

To avoid the distress, the nursing officer handles every patient as positive because she’s at the risk of getting herself and her family infected.

“Many of the nursing officers don’t go home for weeks,” she said. “The nurses’ working roster is to work for 3 days in a week for 24 hours duration.”

Given the paucity of healthcare staff in J&K hospitals, most of these nurses are

putting up the extra efforts as frontline warriors. With the result, they’re not able to give time to themselves.

According to a manpower audit report of health and medical education department 2018, J&K is “severely short” of nursing staff.

The report says that the doctor-patient ratio in J&K is the lowest in India.

Against a requirement of 3193 nurses as per the IPHS Norms, there are only 1290 sanctioned posts of staff nurses in the J&K with a deficit of 1903 posts that need to be created, the report notes. “There is also an urgent need

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5 Hurt In Clashes Over Friday Prayers

Srinagar: Violent protests broke out Friday in Rahmoo area of south Kashmir’s Pulwama district after locals hit the streets and protested barring of congregational prayers by the authorities over Covid-19 pandemic. Defying prohibitory orders imposed in wake of coronavirus pandemic, scores of villagers this afternoon assembled in Rahmoo area and staged a protest over not allowing

• P-02

Woman Ends Life In Anantnag

Srinagar: A young woman on Friday allegedly committed suicide inside her house in a village in south Kashmir’s Anantnag district, reports said. The 22-year-old allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself inside her home at Trahpoo village of Acchabal, news agency KNO reported. She was shifted to nearby hospital where doctors declared her brought dead. After the completion of medical

• P-02

Body Of Rajouri Teen Exhumed

Srinagar: Body of a 19-year-old boy was exhumed on Friday in Rajouri for autopsy as part of investigation. Police sources said that the boy identified as Shabir, son of Ramim Ahmed of Saranoo village died a week ago, news agency KNO reported. His family buried him at their ancestral graveyard, considering it natural death. However, after the matter came into notice of police, they became suspicious about cause of the death. “On the orders of District Magistrate

• P-02

Kashmir Highway Reopens

Srinagar: Traffic was on Friday restored on the 270-km-long Srinagar-Jammu National Highway, after remaining suspended since Thursday afternoon due to landslides and shooting stones. “Stranded vehicles, including trucks and SRTC buses, were allowed to ply on the highway after remaining stuck since Thursday afternoon due to landslides and shooting stones at Trishul Morh and adjoining areas in Ramban,” a traffic police official said. Hundreds of vehicles, including

• P-02

‘India Must Gear Up To Face Community Transmission Of COVID-19’

Press Trust Of India

BENGALURU: India must gear up to face the possibility of community spread of the COVID-19, a prominent health expert said on Friday, cautioning that there could be more widespread transmission of the novel coronavirus due to easing of the lockdown.

On some experts suggesting that there is already community transmission (stage 3) of the virus in the country, President of Public Health Foundation of India, Prof. K Srinath Reddy maintained that it is a matter of definition.

Because, if one looks at the spread to people without history of travel or history of contact, certainly there are several such cases, he said.

“But most of them are concentrated around the original points of entry of the foreign travellers or the travel routes of their contacts. So, these people who are describing it as stage 2 still are saying this is traceable local transmission, it is not unpredictable community transmission, he told PTL.

Therefore, we are avoiding the term community transmission. It is a matter of definitions and language; we need not debate that really, Reddy, who formerly headed the Department of Cardiology at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), said.

But he said it should be recognised that community transmission has occurred in virtually every country which experienced this pandemic in a major form and India should also be prepared for it and act as though it is happening and take all precautionary containment measures.

There is not only risk and but actually threat of community transmission, said Reddy, who presently serves as an Adjunct Professor of Epidemiology at Harvard.

According to him, nations in South East Asia, including Malay-



Pic:Abid Bhat

sia, and India in particular, have kept the COVID-19 death rates per million of the population low compared to countries where the pandemic broke out around the same time.

He said the low death rate in India could be the benefit of multiple factors such as younger age group, more rural population, temperature and climatic conditions as well as the benefits of the containment measures which preceded lockdown, and then got much more consolidated with the lockdown.

“It’s quite possible that

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Covid-19 Crosses 1000-Mark In J&K, 30 More Test Positive

2 Patients, GMC Gatekeeper Among New Cases

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir crossed thousand mark on Friday after 30 fresh cases, including two patients admitted to the SMHS hospital here, tested positive for virus, taking the number of infected people across the Union Territory to 1013.

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

Of fresh cases, twenty-one were reported from Kashmir and nine from Jammu division, they said.

In Kashmir, eleven cases were reported from Srinagar, six from Baramulla, two from Kupwara and one each from Pulwama & Bandipora districts. In Jammu division, four cases were reported from Kathua, two from Ramban, one each from Jammu, Udhampur & Rajouri districts, they said.

They said among the fresh cases, 11 were reported from Srinagar, six from Baramulla, four from Kathua, two each from Kupwara and Ramban besides one each from Bandipora, Pulwama, Jammu, Udhampur and Ramban.

Regarding two patients who tested positive at SMHS hospital, its medical superintendent Dr Nazir Choudhary

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Kansal Is New Administrative Head Of PDD

Observer New Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir on Friday posted senior bureaucrat Rohit Kansal as new Principal Secretary of the crucial Power Development Department (PDD).

Kansal, who is the public face of J&K government, was posted as principal secretary of Power Development Department considered as one of the most significant departments.

According to an order, Kansal would also hold responsibilities of Administrative Secretary, Information Department, Managing Director, J&K Power Development Corporation Limited and Managing Director, J&K Power Corporation Limited, in addition to his own duties. The 1995-batch IAS officer shall also hold the charge of Principal Secretary (Coordination) to coordinate with Government of India for review and monitoring of issues/projects. He was appointed as government spokesman by Governor Satya Pal Malik

• P-02

Govt Appoints Chibber As J&K Bank Chairman

Zubair Iqbal To Be First Full-Fledged MD



Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir Government on Friday appointed RK Chibber as chairman of J&K Bank for next three years and Zubair Iqbal Bhat as its first full-fledged managing director.

According to Finance department’s communiques to J&K Bank, RK Chibber and Zubair Iqbal would respectively be chairman and managing director of J&K Bank for next three years.

In June last year, the Board of Directors of J&K Bank recommended the appointment of separate chairman and a managing director of the bank. The J&K was also repeatedly directed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to separate the positions of Chairman and Managing Director for better governance.

On June 10, 2019, the Reserve Bank had approved the appointment of R K Chibber as

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NIA Files Charges Against Six In Parihar Brothers Killing

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday filed a chargesheet against six people, including three slain militants of Hizbul Mujahideen, in connection with the killing of Jammu and Kashmir state BJP secretary Anil Parihar and his brother in 2018.

According to a spokesperson of the NIA, the chargesheet named Nisar Ahmed Sheikh, Nishad Ahmed Butt and Azad Hussain Bagwan, alleged to be over ground workers of the militant group, and charged them with various provisions of Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The chargesheet was filed in a special court here.


The NIA also named Osama-bin-Javid, Haroon Abbas Wani and Zahid Hussain in the chargesheet as accused who carried out the strike on November 1, 2018 in Kishtawar.

However, all three were killed in encounters with security forces from September 2019 to January 2020.

Parihar and his brother were gunned down outside his house in 2018.

During investigation, the NIA alleged that Sheikh,

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3 Special Trains Bring 2200 J&K Residents Home

Govt says 49218 Stranded Residents Evacuated So Far

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration said nearly 50,000 stranded people have been evacuated from other states, even as three fresh batches of over two thousand residents of the Union Territory reached Jammu in three different trainson Friday.

Over 900 people from the Union Territory reached Jammu this morning from Delhi in Rajdhani express, while another train from the capital carried 523 people to Udhampur district of the region, an official spokesperson said. A train from Aligarh brought 781 J&K residents. Deputy Commissioner, Udham-


China Defends Building Dam In Gilgit-Baltistan

Press Trust Of India

BEIJING: China on Friday defended its state-run company taking up the contract to build the Diamer-Bhasha dam in Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-controlled-Kashmir (PcK) despite objection from India, saying that it is part of a “win-win” bilateral cooperation to promote the wellbeing of the local population.

On Wednesday, Pakistan government signed a whopping Rs 442 billion (USD 5.8 billion) contract for a joint venture between Chinese state-run firm China Power and Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), a commercial arm of Pakistan’s powerful military for the construction of the dam.

India on Thursday took strong



Representation image

note of Pakistan awarding the mega-contract to build the dam in Gilgit-Baltistan, saying carrying out of such projects in territories under Pakistan’s “illegal occupation” was not proper.

“China’s position on the issue of Kashmir is consistent.

»PAGE 02

J&K Acquires 30K VTM Kits To Ramp Up Testing

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: As 50,000 stranded people returned home to Kashmir, the union territory administration has acquired 30,000 viral transport media (VTM) kits to ramp up the testing for coronavirus to ensure that the infection does not spread.

An Indian Air Force (IAF) plane brought in the 30,000 VTM kits to Kashmir on Friday, officials said.

They said the kits have been imported in bulk to ramp up the testing of people from Kashmir who are stranded in various parts of the country due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

“We had 13 travellers, who returned to Kashmir recently, testing positive for COVID-19 on Thursday.

COVID-19 Related ‘Harassment’ Against Muslims In India Unfortunate: US

Press Trust Of India

WASHINGTON- The US has seen unfortunate reports of COVID-19 related “rhetoric and harassment” against the Muslim community in India, a top American diplomat has said, asserting that it has been exacerbated by fake news and misinformation shared on social media.

Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, however, also said that the US was encouraged by the statements from senior Indian officials calling for unity amidst the unprecedented spread of the pandemic.

Brownback was briefing reporters on Thursday on the impact of COVID-19 on religious

minorities throughout the world.

“In India, we have seen reports of unfortunate COVID-19-related rhetoric and harassment, particularly against the Muslim community. This has been exacerbated by fake news reports, misinformation being shared via social media. There have also been instances of Muslims being attacked for allegedly spreading the coronavirus,” Brownback said during a conference call.

“Now, I have been encouraged and we have been encouraged by statements from senior Indian officials really urging a unity, and noting the prime minister stated even that COVID-19 does not see religion, language, or borders, which is certainly true,” said the US official on international religious freedom.

India has rejected as “propaganda” some social media posts alleging harassment of Muslims in the country for spreading the coronavirus.

“Much of what you see is propaganda by interested parties. Stray tweets can not be used to characterize our bilateral ties with these countries,” external affairs ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said last month.

His statement had come in the wake of angry reactions on Twitter by leading citizens and rights activists from various Arab countries alleging that Muslims were being blamed for spreading COVID-19 in India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also criticised any form of discrimination, saying the COVID-19

pandemic affects everyone equally.

“COVID-19 does not see race, religion, colour, caste, creed, language or border before striking. Our response and conduct thereafter should attach primacy to unity and brotherhood,” he said in a post on LinkedIn last month.

Modi’s remarks came in the backdrop of a section of right wing organisations frequently raking up the issue of Tablighi-Jamaat members being responsible for a large number of COVID-19 infections in India.

About 30 per cent of the total infections in India has been attributed to the fallout of a TablighiJamaat meet held in New Delhi in March.

Turning to the plight of the religious minorities in other parts

of the world, Brownback said it was a “tough situation” for them in Pakistan, China and Sri Lanka.

“It is a tough situation for a lot of religious minorities in various places around the world,” he said, adding that the problems tend to fall into about five categories.

“One is just a straight government repression that some governments are using this to further repress the religious minorities. Second is just discrimination in the health care sector, wherein governments deny health care to some of the religious minorities in various places,” he said.

A third is in the kind of hoaxes and scapegoating category, where some of the religious minorities are scapegoated, targeted. There is fake news being put out that they are the reason

for the spread of the COVID-19 virus in their country. Fourth is online inflammatory speech, where actors are putting out disinformation campaigns that are targeting particularly religious minority groups. And then, a final category is this growth of misuse of technology to further repress, discriminate, or surveil that is outside of really the scope of the crisis, he said.

In Pakistan, he referred to the Christian sanitation workers.

“They are the ones that get the jobs of sweepers and sanitation workers. And now, as the sanitation work includes collecting contaminated waste from hospital quarantine wards across the country, these workers must not be neglected as the government works to increase distribution of personal

protective equipment for front line workers. You can’t single out and isolate this religious minority that’s the Christian workers that are the sanitation workers,” he said. “In China, we are seeing a couple of particular faces of this taking place in the religious persecution category in Tibet, towards the Tibetans,” Brownback said. Even during the strictest parts of the lockdown, China was conducting a campaign to send a million police to 10 million homes in Tibet to further restrict the Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhism, even during the pandemic. “We are seeing in Uighur Muslims, they’re facing increase of vulnerabilities as they are being forced to work despite coronavirus risk, and they’re being further exposed,” he said.

‘Sleep-Deprived, Stigmatised, Sidelined’...

for creating Staff for the proposed Nursing Colleges to train a requisite number of good quality Nurses in the State.”

Mindful of this crisis situation, MahaparaMushtaq, a junior grade nurse at Government Medical College (GMC) Anantnag, said the deficit infrastructure and manpower is creating impediments in Covid fight back in her hometown.

“Active cases are coming down in Srinagar,” Mahapara said. “However in a district like Anantnag the numbers continue to soar up. And to tackle the health crisis, we’re certainly running short of staff.”

But instead of coming to the rescue of the understrength and overburdened nursing class, Jammu and Kashmir administration amidst pandemic terminated around 250 nurses - employed in five Government Medical Colleges.

The move only drew raging flak in locked down region.

The nurses recruited under an academic arrangement program last year were removed from duty and replaced with permanent recruits to fill the vacancy.

The permanent recruits being freshers are not as experienced as the incumbent nurses who were told to discontinue. Taking a strong note of the move, senior Congress MP ShashiTharoor requested New Delhi to take the matter and protect the nurses from being terminated.

“Have received urgent SOS from nurses that on 12 April, the J&K Govt dismissed 181 trained professionals of the Health and Medical Education Department, including 97 staff nurses and paramedics, in the midst of COVID-19,” tweetedTharoor.

“How can frontline warriors against the deadly virus be fired at the very time when they are needed most? These healthcare professionals had been selected under SRO 24 by following a proper procedure and are now being arbitrarily terminated. Pls protect them,” added the MP.

As a face-saver and fill the void, students pursuing Post Graduation were soon called, to work as a nursing staff.

“I’m currently on a 2-year study leave doing my PG,” said Rubina, the SKIMS nurse. “But I was called to the hospital along with my friends recently and put on the Covid duty.”

Some of these developments amid pandemic fail to make news. And since the administration has already debarred the healthcare workers from reporting to media, the nursing staff continues to suffer in silence.

Perhaps that’s why many of them went on their routine job, than celebrating International Nurse Day on May 12.

The day commemorates the birthday of the founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale. During the 1854 Crimean War, Nightingale brought 38 volunteer nurses to care for soldiers. This year’s theme for the International Nurse Day was “A Voice to Lead – Nursing the World to Health”.

While the world took to social media in praise of nurses for being the frontline warriors amidst the pandemic, some Kashmiri nurses reported stigma for doing their job during the current Covid crisis.

Speaking about the problems faced, Rubina recollected an incident of being stigmatized in her hospital.

“I was waiting along with my colleagues outside our own hospital administration room to apply for Covid passes that would make our movement possible,” said the staff nurse at SKIMS.

“But to our surprise the moment they came to know that we’re posted in Covid isolation wards, they closed the door with a bang, saying, ‘Look at them! They’ve come here after being posted with Covid patients’. I don’t think we deserve such a disheartening treatment for leading from the front during this crisis!”

Kashmiri nurses are reporting this ill-treatment when many people are standing on their roof banging plates and lightning diyas to express their gratitude to the healthcare workers.

And yet, in reality, the healthcare workers, especially nurses are facing social discrimination from neighbors and landlords. Mahapara, the Anantnag-based nurse, mentions a case of social stigma when one of her colleagues was asked to vacate her room by the landlord.

“People are reluctant to get in contact with healthcare workers coming from direct or indirect patient care areas,” the junior grade nurse said.

But nurses, said Wani Azhar, a staff nurse at SKIMS, cannot maintain a gap while dealing with any patients, even if some of them might be infected with the coronavirus.

Not only social discrimination, many nurses have to deal with patients’ rude behavior as well. “Most of them are not ready to cooperate with us,” Rubina said. “They keep demanding and over expecting.”

The staff nurse at SKIMS said that the patients know that they are being monitored closely by the government as well as media and they are taking full advantage of it.

“They have demands like one would have in a hotel rather than in a hospital,” Rubina continued. “While everything is provided by the hospital administration, the patients still want to go home and if their demands are not met, they abuse the staff.”

But on the question of the protective gear, each of these nurses who spoke with Kashmir Observer gave a positive response.

MustaqeemJahan, a nursing officer at SKIMS, said the hospital administration has provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to each staff for “fighting this disease and for protecting ourselves”.

“While I’m not sure about other hospitals,” Shaheena, the nursing officer at GB Pant Hospital, said, “the nurses are well equipped with the PPE in our hospital.”

According to her conversation with her colleagues, seniors, and batchmates, the nursing officer claimed that other periphery care hospitals where there is much more burden on healthcare have limited facilities with meager staff members.

“In those hospitals, where there should be an adequate number of PPEs, nurses are burning the midnight oil at the risk of their lives,” Shaheena said.

On these nursing challenges during pandemic, Dr. Mir Mushtaq, spokesman of Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK), and a doctor at District Hospital Pulwama, said these healthcare

workers should be taken care of and given due credits.

“Nurses are the wheel of healthcare,” Dr Mushtaq said. “They’re the ones who’re mostly in touch with the patients.”

Since a majority of the nurses are females, the doctor emphasized, they should be given a proper environment where they feel comfortable.

The doctor is of the view that though clapping and showering flowers are good gestures by the government but not good enough to appreciate the work done by healthcare workers. The government, he said, needs to come with some plans to provide incentives to the nurses so that they stay motivated.

“Healthcare is a team effort,” he said. “Doctors cannot work if one part of the team is missing. Our work relies on teamwork and we need to appreciate everyone.”

‘India Must Gear Up To Face Community Transmission..

all of these factors have been helpful and we have seen that benefit, Reddy said.

But we need to continue to consolidate that. There are some risk factors, when the lockdown opens there will be much greater mobility of people, there could be more widespread transmission of the virus, so we have to maintain as much as possible physical distancing, continue practices like wearing masks and hand-washing as precautionary measures, he said.

Things are going to be difficult in overcrowded areas, especially slum areas.

We will have to try and provide as much facilities as possible, particularly for elderly people and to people with co-morbidities, whether they can be provided temporary shelters elsewhere with good social cares.

Fortunately, he said, most of the infections are restricted to large cities and areas radiating around them.

Referring to return of migrant workers, he said care must be taken to see that they themselves will not be victims of the epidemic, and at the same they dont infect others.

“But most important thing is to protect the rural areas (from COVID-19) because two-thirds of India is in rural areas, and the transmission of the virus is low there because mobility is low, Reddy said.

Several precautionary measures have to be taken in order to contain the virus because the risk of transmission will certainly increase with the lifting of the lockdown.

We must recognise that this virus is going to stay on for some time and we have to make sure that at least for the next one year, we try and keep the virus as slowly moving as possible by physical distancing and other protective measures like masks and handwashing.”

Evolutionary biology of the virus says that when the movement is greatly restricted and its chances of transmission are greatly reduced, the virus actually can turn into a milder virus, said Reddy, who is also an Adjunct Professor of the Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University and Honorary Professor of Medicine at the University of Sydney.

So, we will have to do everything to reduce the transmission, speed and number, at the same time try and moving it towards milder form to our own defensive measures.

So, while there are threats, there are also opportunities for us to protect ourselves and even control not only the spread of the virus but also the virulence of the virus, he added.

Covid-19 Crosses 1000 -Mark In J&K, 30 More ...

said “One patient was admitted to CD hospital and later his test came out to be negative. He was kept in separate room. His fresh test came out to be positive again. He has now been shifted (CD) again.”

Regarding another patient, the medical superintendent said she is a 29-year-old woman who was operated in ENT on May 8. “She was shifted to surgical ICU. Her test came positive,” he said, adding, “Many doctors, nurses and patients would now be quarantined.”

Choudhary said that almost 20 doctors and nurses besides the patients would now be quarantined.

Sources said that among the fresh cases is also gate keeper at GMC. “One can imagine how many move through the gate. We will have to act quickly,” a senior doctor at GMC Srinagar said.

At SKIMS, the Valley’s premier healthcare institution, eight out of the total samples which were processed at hospital’s viral diagnostic lab returned positive of the virus.

They include six from Baramulla and one each from Pulwama and Bandipora districts. They include 22-year-old from Pulwama, 28-year-old and 40-year-old from Mirgund Baramulla, 9-year-old boy, 11-year-old girl, 20-year-old woman and 40-year-old from Tangmarg besides 20-year-old from Sopore Baramulla while one case—23-year-old woman—is from Nadihal Bandopora.

Professor Farooq Jan, medical superintendent SKIMS said almost all of them have history of travel to New Delhi and Bangalore while one case is a contact of a previous covid-19 patient.

At Chest Diseases hospital, 12 test reports came positive for coronavirus. All of them are said to be travellers

Regarding those who tested positive at CD lab include 45-year-old man from Samba, at present guest house in Rajbagh Srinagar, 29-year-old woman from Habbakadal (admitted to Surgical ICU SMHS hospital), 38-year-old woman and 35-year-old from Ramban 35-year-old man from Udhampur, 39-year-old man from Kathua, 33-year-old man from KishanpurUdhampur, 31-year-old from FaridKote Punjab, 21-year-old man from DahnagriKathua, 38-year-old Jodhpur Rajasthan and 31-year-old Nowshera Rajouri.

Of the total number of cases reported so far, 903 are from Kashmir and 110 from Jammu. Eleven people (nine In Kashmir and two In Jammu) have died and 513 patients (456 from Kashmir and 57 from Jammu) have recovered. The number of active cases stands at 489 (438 in Kashmir and 51 in Jammu), officials said.

More than 1 Lakh people have been kept under surveillance including those who are either in government established

quarantine facilities or in home isolation.

Kansal Is New Administrative Head ...

led administration in 2019.

The government also transferred M. Raju, Secretary, Power Development Department and posted him as Secretary, Planning, Development and Monitoring Department.

He shall also hold the charge of Administrative Secretary, Hospitality & Protocol, Estates, Civil Aviation Departments and Managing Director, J&K Project Construction Corporation Limited, in addition to his own duties, till further orders.

Govt Transfers 14 Police Officers ...

vacancy.

M. FieselQureshi, (JKPS:2002), Additional SP, Samba, has been transferred and posted as Assistant Director, SKPA, Udhampur, against an available vacancy.

Naresh Singh, (JKPS:2004), Additional SP, CID (CI), Jammu, has been transferred and posted as SP, PC, Jammu, vice Mr. Sandeep Mehta.

Aijaz Ahmad Zargar, (JKPS:2004), Additional SP, Kishtwar, has been transferred and posted as Additional SP, Samba, vice Mr. M. FieselQureshi.

FarooqQesor Malik, (JKPS:2004), Additional SP, Poonch, has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commandant, IR-1st Battalion, against an available vacancy.

Khalid Amin, (JKPS:2004), Deputy Commandant, IR-15th Battalion, has been transferred and posted as Additional SP, Poonch, vice Mr. FarooqQesor Malik.

MubbasherHussain, (JKPS.2004), Additional SP, PC, Anantnag, has been transferred and posted as Additional SP, Security, Kashmir, against an available vacancy.

Mushim Ahmad, (JKPS.2004), SP, SSG, has been transferred and posted as Additional SP, Kishtwar, vice Aijaz Ahmad Zargar.

Parvaiz Ahmad Dar, (JKPS:2007), Additional SP, PC, Kupwara, has been transferred and posted as Additional SP, PC, Anantnag, vice Mr. MubbasherHussain.

Deepak Digra, (JKPS:2008), Deputy Commandant, JKAP-5th Battalion, has been transferred and posted as SP, South, Jammu, vice Mr. Vinay Kumar.

Pardeep Singh, (JKPS:2008), Deputy Commandant, IR-11th Battalion, has been transferred and posted as Additional SP, Traffic, City Jammu, vice Mr. AmitBhasin.

Kulbir Chand Handa, (JKPS:2008), SP, Katra, is transferred and posted as Additional SP, CID (CI), Jammu, vice Mr. Naresh Singh.

Govt Appoints Chibber As J&K Bank Chairman...

interim CMD of Jammu and Kashmir Bank for three months following the removal of Parvez Ahmed from the post by the then state government.

He received a month’s extension in September 2019 to continue as the bank’s interim CMD, followed by a six months extension in October last year.

“I am directed to convey that the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has taken the following decision in exercise of the powers under Article 69(i) of the Articles of Association of the J&K Bank: Mr RK Chhibber, chairman-cum- managing director, shall be a non- executive director on the Board of J&K Bank Ltd. for a period of three years or till further orders, whichever is earlier.

Consequent to the above, the Board of the J&K Bank Ltd may appoint/elect him as the chairman of the Board of the J&K Bank Ltd.” reads Finance department’s letter. Similarly, the government has appointed ZubairIqbal, senior vice-president HDFC Bank, as managing director of J&K Bank for next three years.

“I am directed to convey that the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has, in exercise of the powers under Article 69 (i) of the Articles of Association of J&K Bank Ltd, decided to appoint MrZubairIqbal, senior vice-president of HDFC Bank as a government nominee director on the Board of J&K Bank Ltd. for a period of three years or till further orders, whichever is earlier. Consequent to the above, the Board of the J&K Bank Ltd. may appoint/elect him as the managing Director of the J&K Bank Ltd,” reads another letter. (KNO)

NIA Files Charges Against Six In Parihar Brothers Killing

Butt and Bagwan, all residents of Kishtwar and arrested in November last year, had helped the three militants in carrying out the attack on the brothers.

The NIA said that the probe unearthed a larger conspiracy of these militants and the OGWs of the outfit to revive militancy in the region of Chenab valley – Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban in Jammu region.

These militants not only carried out the murder of Parihar brothers but they carried out three other militancy acts in Kishtwar in 2019.

The NIA said that HizbulMujahideen commander Jahangir Saroori had devised ways and means to raise funds to sustain the activities of banned militant group for which they looted weapons from police to enhance their armed strength.

The agency said further investigation continues against Saroori who is absconding.

3 Special Trains Bring 2200 J&K Residents Home...

spokesperson added.

Meanwhile, as per the official communiqué 49218 people have returned to Jammu and Kashmir till today through Lakhapur. These include 11513 from Punjab, 18286 from Himachal Pradesh, 3905 from Delhi, 650 from Guajrat, 1538 from Rajasthan, 2401 from Haryana, 96 from Chhattisgarh, 2666 from Uttarakhand, 326 from Maharashtra, 2766 from Uttar Pradesh, 42 from Odhisa, 35 from Assam, 814 from Madhya Pradesh, 88 from Dehradun, 486 from Chandigarh, 316 from Telengana, 142 from Bihar and 3148 from other states and UTs.

China Defends Building Dam In Gilgit-Baltistan...

China and Pakistan conduct economic cooperation to promote economic development and improve the wellbeing of the local people,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here.

“This is mutually beneficial and win-win” cooperation, he said.

The two countries are also building the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor through PaK which connects both the countries. India has also objected to China over the CPEC as it traverses through Pck.

The Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi on Thursday said, “Our position is consistent and clear that entire territory of the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have been, are and will continue to be integral and inalienable part of India.”

“We have consistently conveyed our protests and shared concerns with both Pakistan and China on all such projects in the Indian territories under Pakistan’s illegal occupation,” it said.

J&K Acquires 30K VTM Kits To Ramp Up Testing...

people returning from outside the valley to exercise utmost caution.

“Nothing is more important than this,” he added.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has conducted over 63,000 tests for COVID-19 so far. Out of these, 983 people have tested positive.

While 11 patients have died due to the infection, more than 450 have recovered. More than 1.03 lakh persons were put under various kinds surveillance and 26,603 were put in administrative quarantine facilities set up across the union territory.

5 Hurt In Clashes Over Friday Prayers...

them to offer prayers, news agency GNS reported. Chanting slogans, the protesters alleged that faithful were not being allowed to pray in mosques while the sale of liquor was allowed in the outside states.

As the protests were going on, a joint team of police and CRPF reached the area and tried to disperse the protesters with batons, reports said.

However, the protesters offered stiff resistance and pelted rocks and stones on the state forces triggering off fierce clashes. The government forces fired pellets after they failed to chase away protesters with tear smoke shells.

The clashes that continued for several hours left at least five people injured. Three of the injured have been identified by locals as Amir Nabi, Sajad Ahmad and Mohammad Anwar. Amir Nabi, according to locals was removed to Srinagar’s SMHS hospital for treatment.

Meanwhile, stones were also pelted on CRPF vehicles near Murran when they were heading towards Rahmoo village to assist the already deployed in containing the situation, the reports added.

Reports of clashes were also received from Qaimoh area of the neighbouring Kulgam district.

An official told news agency KNO that some miscreants pelted stones on patrolling party of police and CRPF in Ghat village in Qaimoh area who retaliated by firing pellets, resulting in injuries to five persons who were passing by the area at the time of the incident.

Woman Ends Life In Anantnag...

and legal formalities, the body will be handed over to family members for last rites, an official said.

A police officer said that a case under relevant sections of law has been registered in this regard and further investigation has been taken up.

Body Of Rajouri Teen Exhumed...

Rajouri, the body was exhumed today by a team of doctors for completing medico-legal formalities,” police sources said, adding that body has been exhumed after eight days of burial.

Dr. Javed Iqbal, Deputy Medical Superintendent of GMC Rajouri, who was also part of team of doctors said that body has been exhumed on the orders of District Magistrate

Kashmir Highway Reopens

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 since Thursday afternoon. “About 1100 vehicles were stranded in up traffic while about 130 vehicles were stranded in down traffic on the highway since Thursday,” he added

COVID-19: People of Srinagar behaving as mature citizens, says SSP Sgr

Agencies

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir police Friday said that people of Srinagar district have understood the seriousness of maintaining social distancing and abiding the law as mature citizens and police lauds the people's cooperation at this crucial juncture.

Police also said that there was no law and order issue reported from anywhere in Srinagar district, which houses over 50 revered shrines and more than 3000 masjids alone. "I want to hail the people of Srinagar for coop-



erating with the police in the challenging times of Covid-19 pandemic.

People have understood that we are collectively fighting an invisible enemy and its not a law and order

No Law And Order Was reported from any part of Srinagar and people offered prayers in their homes while as proper social distancing was being maintained at important places in the city by the people themselves

issue or something else but a fight to save humans and humanity," SSP Srinagar, Dr Haseeb Mughal told news agency.

He said that no law and order was reported from any part of Srinagar and people offered prayers in their homes while as proper social distancing was being maintained at important places in the city by the people themselves. "This is how mature citizens behave and we are glad to see a sense of responsibility among the people of Srinagar," the Srinagar police chief said.—(KNO)

SKIMS Bemina discharges 09 more COVID-19 Cases, recovery rate moving to 81%.

SRINAGAR, MAY 15 The SKIMS Medical College & Hospital Bemina a designated COVID-19 Specific Hospital a besides providing health care on scientific basis, the patients are provided hygienic nutritious food, and Psychiatric counselling which has enabled us to discharge 81% of admitted patients after recovery till date and expected to move above 900/0 in coming days.

Today another nine (09) patients, 04 from District Bandipora, 03 from Budgam and 02 from Kupwara were discharged after full recovery.

The dedicated team of doctors, paramedics, nursing staff, sanitation and security personals are putting up best efforts round the clock and their comfortable accommodation by the District Administration Srinagar has facilitated the delivery of high quality health care

to the COVID patients including some highly comorbid as well admitted in the hospital.

The Department of Microbiology did not lag far behind and commissioned a COVID testing lab in a short span of time with the help of assistance from SKIMS Soura. The department besides repeat testing on the admitted patients has started receiving samples from District Budgam and Srinagar for testing. Today 267 samples of Budgam were tested and 266 reported negative with 01 sample defective.

The Principal SKIMS Bemina Dr. Reyaz A. Untoo has complimented his staff and also put a message to the General Masses for respecting Lockdown, Maintain Social Distancing, constant use of Masks, Hand hygiene and avoid social and religious gatherings particularly in view of festive days ahead.

COVID19: Bandipora fights back

Once hotspot for Coronavirus cases, Bandipora figures at the bottom

BANDIPORA, MAY 15: Bandipora once being a hotspot for the novel Coronavirus cases is effectively fighting back and skipped from number one position to No 8 within a month. Thanks to the coordinated efforts by the district administration, Health Department and the field functionaries.

Bandipora district was the first district to cross 100 figure mark in the state and topped the list with 134 positive cases. However one month later Bandipora not only witnessed a steep drop in the positive cases but is currently the first district in the state to have highest number of recoveries. The district has only 12 active cases at present.

The fight started with the first detection of positive case in Khenusa village on March 23 and later in Hajin village on 24th March. Soon after the detections, the district administration launched extensive contact tracing at large scale involving medicos, revenue officers and law enforcing agencies.

The contacts were immediately put either in administrative quarantine or home quarantine depending upon

the recommendations from the medical experts. The district administration constituted 31 dedicated teams of health experts in Red zones for conducting extensive screening of the whole population of these red zones.

About 40000 persons residing in 12 red zones including Hajin, Naidkhai, Gund Jahangeer, SK Bala, Bata gund, Chandergeer, Madwan, Hakabara, Kunan, Gund Qaiser, Gund Dachina and Nowgam (Bankoot) have been screened. 4142 persons have also been tested so far out of which 134 persons were tested positive.

Deputy Commissioner Bandipora said soon after detection of positive cases, the extensive contact tracing helped in detection of more positive cases and one satisfying thing was that all the other cases were those who were already put under quarantine hence helped in preventing the virus from spreading. He said rise in positive cases was also the result of extensive testing.

While talking about the arrangements, DC Bandipora said the district administration made available 37 quarantine centres in the district with a

bed capacity of about 1500 beds within a shortest possible time. 10 COVID wellness centres have also been established with 662 bed capacity and four Level-II COVID centres at Maternity hospital Pazalpora, CHC Hajin, SDH Gurez and DH Bandipora with an overall capacity of 330 beds.

1704 persons have completed their recommended quarantine period and have returned to their homes while 11813 persons also completed their home quarantine. 1519 persons are still under home quarantine while at present 307 persons are under administrative quarantine including students and migrant workers who recently returned from abroad or other states.

Amid growing number of positive cases, the district administration also decided to screen entire population and launched a massive COVID Health Audit in which health workers are meeting every individual of the district and enquire about her/his well being and check symptoms of virus, if any, following which a medical team (Level-II) visit that particular household to check suspected patients, if any.

Admin mess at SMHS Two patients test positive after remaining in hospital for over a day

Agencies

Srinagar: The failure of administration at Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) Hospital Srinagar has put dozens of staff members at a great risk of catching deadly virus as two patients, who tested positive for COVID on Friday, were kept in ICU and Ward 10 of the hospital for more than a day.

Official sources told News Agency, that two patients—one of them a female from Habba Kadal area of Srinagar was referred to ICU from ENT department. "She was put on ventilator and her samples were taken that came positive today. In the ICU, most of the staff is without Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)," a source in the

ICU revealed.

Similarly, another patient who was referred from Chest Diseases hospital to SMHS for tracheostomy was kept in Ward 10 also known as Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) overnight. He is from South Kashmir's Anantnag district and has been identified as Ghulam Rasool. What is more shocking is that when his test came as positive for COVID, he was again shifted back to CD clandestinely.

The two back to back positive cases has triggered a fresh fear among the staff members at ICU and Ward 10, who stated that due to the "negligence of hospital administration, hundreds of staff members have been exposed to a great risk of catching the pandemic."

A staff member, speaking on the condition of anonymity said that SMHS hospital is in total mess and the mismanagement is taking toll over precious lives of patients, attendants and even the medical staff.

Talking to agencies, Dr Rukhsana Najeeb, Head Of the Department (HoD) of Anesthesia department, said that a patient was kept in ICU. "Her reports came positive after two days of taking samples. She was in shock and dying. We saved her life," she said.

About the possible contact tracing, she said, its administration to see and to ensure safety of health workers including doctors. "I have provided them safety equipments so that they remain protected," she said—(KNO)

ECT department launches drive against poppy growers

SRINAGAR, MAY 15:- As a part of drive against illicit cultivation of Poppy crops, the enforcement wing of Excise and commercial Tax (ECT) department destroyed illicit poppy crop spread over 48 kanals of land in village Patal Bagh & Lethpora of Tehsil Pampore, District Pulwama, Village Hayar & Takibal in Tehsil Bijebehara, Dis-

trict Anantnag and Village Wachi of Tehsil Zanipora, District Shopian. In total, illicit Poppy crop on 174 kanals of land has been destroyed in South Kashmir so far.

The eradication drive shall continue till all illicit poppy crop in Kashmir valley is destroyed, the statement issued by the department said.



ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
AWANTIPORA, KASHMIR.
Tele: 01933-247954/247955. Website: www.islamicuniversity.edu.in.

NOTIFICATION

A meeting was conducted by the Vice Chancellor with Dean Academic Affairs, Registrar and all the Deans of Schools on 12.05.2020 to take stock of the current academic status and discuss future course of action. After detailed deliberations and considering the inputs from Heads of Departments conveyed by the Dean of respective School and keeping in view the current situation, the Vice Chancellor in exercise of special powers vested in him by virtue of section 3(v) of the University Act has approved the following:

1. The current odd semester and the following even semester (Autumn 2019 and Spring 2020) shall be merged together for the purpose of teaching and conduct of examinations for all UG, PG and Diploma programmes.
 2. The examination shall be conducted for both the semesters jointly starting from the month of August 2020 after receiving syllabus completion certificate from the concerned teacher/HoD.
- Consequent upon above, all the HoDs shall:
- a) Continue conducting online classes and try to cover as much syllabus possible using online platforms like Zoom, Google classes etc. up to the maximum possible satisfaction of students.
 - b) Frame the schedule for online classes for the next semester, convey it to the students besides posting it on the University website and start the classes immediately.
 - c) Conduct internal assessments of students maintaining the sanctity of academic expectations and integrity of examination process.
 - d) Employ simplified modes and methods of internal assessments to complete the process. These may include Open Book Examination, Open Choices, assignment/presentation-based assessments etc.
 - e) After the end of lockdown, practical and interactive classes may also be arranged before the conduct of final examination if needed/possible.
 - f) For UG/ PG students pursuing Projects/ Dissertations, in view of the prevailing circumstances, review-based/ secondary data-based projects or software-driven projects, instead of laboratory-based experiments or field/ survey-based be assigned.
 - g) Students be counselled through the online classes on the safety measures to be taken during the Covid-19 pandemic and keep themselves safe and healthy.

No: IUST/Acad/Notification/20/188
Dated: 15.05.2020

Sd/-
Deputy Registrar (Academics)

DIAL-EMMA



- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
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- PDD: 0194-2450213
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- 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

22 Ramazan
1441

PRAYERS

FAJR	3: 53
ZUHR	12: 27
ASR	5:21
Magrib	7:19
ISHA	9:03

This Day In History

- 1165 - Ramjam & his family reach Acre Palestine
- 1204 - Baldwin IX, Count of Flanders, is crowned as the first Emperor of the Latin Empire of Constantinople
- 1527 - Florence becomes a republic
- 1571 Johannes Kepler, by his own calculations, is conceived at 4:37 AM
- 1606 - 2,000 foreigners murdered in Russia
- 1648 - Battle of Zhovti Vody: Bohdan Chmielicki's cosacks defeat Polish King John Casimir after 18 days of battle
- 1771 - The Battle of Alamance, a pre-American Revolutionary War battle between local militia and a group of rebels called "The Regulators", occurs in present-day Alamance county, North Carolina.
- 1795 - Hedges Treaty: Bataafse Republic becomes French vassal state
- 1803 - Peace of Amiens between French Republic and Great Britain ends
- 1811- Peninsular War: Allies defeat French at Albuera
- 1822 - Greek War of Independence: Turks capture the Greek town of Souli.
- 1860 -Chicago: Republican convention selects Abraham Lincoln as candidate
- 1863 - Battle of Champion's Hill, Mississippi-bloodiest action of Vicksburg Campaign
- 1875 - Earthquake in Venezuela & Colombia kills 16,000
- 1907 - In the Pact of Cartagena, Great Britain, France, and Spain agree to maintain the status quo in the Mediterranean and along the Atlantic coast of Europe and Africa
- 1918 - The Sedition Act of 1918 is passed by the U.S. Congress, making criticism of the government an imprisonable offense.
- 1936 - 1st British air hostess Daphne Kearsley flies to France
- 1941 - Last great German air attack on Great Britain (Birmingham)
- 1945 - Violent battles around Sugar Loaf and Half Moon, Okinawa
- 1948 - Chaim Weizmann elected 1st President of Israel
- 1948 - Egyptians enter Gaza
- 1956 - Egypt recognizes People's Republic of China
- 1957 - US launches its 3rd atomic submarine, USS Skate, at Groton Conn
- 1960 - Big 4 summit in Paris collapses as USSR levels spy charges against US
- 1960 - Theodore Maiman operates the first optical laser, at Hughes Research Laboratories in Malibu, California.
- 1965 - Bomb destroys USAF base Bien Hoa South Vietnam
- 1968 - Earthquake kills 47 in Japan
- 1969 - Venera 5 lands on Venus, returns data on atmosphere
- 1974 - USSR performs nuclear Test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalinsk
- 1975 - India annexes Principality of Sikkim
- 1975 - Junko Tabei from Japan becomes 1st woman to reach summit of Mt Everest
- 1983 - Lebanese parliament accepts peace accord with Israel
- 1989 - Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev and Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping meet in Beijing and formally end a 30-year rift
- 1991 - Queen Elizabeth II becomes 1st British monarch to address US congress
- 1992 - US space shuttle STS-49 lands (maiden voyage of Endeavour)
- 2003 - In Casablanca, Morocco, 33 civilians are killed and more than 100 people are injured in the Casablanca terrorist attacks.
- 2007 - Nicolas Sarkozy becomes the 23rd President of France
- 2011 - Space shuttle Endeavour launches for its final commission in space
- 2013 - Human stem cells are successfully cloned
- 2013 - Bill Gates regains his position as the world's richest man with \$72.7 billion after losing the position in 2008

From KO Archives

'India, Pak will find JK solution'

WASHINGTON - Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, will find a solution to the Kashmir issue within the parameters they have laid down, three US-based experts on South Asia have hoped.

Rafiq Dossani of Stanford University, Robert Hathaway. Director of the Woodrow Wilson Centre, and Michael Krepon, President Emeritus of the Stimson Centre were cautiously optimistic about the resolution of the issue keeping in mind that India has rejected any redrawing of boundaries in a possible solution.

The discussion included the conclusions in a book titled 'Prospects for Peace in South Asia' edited by Dossani and another scholar Henry Rowen.

The Kashmir issue, according to the book, is "enduringly rooted in national identity, religion and human rights. It has also influenced the politicisation of Pakistan's Army, religious radicalism and nuclearisation in both countries."

The book, while acknowledging the risks, is "optimistic about peace in South Asia." The key argument is (barman) of the domestic concerns, such as territorial integrity in both countries and civil-military rapprochement in Pakistan, that were fuelling the conflict, have abated.

Hathaay said that Musharraf seems to have realised that he cannot create the kind of Pakistan he wants unless he reins in extremism and repairs his relationship with India.

(Kashmir Observer, 16 May, 2005)

Government Medical College, Srinagar

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Extension Notification To Advertisement Notice

No: 02 Of 2020

dated : 30-04-2020

In view of the internet breakdown in the valley for sometime, the last date for submission / mailing of application forms / documents for the posts of tutor on contract basis under National Health Mission Programme advertised vide this office No: 02 OF 2020 Dated: 30-04-2020 is hereby extended upto 20-05-2020.

Other terms and conditons as laid down in the original notification shall remain unchanged.

No: NAS/MC/20/127-35
Dated: 14-05-2020

Sd/- Principal Dean

DIPK-773/20

KASHMIR OBSERVER

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NO HOLDS BARRED



Work-Life Balance activities are a worldwide wonder. Women, who work, convey a twofold burden as an employee and housewife. They are super mothers assuming fluctuated jobs and accommodating among tradition and modernity. Employees in worldwide networks likewise demand adaptability and authority over their work and individual lives.

Trade-Off Between Safety & Data Privacy

MOHAMMAD MAQBOOL WAGAY

THE rigorous use of contract tracing, across digital and physical spheres, has been widely credited with helping to limit the spread of COVID-19. While using digital technology for contact tracing personal data is used to map the location and mark out the communication of persons, compare their site with the location history of confirmed cases and inform the users to take necessary actions if they come in contact with COVID-19 cases. This digital surveillance has sparked legitimate concerns about privacy.

The Government of India has developed a contact tracing mobile application, namely Aarogya Setu, which uses smartphones' GPS and Bluetooth features to track the coronavirus infection. The Aarogya Setu app uses Bluetooth technology to determine the risk if one has been in contact with the COVID-19 infected person within six feet of distance by scanning through a database of known cases across India. It uses location information and determines the location one is in belongs to the infected area based on available data.

The state of Kerala has traced its people who have tested positive and their secondary and tertiary contacts by using telephone call records, CCTV footage, and mobile phone GPS systems.

Punjab is also using cell phone data, including call records and GPS, to enforce lockdown, ensure home delivery of groceries, and for contact-tracing.

The states of Karnataka, Rajasthan, and the Mahali district administration have displayed biodata of COVID-19 suspects public through local newspapers and official websites.

The Jammu & Kashmir undertook GIS mapping of all cases, including suspects, those under surveillance, quarantined, and isolated. In Ganderbal District Administration has issued orders for people to install Arogya Setu App.

The use of these methods sparked legitimate concerns of incursion on the right to privacy of individuals. But we are, as individuals, making a trade-off between our safety and data privacy. We understand that in this pandemic situation, our very existence depends on sharing our personal information. Not sharing your personal information could result in loss of human life, including yours and that of your loved ones, and it seems sensible not to worry about privacy when human existence is in danger without sharing personal data.

Though, making swapping between privacy and public health is an oversimplification. The pandemic COVID-19 is an exceptional circumstance and a clear purpose, not blanket permission nor an admission of our willingness to give up our right to privacy. Government agencies should not exploit Pandemic as an opportunity to infringe on the privacy rights of individuals. The governments must make sure that the privacy rights of its citizens are not unreasonably breached even in times of health emergencies. What constitutes a reasonable infringement of the right to privacy in a health emergency? It is imperative to understand the legal framework of the right to privacy.

The right to privacy is an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution. Its first scope came in Kharak Singh vs. state of U.P in 1962, which was related to the validity of specific regulations that permitted the surveillance of suspects. However, it was in the nine-judge-bench judgment of K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, in 2017, The Supreme Court of India documented the right to privacy as an integral part of fundamental rights (Puttaswamy I). It also recognized data protection as an indispensable part of the data privacy of an individual and observed that India lacks a comprehensive legal framework for personal data protection.

Following the same, the Government of India

“The use of these methods sparked legitimate concerns of incursion on the right to privacy of individuals. But we are, as individuals, making a trade-off between our safety and data privacy. We understand that in this pandemic situation, our very existence depends on sharing our personal information. Not sharing your personal information could result in loss of human life, including yours and that of your loved ones, and it seems sensible not to worry about privacy when human existence is in danger without sharing personal data.”

constituted a committee headed by Justice Srikrishna, which submitted its comprehensive report on personal data protection to the parliament. Shortly after that, the government introduced the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, in the Lok Sabha on December 11, 2019, mainly incorporating the principles of personal data protection recommended by the Justice Srikrishna Committee.

In the meanwhile, it was further strengthened by a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court deciding the constitutionality of Aadhaar (Puttaswamy II), which further reiterated the principles of informational privacy and recognized personal data protection as a part of the right to privacy.

Both Puttaswamy I and Puttaswamy II held that any incursion on the right to privacy by the government must be reasonable and proportionate; it should qualify the following three conditions:

- a) the restriction in the right to privacy must be effected through a law that pursues a legitimate state aim,
- b) has a reasonable relationship between the end and means to achieve them, and

- c) is the least meddling means to achieve the state aim.

The Personal Data Protection Bill articulates the essential principles of personal data protection, which are a part of the right to privacy of an individual. As per these principles:

1. The consent of the person whose personal data is collected (Data Principal) is necessary before any person, or the government (Data Fiduciary) can collect and process such data.
2. The personal data collected must be used only for a specific, explicit, and lawful purpose for which the consent of the Data Principal is obtained (purpose limitation).
3. The personal data must also be used fairly and reasonably (lawful processing).

Clause 12 of the Personal Data Protection Bill provides procedures for the collection and processing of data during a health emergency. It has been provided, the Data Fiduciary is exempt from taking the consent of the Data Principal, provided that the collection and processing of personal data are authorized under law. A public health emergency, however, does not offer reservations to governments from other principles of personal data protection such as purpose limitation, lawful processing, storage limitation, transparency, and accountability.

However, the Bill falls short in addressing privacy and accountability as it does not provide for an independent data protection authority that could look into the privacy concerns.

The Personal Data Protection Bill has not been enacted yet, and the data collected by central or state governments is taken on Adhoc bases not sanctioned by any law.

Provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and the National Disaster Management Act, 2005, have been frequently implemented by governments during this Pandemic to adopt certain emergency containment programs. The Act and the orders issued thereunder, do not provide for a mechanism to collect or process personal data. They do not comply with the principles of personal data protection.

It is obligatory, therefore, that the governments collect and process all personal data only under due process of law and promulgate necessary and comprehensive measures for the same.

In this unprecedented situation, it is in our benefit to provide information and we are providing our data for the lone purpose of containment of this Pandemic ('purpose limitation'); we look forward to no illicit use of our data and require an understanding of the intention of its use ('lawfulness, fairness and transparency'); contact surveillance measures put in place should only pool and analyze data that is pertinent and required for this purpose e.g., drones, phone GPS tracking, etc...(data minimization). We hope our data to be protected from unauthorized access at all times ('integrity and confidentiality').

Author is a Research Scholar at the Department of Politics & Governance, Central University of Kashmir and can be reached at: mmwaggy@gmail.com

Some People Cough, Others Sigh

I spent a week in isolation waiting for that little tickle at the back of throat

KEVIN MARTIN

These days, a cough is like the sound of a starter's gun. It is a signal to get off your marks, pronto, and run as fast as you can in the opposite direction. Covid has got everybody's senses attuned to things that only a few months ago we would have called 'commonplace'.

Fellow-men hearing a person cough, used to, on occasion inquire politely if all was well and, if all was not too well, helpful suggestions were offered, sometimes ready-at-hand solutions were offered, as in, 'Here, take these cough lozenges. You'll at least feel a bit of relief until you can get something stronger.'

But these days, fellowmen are taking their cough lozenges with them as they sprint away. These days a cough can only mean one thing. Yes. The dreaded C word: Covid. Or, Coronavirus, take your pick. Same difference. The sprint is on!

I spent a week in isolation after that, waiting for that little tickle at the back of the throat, like a visitor's polite knock on the door, to tell me Corona had arrived. But, so far so good, as my mum was fond of saying whenever, at the end of the month, my father asked how she was managing for finances

I don't wish to convey through the above-mentioned that I am a finger pointer; that I am sacrosanct; that I am denouncing my fellowmen as a tad cowardly; that I am one of the noble ones who'll stop (upon hearing a cough), make the obligatory polite inquiry, dip my hand into my pocket and, voila, produce a magically handy strip of cough lozenges. No, that's not the case at all.

I am, truth be told, a member of Sprinters Amalgamated. I have run so hard recently, and with good cause, because it was not one but two people (whom I know rather well) who began coughing in my presence.

I took to my heels, not once looking back over the shoulder. To be fair, and in my defence, that was the right thing to do because one member of that twosome did have the virus which was, a few days later, passed on to the other.



A week in isolation

I spent a week in isolation after that, waiting for that little tickle at the back of the throat, like a visitor's polite knock on the door, to tell me Corona had arrived. But, so far so good, as my mum was fond of saying whenever, at the end of the month, my father asked how she was managing for finances.

I can't tell if my mum would have approved or disapproved of my 'sprinting' behaviour, had she been around in this world. However, I was reminded of something she told me when she was alive and I was a young man 'mortally' wounded by one of Cupid's arrows — that vulnerable, arrow-exposed age of sixteen, in other words.

Unbeknown to the fact that I was 'mortally' wounded, my heart in pieces, 'mum began telling me about one of her friends — a young mother of three, too — who'd accidentally found out, to her shock and horror, that all was not well with her marriage.

'But they are together, aren't they? I saw Daisy and Dermot Hughes (not their real names) just the other day. You probably have your facts mixed up, mum,' I said.

And she in turn replied, 'Yes. People can be together and still be very far apart. It's called an amicable coexistence, or something like that. Poor Daisy. I've known her all my life. We grew up as young girls. I've never ever heard Daisy sigh so much.'

It was then that mum said something that reminded me, all these years later, of my own little sprint from Coronavirus.

Because, even as I went haring away in the supermarket, ducking and weaving metaphorically to avoid a dangerous virus, and in the process chiding myself for it, reasoning 'people cough to clear their throats,' I recalled mum saying all those years ago, 'Poor Daisy. How difficult things must be for her, having to put up a pretence. You know, people sigh to clear their hearts.'

— Kevin Martin is a journalist based in Sydney, Australia. Gulf News



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Work-Life Balance & Working Women

The expression 'Work-Life Balance' could be characterised as a condition of harmony where the demands of both an individual's job and personal life are equivalent. This term was coined in 1986, despite the fact that its utilisation in ordinary language was sporadic for various years.

Work-Life Balance activities are a worldwide wonder. Women, who work, convey a twofold burden as an employee and housewife. They are super mothers assuming fluctuated jobs and accommodating among tradition and modernity. Employees in worldwide networks likewise demand adaptability and authority over their work and individual lives.

Despite the fact that women can accept the job of a researcher or a technocrat, they still do encounter trouble in having a comparable job as housewife

or mother. Women battle to build up a personality and make a real space in society and in work places. Work-life balance, in its broadest sense, is characterised as a "fit" between the different jobs in an individual's life. There are changes in enormous part because of a noteworthy social and cultural transition in parental perceptions that is, an expanded acknowledgment of giving education to girls that takes into account the possibility of girls working outside the home, contributing monetarily to the family and even pursuing a career.

There is a particular new pattern in work direction. Women are focused on their employments and appreciate positions of responsibility, yet they are confronted with issues of mobility and moderate promotions because of time constraints and family responsibilities. Unmarried women likewise have some

restriction from guardians. The experience shared by women is that they want to stay in the small positions as opposed to take a transfer or job promotion because of domestic compulsions. Women have in any case, at times left their jobs or have taken long leave without pay when her spouse gets transferred.

The time of marriage is additionally moving from 22 to 26-30 years age-group. In any case it largely depends upon the guardians financial condition and society's attitude towards high paid women that many do not prefer for their sons who may be less paid. They think this will make a son subordinate to his spouse at home. Women convincingly join work and family life by tolerating the idea of one kid and bringing forth a youngster simply in the wake of settling in an occupation. They additionally give quality time to kids and don't offer

need to advancements and profession development. In spite of these issues, working women are assuming an essential job in their life to deal with their double duty. Between this double duty of life, the women endure the trauma of mental and physical strain.

Working women need to deal thoughtfully with her different roles to strike a balance in her life. The working women have a significant role in shaping a family and by extension a society but let that be not at the expense of her own life.

There is a greater interest for women employees are scope is expanding. It is a joint obligation of society and the family to deal with the issue and make life of working women better and less stressful.

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What Is Dirilis Ertugrul And Why Everyone Is Watching It

SADAF HAIDER

The Prime minister of Pakistan would like Pakistanis to watch a phenomenally popular Turkish television series called *Dirilis: Ertugrul*.

Imran Khan has been seen on tape, not only recommending the popular serial but insisting all five seasons should be dubbed in Urdu so that the general public can watch and understand (Pakistan's state run broadcaster PTV has since begun telecasting the serial in Urdu from first of Ramazan).

This may have come as a shock to the Pakistani drama and filmmakers, who only a few years back had been lobbying to ban or limit Turkish serials like *Ask-I Memnu* (Ishq-e-Mamnu or 'forbidden love') and *Hurrem Sultan* because their popularity threatened to destroy a nascent but still fragile Pakistani industry.

So why does a populist leader like Imran Khan, recommend a foreign television show?

The reason may lie in a much publicised, behind the scenes meeting, where Prime Minister Khan met with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad at UNGA.

The idea of an English language channel to counter the rising problems of Islamophobia and the very serious misconceptions about Islam and Muslims at an international level was floated by the three leaders.

An action adventure serial full of sword fights, *Dirilis* is based on stories of the Muslim Oghuz Turks, fighting invading Mongols, Christian Byzantines and the fanatic Knights Templar Crusaders in Anatolia (now modern-day Turkey) of the 12th century.

To put the timeline into context, Zahir Uddin Babur, the founder of the great Mughal empire first reached Lahore in 1524. In 1258, Hulagu Khan sacked Baghdad, the great Abbasid capital of the Caliph Haroun Rashid, washing its streets with blood and turning the river Tigris black with the ink of countless priceless books.

So what makes *Dirilis Ertugrul* so popular?

Often described as a "Turkish Game of Thrones", *Dirilis* has a vast and obsessive worldwide fan following in 60 plus countries. Apart from diaspora Muslims in the west, the show has gained sweeping popularity in the Middle East, South Africa and surprisingly in South America.

Venezuela's President, Nicolas Maduro is an avid fan and was seen happily wearing the hat of a Turkish warrior or Alp on a recent visit to the sets.

The writer and creator of *Dirilis*, Mehmet Bozdog is an acclaimed filmmaker with links to Turkey's conservative ruling AKP party, and it is his ability to combine a deeper message of traditional Islamic beliefs with the swashbuckling story of a hero fighting against all odds that is the heart of its success.

High quality production values, talented actors who take their roles very seriously and a director that knows how to keep the audience on the edge of their seats in each episode, you can see why it's an addictive combination.

The fights are a special feature and the producers spared no expense, using a famous Hollywood stunt team called NOMAD to train the actors and coordinate each clash with the bad guys. Set at the crossroads of empires, the show focuses on the figure of Ertugrul Ghazi, his family and friends.

Talking about this character, actor Engin Altan Duzguzen has said, "He was the father of Osman Gazi, founder of Ottoman Empire, which ruled the world for 600 years. And, actually, we do not have too much sources about that era. Our sources are just about 7 pages. We know that he was a real hero. For him, the limits were not an obstacle."

Duzguzen himself is another key to the success of this serial, with only a few pages to go by the actor has created a memorable character, whom audiences root for no matter what back-

ground. Surprisingly non-Muslims are also great fans of Ertugrul, setting aside any cultural bias to enjoy the show for pure entertainment.

Muslims are usually portrayed as barbarians or tyrants in historical portrayals. Muslim countries either cannot afford to make such epics or filmmakers are not focused on history, hence the colonial, western perspective is dominant and to a certain extent internalised by viewers through constant repetition.

Take for example the recent spate of historical Indian movies; Alauddin Khilji the historic ruler of the Delhi Sultanate is projected as a crazed, carnivorous barbarian in the Bollywood movie *Padmaavat*.

While Khilji was a hard man, he was not unusual for his times and definitely not the uncultured barbarian that the lens of modern day Indian nationalism projects him through. For many, watching Ertugrul is like Alice walking

icbuka wish for Mongol dominance and revenge, the crusader Titus is a Templar (the extremists of their time) hoping to ignite another crusade. All of these villains are brave, intelligent and surprisingly spiritual, often shown praying or meditating.

While this serves as a sly compliment to Ertugrul who can overcome or at the least survive such fearsome and intelligent antagonists, it's also a reminder that simply being a strong or brave is not enough; protecting the innocent and standing for justice are what sets a real hero apart.

The most notable lessons from this serial are: maintain your orientation towards establishing justice, protect the innocent, trust in God and never give up. Perhaps the most popular quote is "The victory is not ours, it belongs to Allah", a sentiment that resonates deeply with many Muslims.

There are many incidents in the early episodes where Ertugrul straightforward approach

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through the looking glass; the Muslim characters are the ones making the good decisions, caring for the weak, standing for principles and defying oppression.

As with all fiction, historical accuracy is somewhere in the hazy middle.

What *Dirilis* gets right

Look deeper into the show and you will see that each episode delivers both spiritual and life lessons by allowing principle characters to talk directly about moral dilemmas and their resolution.

Another feature is the use of alims or scholars; in the earlier seasons, a fictionalised version of renowned Islamic scholar and Sufi, Ibne Arabi, is seen advising Ertugrul, while the later series show the local Imam or Khoja gives guidance.

These teachers appear at difficult times in protagonists' lives and offer explanations of how to deal with the situation with examples from Quran and Hadeeth but most significantly from the life of the Prophet Mohammad (SAW). A lot of emphasis is also placed on Hazrat Ali whom the Turkish warriors consider their patron.

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At any given point in the story, Ertugrul is faced by three or even more sets of problems: family issues, conflicts within his tribe, all the while dealing with external enemies like the Templars or Mongols who are always plotting his annihilation.

Interestingly, there is usually a fourth political front, the enemy within. These are always Turks like Ertugrul, but because of their greed, pride or jealousy they are willing to commit any traitorous act to succeed.

The array of traitors make a fascinating subset of villains: there is Kurtoglu, who is secretly plotting with the Templars and the scheming adviser to the Seljuk Sultan, Emir Sa'd al-Din Köpek, followed by the almost comically delusional Ural Bey.

One of the most interesting members of this group is Beybolat Bey who played a powerful chief murdering and policing his own people with the enemy. Like many collaborators, he justified himself that he was saving his people by acting as a buffer with the Mongols.

Writer Mehmet Bozdog has avoided caricatures and created recognisable and surprisingly nuanced villains, who are not necessarily other-worldly evil.

For example, the formidable Nuyan and Ar-

lands him in near impossible situations but his determination to never ever give up eventually sees him through.

While this die-hard attitude is reminiscent of many heroic figures historical and fictional, what makes Ertugrul so different is that there are many times when courage, persistence, strategy and cunning are simply not enough.

Then its prayer and the guiding hand of fate that make a way out of hopeless circumstances. Whether he is caught in a poison filled room at Sultan Aziz's Palace in Aleppo, or literally nailed to stake through his bare hand in a Mongol camp, the power of the prayers of the Sufis and his own direct and sincere supplications to Allah become his salvation.

The women of *Dirilis Ertugrul* are no damsels in distress

As in most stories about men, male bonding is a vital element; while ties of blood can disappoint the connection between friends, the brother of choice is what lasts. Ertugrul often states: "Forgiving a traitor is a crime against the innocent," and this lesson of loyalty is reinforced through five seasons by the unflinching devotion of the Alps, Turgut, Dogan and Bamsi and Abdul Rehman.

The women of the story also provide an intriguing change from the usual orientalist stereotypes of Muslim women hidden in harems.

There is a noticeable change over the season 1, where earlier episodes show the lead female characters like Ertugrul's wife to be, Halime Sultan with uncovered hair and even short sleeves, towards the latter episodes, the women's hair is completely under the wrap of rather beautiful Turkish style hijabs.

An interesting historical parallel to this is illustrated by Ira Mukhoty's book, *Daughters of The Sun* about the Mughal women and the slow historical slide of Muslim women into the realm of seclusion.

The Mughal women who were also of distant nomadic Chaghtai Turkic and Timurid descent, were active, independent and powerful members of the state, their power remained but during Emperor Akbar's time as Mughals settled into their roles as ruler, they too slid into respectful seclusion.

Powerful and willful, the ladies of *Dirilis: Ertugrul* are very different to the weeping females we see in Pakistani and Indian dramas but neither do they live up to the Game of Thrones analogy used to describe this show.

The women often act as Beys or chieftains in place of their husbands and brothers as required, they fight with swords or daggers and won't quietly

marry any man chosen for them to please anyone even if it's a sultan.

Despite the supposedly conservative setting and dangerous times, the women travel independently and preserving concepts of honour isn't at the forefront of their lives.

However, all this freedom is tempered by the way none of the women are allowed to be independent rulers, both Aslihan Hatun and Ilblige Hatun inherit leadership roles but must eventually cede them on marriage.

Obviously the 12th century wasn't the most enlightened of times but there have been queens throughout history who defied the pressures of the times by ruling independently.

It's not perfect though

While many hail the show as an example of "Islamic values", there are a few aspects in the writing which don't bare up to that declaration on closer inspection.

Islam places great importance on forgiveness but a lot of the action focuses on vengeful justice. The tradition of the Prophet Mohammad (SAW) also encourages men to consult with their wives but the script doesn't emphasise this despite giving the women strong roles.

In Turkey, the serial has also been at the center of controversy because members of the secular media have tried to ignore and belittle the series.

At an award ceremony, the team of actors were not allowed to speak despite winning, which outraged fans who claimed the elite, secular left was silencing the more conservative general public who loved the show.

Those familiar with Indian and Pakistani dramas will see some familiar elements with the usual jockeying for position and who will marry whom turf wars but they will also find a lot of positivity and friendship.

The driving force behind *Dirilis'* popularity with leaders like Imran Khan may be the sense of hope and revival against all odds that this story provides. Mired in difficult times like these, *Dirilis* seems to provides an inspirational balm to a collectively damaged Muslim psyche that yearns to take its place as a more powerful and productive member of the world community.

Even without the theology, Ertugrul is thoroughly entertaining and represents universal values of good over evil and surviving tough times through perseverance and that can revive the spirit no matter what your faith is or isn't.

Sadaf Haider is a freelance writer, a seriously unserious fan of dramas and films but most of all an observer. She is always looking for an amusing diversion and luckily other people are always willing to provide one. Find her at sadaf-says@gmail.com.

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Scientists Create Washable Coating For PPEs That Repels Viruses

Press Trust of India

Researchers have created a textile coating that can prevent viruses from adhering to the surface of masks, gowns, and other personal protective equipment (PPE), an advance that may lead to better protection of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the scientists, including those from the University of Pittsburgh in the US, textiles and materials used in PPEs can absorb and carry viruses and bacteria, inadvertently spreading disease the wearer sought to contain.

They said the coating, described in the journal *ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces*, provides better protection while allowing for safe reuse of PPEs, which are already in short supply amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"We want to push the boundary on what is possible with these types of surfaces, and especially given the current pandemic, we knew it'd be important to test against viruses," said Anthony Galante, study co-author from the University of Pittsburgh, and lead author of the paper.

The researchers said the uniqueness of the coating comes from its ability to withstand rigorous washing, scrubbing, and scraping.

In other similar coatings currently being used, they said washing or rubbing the surface of the textile tends to reduce or eliminate its repellent abilities.



"The durability is very important because there are other surface treatments out there, but they're limited to disposable textiles. You can only use a gown or mask once before disposing of it," said Paul Leu, another co-author of the study from the

University of Pittsburgh.

Given the PPE shortage across the world, the scientists said, there is a need for coatings that can be applied to reusable medical textiles that can be properly washed and sanitised.

They tested the new material

by running it through tens of ultrasonic washes, a method which uses high frequency sound waves to agitate cleaning liquids.

The researchers also applied thousands of rotations with a scrubbing pad, and even scraping the fabric with a sharp razor blade.

After each test the coating remained just as effective, the researchers said.

"As this fabric was already shown to repel blood, protein and bacteria, the logical next step was to determine whether it repels

viruses," said Eric Romanowski, another co-author of the study.

The study tested the material for its ability to repel human adenovirus types four and seven, as people commonly pick these up in hospital waiting rooms and from contaminated surfaces and

can cause acute respiratory disease as well as conjunctivitis, the scientists said.

Since the fabric showed promise in repelling proteins, they hoped it would also repel viruses as the parasites are essentially proteins with genetic material inside.

"As it turned out, the adenoviruses were repelled in a similar way as proteins," Romanowski said.

He said the novel coating may have broad applications in healthcare.

Everything from hospital gowns to waiting room chairs could benefit from the ability to repel viruses, particularly ones as easily spread as adenoviruses, the scientists noted.

"It is rapidly spread in schools and homes and has an enormous impact on quality of life -- keeping kids out of school and parents out of work," said Robert Shanks, another co-author of the study.

"This coating on waiting room furniture, for example, could be a major step towards reducing this problem," Shanks said.

The researchers hope to further test the effectiveness of the material against betacoronaviruses, like the one that causes COVID-19.

"If the treated fabric would repel betacoronaviruses, and in particular SARS-CoV-2, this could have a huge impact for healthcare workers and even the general public if PPE, scrubs, or even clothing could be made from protein, blood-, bacteria-, and virus-repelling fabrics," Romanowski said.

THE DURABILITY IS VERY IMPORTANT BECAUSE THERE ARE OTHER SURFACE TREATMENTS out there, but they're limited to disposable textiles. You can only use a gown or mask once before disposing of it," said Paul Leu, another co-author of the study from the University of Pittsburgh.

Aerobics At Any Age A Super Treat For Your Brain



Agencies

TORONTO- It's never too late to lace up shoes and work up a sweat for brain health as older adults, even couch potatoes, may perform better on certain thinking and memory tests after just six months of aerobic exercise, says a new study.

Researchers found that after six months of exercise, participants improved by 5.7 per cent on tests of executive function, which includes mental flexibility and self-correction.

Verbal fluency, that tests how quickly you can retrieve information, increased by 2.4 per cent. This change in verbal fluency is what one can expect to see in someone five years younger.

"As we all find out eventually, we lose a bit mentally and physically as we age. But even if you start an exercise programme later in life, the benefit to your brain may be immense," said study author Marc J Poulin from University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada.

Aerobic exercise gets blood moving through your body.

"As our study found, it may also get blood moving to your brain, particularly in areas responsible for

verbal fluency and executive functions. Our finding may be important, especially for older adults at risk for Alzheimer's and other dementias and brain disease," Poulin said in a study published in *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

The study involved 206 adults who prior to starting the six-month exercise intervention worked out no more than four days per week at a moderate intensity for 30 minutes or less, or no more than two days per week a high intensity for 20 minutes or less per day.

They had an average age of 66 and no history of heart or memory problems.

Participants were given thinking and memory tests at the start of the study, as well as an ultrasound to measure blood flow in the brain.

"Our study showed that six months' worth of vigorous exercise may pump blood to regions of the brain that specifically improve your verbal skills as well as memory and mental sharpness," informed Poulin.

"At a time when these results would be expected to be decreasing due to normal aging, to have these types of increases is exciting," the authors wrote.

Combination Of Fasting, Vitamin C Effective On Hard-To-Treat Cancers, Suggests Study

Agencies

CALIFORNIA: A fasting-mimicking diet could be more effective at treating some types of cancer when combined with vitamin C, suggests a new study conducted by the scientists from USC and the IFOM Cancer Institute in Milan.

In studies on mice, researchers found that the combination delayed tumour progression in multiple mouse models of colorectal cancer; in some mice, it caused disease regression. The results were published in the journal *Nature Communications*.

"For the first time, we have demonstrated how a completely non-toxic intervention can effectively treat an aggressive cancer," said Valter Longo, the study senior author and the director of the USC Longevity In-



stitute at the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology and

professor of biological sciences at the USC Dornsife College of

Letters, Arts and Sciences.

"We have taken two treat-

ments that are studied extensively as interventions to delay ageing-- a fasting-mimicking diet and vitamin C -- and combined them as a powerful treatment for cancer," added Longo.

The researchers said that while fasting remains a challenging option for cancer patients, a safer, more feasible option is a low-calorie, plant-based diet that causes cells to respond as if the body were fasting.

Their findings suggest that a low-toxicity treatment of fasting-mimicking diet plus vitamin C has the potential to replace more toxic treatments.

Results of prior research on the cancer-fighting potential of vitamin C have been mixed. Recent studies, though, are beginning to show some efficacy, especially in combination with chemotherapy.

Antibodies With Potential To Block Coronavirus Identified

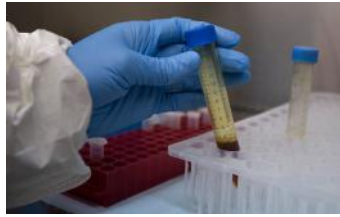
Agencies

BEIJING- From a patient who recovered from COVID-19, scientists have isolated a pair of neutralising antibodies that could potentially block the virus responsible for the pandemic from entering into host cells.

The study, published in the journal *Science*, suggests that a "cocktail" containing both antibodies could provide direct therapeutic benefits for COVID-19 patients.

The new information detailed in the study could also aid the development of small molecule antivirals and vaccine candidates to fight the SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19.

The twin antibodies identified by the researchers are named B38



and H4.

The study by Yan Wu from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and colleagues found that the two antibodies bind to the glycoprotein spike of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and thereby block the entry of the virus into host cells.

Preliminary tests of the two antibodies in a mouse model resulted in a reduction of virus titers, suggesting that the antibodies may offer therapeutic benefits.

2-3 Cups Of Coffee Daily Linked To Lower Body Fat In Women

Agencies

LONDON- This news may make coffee-lover men depressed a bit as new research has revealed that women who drink two or three cups of coffee a day have been found to have lower total body and abdominal fat than those who drink less.

The study indicated that some compounds in coffee may have anti-obesity properties.

Overall, the average total body fat percentage was 2.8 per cent lower among women of all ages who drank two or three cups of coffee per day and the findings were consistent whether the coffee



consumed was caffeinated or decaffeinated, and among smokers/non-smokers and those suffering from chronic diseases when compared to those in good health.

In men, the relationship was less significant, although men aged 20-44 who drank two or three cups per day had 1.3 per cent less total fat and 1.8 per cent less trunk fat than those who did not consume coffee, according to the study published in *The Journal of Nutrition*.

"Our research suggests that there may be bioactive compounds in coffee other than caffeine that regulate weight and which could potentially be used as anti-obesity compounds," said Dr Lee Smith, senior study author from Anglia Ruskin University in the UK.

To reach this conclusion, researchers examined data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, organised by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the US, and looked at the relationship between cups of coffee drunk per day, and both total body fat percentage and abdominal or 'trunk' fat (adiposity).

Amnesty International urges King Salman to free detained Saudi women's activists

Agencies

Riyadh: Amnesty International has called on King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to order the freedom of a group of women's rights activists, who were detained two years ago in a wide scale crackdown across the kingdom, describing their ongoing plight as "heartbreaking."

"It is heartbreaking that two years have now passed with these brave women still behind bars, especially as during this time Saudi women have been enjoying some of the newfound rights they had fought so hard for," Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Middle East Research

drive' cannot be considered credible as long as these women and other peaceful activists are still being targeted for their work," she emphasized.

The London-based organization then called on Saudi authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders solely detained in connection with their peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression, association and assembly.

More than a dozen activists were arrested in May 2018, and held on suspicion of harming the country's interests and offering support to hostile elements abroad.

Saudi women's rights ac-



Director, said.

"In prison, many suffered mental and physical anguish – including torture, sexual abuse and solitary confinement. Scores of others, though released, still face trial based on charges relating to their peaceful activism."

"It is time the Saudi Arabian leadership stopped using the judiciary as a Damocles sword hanging above activists' heads. Saudi Arabia's 'reform

tivist Loujain al-Hathloul contender for Nobel Peace Prize

Saudi women's rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul contender for Nobel Peace Prize

Jailed Saudi women At the time, international rights groups reported the detention of prominent female activists among the detainees, who had previously campaigned for the right to drive and an end to the kingdom's male guardianship system.

Iran Brings Back Dying Lake From Brink

Agencies

Tehran: Images from northwest Iran in recent years have told a grim environmental story: of a vast lake in retreat, of a beached ship and piers that jut out onto arid salt flats. But against the odds, one of the world's largest salt lakes is now coming back to life, in a rare piece of good news from Iran.

A combination of man-made efforts and higher rainfall in recent years is "slowly, but surely reviving what was once the second largest saltwater lake in the world," says Claudio Providas, Resident Representative in Iran for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which is involved in a project to save the lake.

Urmia had been laid low by a combination of drought, an ever-increasing number of dams (Iran has been an enthusiastic builder of them for more than 60 years) and the overuse of underground water sources and rivers by local farmers. The lake began retreating in the mid-2000s and by 2014 had shrunk to a fraction of its former size, with reports of it holding just 500 million cubic metres of water, compared to 30 billion cubic metres when it had been full.

Satellite images showed a body of water that had mostly receded to a shallow basin to the north of a bridge which had once bisected the lake, leaving the southern portion largely barren. Iran was facing an environmental disaster similar to what has happened to the Aral Sea in Central Asia. An estimated 6 billion tons of salt and dust threatened to blow around the surrounding area, devastating farmland and posing a health risk to the local population.

The programme to save the lake began in 2013. At the time, Urmia's surface covered just 500 square km, a fraction of the 5,000 km² it had been at its height. By 2017, it had expanded to 2,300 km² and, according to the latest information from the Lake Urmia monitoring station, it was at 3,134 km² last month.



From left, Tejmur, Naile, Layla and Emil Hacimuradov from Neuwied enjoy to feed sparrows as they have breakfast today in a bakery at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany. After month of a nationwide lockdown restaurants are reopening in more German states today.

Europe Relaxing Restrictions But Cases Flare Elsewhere

Agencies

BERLIN : Germany and several other European countries where the coronavirus spread has slowed were moving ahead today with relaxing border restrictions, while flare-ups in Mexico and elsewhere served as a reminder the pandemic is far from over.

Slovenia, which has been gradually easing strict lockdown measures, declared that the spread of the virus is now under control and that European Union residents could now enter from Austria, Italy and Hungary.

Germany, meantime, was preparing to open its border entirely with Luxembourg at midnight, and increase the number of crossings open from France, Switzerland and Austria. Travelers will still need to demonstrate a "valid reason" to enter Germany and there will be spot checks, but the goal is to restore free travel by June 15.

Germany's states have also agreed to drop a mandatory 14-day quarantine for travelers entering from the European Union and several other European countries, including Britain, said Armin Laschet, the governor of the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

"Germany will only over-

come the corona crisis if European freedom of movement for people, goods and services is fully restored," Laschet said.

Germany has seen more than 170,000 COVID-19 infections and nearly 8,000 deaths, but more than 150,000 people have recovered and the country has been seeing fewer than 1,000 new cases per day.

In northern Europe, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania removed travel restrictions between the Baltic nations, which Estonian Prime Minister Juri Ratas called "another step toward normal life."

Austria and Switzerland were also moving ahead with easing some border restrictions, and Austria reopened all cafes and restaurants.

"I have been having breakfast at this café for about 100 years," said Helmut Gollner, a former literature professor who was one of the first guests this morning at Vienna's Cafe Sperl. "My wife always made great breakfast but it's a different atmosphere here with the newspapers and so on."

Restaurants were reopening in more German states today as well, and the country was to resume professional soccer on Saturday after a two-month hiatus.

The Bundesliga plans five games with no fans present and other precautions, including the Ruhr derby between Borus-

sia Dortmund and Schalke.

In Sydney, many cafes and restaurants opened again today as New South Wales, Australia's most populous state, granted permission for them, as well as places of worship, to reopen with up to 10 people so long as distancing rules are in place.

Many Catholic churches across the state opened for private prayer, confession and small-scale Masses.

"The celebration of Mass is the highest form of Catholic worship and to not be able to physically gather these past two months has been very difficult," Sydney's Archbishop Anthony Fisher said in a statement.

In Japan, some schools, restaurants and other businesses started to reopen after the country lifted its national coronavirus emergency, while keeping in place restrictions in limited urban areas like Tokyo where risks remain.

As countries move ahead with relaxing restrictions, the head of the World Health Organization's Europe office, Dr. Hans Kluge, warned that distancing guidance and other protective measures were more important than ever.

"It's very important to remind everyone that as long as there is no vaccine and effective treatment, there is no return to normal," he said on French radio Europe-1.

US issues alert over Covid-19-linked childhood illness

Agencies

Washington: US health authorities issued an alert Thursday over a rare but sometimes deadly autoimmune condition among children that is believed to be linked to Covid-19.

The illness, which the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) called multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (Mis-C), was first reported in Britain in late April.

"Healthcare providers who have cared or are caring for patients younger than 21 years of age meeting Mis-C criteria should report suspected cases to their local, state, or territorial health department," said the CDC.

The criteria include fever,

multiple inflamed organs that cause severe illness requiring hospitalisation, a confirmed active or recent coronavirus infection and no other plausible causes.

The condition had previously been referred to as Pediatric Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (PMIS) by the state of New York, where there have been more than a hundred reported cases, including at least three deaths.

Doctors who have treated the illness say patients sometimes have symptoms similar to a rare condition called Kawasaki disease, which causes blood vessels throughout the body to swell, leading to extreme pain.

The CDC said that physi-

cians should "consider Mis-C in any pediatric death with evidence of Sars-CoV-2 infection," referring to the virus that causes Covid-19.

But it is not yet known if the condition is limited to children, the CDC added.

Sunil Sood, a pediatrician at Cohen Children's Medical Centre in New York, told AFP that some children had very mild forms of illness, but about half of the patients that he and colleagues had seen had to be treated in intensive care for heart inflammation.

The treatment involves injecting antibodies as well as administering steroids and aspirin in case patients experienced a sudden loss of blood pressure, called "shock."

COVID-19 related 'rhetoric and harassment' against Muslims in India unfortunate: US

Press Trust Of India

Washington: The US has seen unfortunate reports of COVID-19 related "rhetoric and harassment" against the Muslim community in India, a top American diplomat has said, asserting that it has been exacerbated by fake news and misinformation shared on social media.

Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, however, also said that the US was encouraged by the statements from senior Indian officials calling for unity amidst the unprecedented spread of the pandemic.

Brownback was briefing reporters on Thursday on the impact of COVID-19 on religious minorities throughout the world.

"In India, we have seen reports of unfortunate COVID-19-related rhetoric and harassment, particularly against the Muslim community. This has been exacerbated by fake news reports, misinformation being shared via social media. There have also been instances of Muslims being attacked for allegedly

spreading the coronavirus," Brownback said during a conference call.

"Now, I have been encour-



aged and we have been encouraged by statements from senior Indian officials really urging a unity, and noting the prime minister stated even that COVID-19 does not see religion, language, or borders, which is certainly true," said the US official on international religious freedom.

India has rejected as "propaganda" some social media posts alleging harassment of Muslims in the country for spreading the coronavirus.

"Much of what you see is propaganda by interested parties. Stray tweets can not be used to characterise our bilateral ties with these countries," external affairs ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said last month.

Pope Joins Inter-Faith Prayers Against Coronavirus, Irks Ultra-Conservatives

Agencies

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis joined an interfaith day of prayer on Thursday to call on God to end the coronavirus pandemic, brushing aside criticism from ultra-conservative Catholic groups, with one accusing him of associating



with "infidels".

A multi-faith committee formed after the pope's historic visit to the Arabian Peninsula last year came up with the proposal that Christians, Muslims and Jews pray, fast and perform charitable works on Thursday.

"Maybe there will be someone who will say 'This is religious relativism and it cannot be done,' Francis said in the homily of his morning Mass at the Vatican on Thursday.

Coronavirus is no excuse to exploit workers, pope says

"But how can we not pray to the father of us all? Each one prays as they know-how, as they are able to. We are not praying one against the other, one tradition against another ... (but) as brothers," he said.

The nine-member Higher Committee on Human Fraternity, which is based in Abu Dhabi, pro-

motes dialogue among religions. It comprises Muslims, Jews and Christians, including a Vatican cardinal and one of the pope's private secretaries, who is an Egyptian priest.

In Thursday's initiative, the Committee expressed support for medicine and scientific research but also invited people to pray "according to the teachings of their religion," as well as to fast and do works of charity to ask God to end the pandemic.

'Poison fruit'

Not all Catholics heeded the appeal.

In a series of tweets, the traditionalist Catholic blog Rorate Caeli mocked the pope. One tweet called the inter-religious prayer day "Francis' Fast with Infidels".

Rorate Caeli accompanied its tweets with pictures of sumptuously laid tables overflowing with food, suggesting that Catholics should feast, not fast, on Thursday.

Recovery from coronavirus must be just and equitable, pope says

One was accompanied by a picture of a roasted piglet. Observant Muslims and Jews do not eat pork.

Another influential traditionalist group, The Society of Saint Pius X, called the pope's promotion of the prayer day the "poison fruit" of the Catholic Church's dialogue with Islam.

The traditionalists, a vociferous minority in the 1.3 billion-strong Roman Catholic Church, have consistently criticised the pope since his election in 2013, particularly over his overtures to the Muslim world and his call for a Church that stresses mercy over doctrinal rigidity.

They have also opposed his support of agreements to limit global warming.

NEWS MAKERS

Singapore: Before the outbreak of coronavirus this year, Malaysian accountant Jazerel See used to travel regularly between her country's southern state of Johor and neighbouring Singapore where she worked, going home once a week to her parents and her seven-month-old boy.

But after Malaysia banned citizens from travelling overseas in mid-March in a bid to stem the coronavirus outbreak, See and hundreds of other Malaysian women were cut off from their families if they wished to continue working, and unable to breastfeed their newborn children.

See said the women, communicating via social media, then pooled together funds to ship supplies of frozen breast milk to their babies back home.

"We sought help from all the mummies and we tried to save and share the cost, because it's not really cheap to send back the milk," 32-year-



A worker piles up boxes of frozen breast milk to be delivered to Malaysia by mothers residing in Singapore

Malaysian mothers in Singapore freeze breast milk for babies at home

old See told Reuters.

In Johor Baru town, her mother Wai Lan Moy said: "I like that the baby is drinking her mother's breast milk, because drinking breast milk is better for the baby's immune system."

It's easier to take care (of the baby) that way." An estimated half a million Malaysians live and work in Singapore, with thousands

commuting regularly to the wealthy city-state from Johor.

Although Malaysia allowed citizens to return, they have to undergo two weeks of quarantine. Many of those working in Singapore were reluctant to go back fearing the spread of the virus as well as the risk of losing their jobs. Singapore also set up restrictions of its own in late March, barring or quaran-

ting visitors.

"If I go back (to Malaysia) now, I might bring back the virus," See said. "I keep telling myself to just bear it for a moment to ensure a better future."

So far, four shipments totalling about 7,000 kilograms of milk have been sent from 200 mothers in Singapore, Johor state lawmaker Andrew Chen Kah Eng said. Such a shipment has never been made before, he said.

"I talk to officers from CIQ (Customs, Immigration and Quarantine), they have never done that before, even from agriculture department, ministry of health and also customs, they have never done that before."

"They are willing to help."

Singapore has among the highest number of coronavirus infections in Asia, with more than 26,000 cases, mainly due to outbreaks in cramped migrant-worker dormitories.

Virus whistleblower Rick Bright tells lawmakers US lacks vaccine plan

Whistleblower Dr Rick Bright warned on Thursday that the U.S. lacks a plan to produce and fairly distribute a coronavirus vaccine when it becomes available. The nation could face the darkest winter in modern history unless leaders act decisively, he told a congressional panel.

Bright alleges he was ousted from a high-level scientific post after warning the Trump administration to prepare for the pandemic. Testifying Thursday, Bright said, "We don't have (a vaccine plan) yet, and it is a significant concern."

Asked if lawmakers should be worried, Bright responded, "Absolutely".

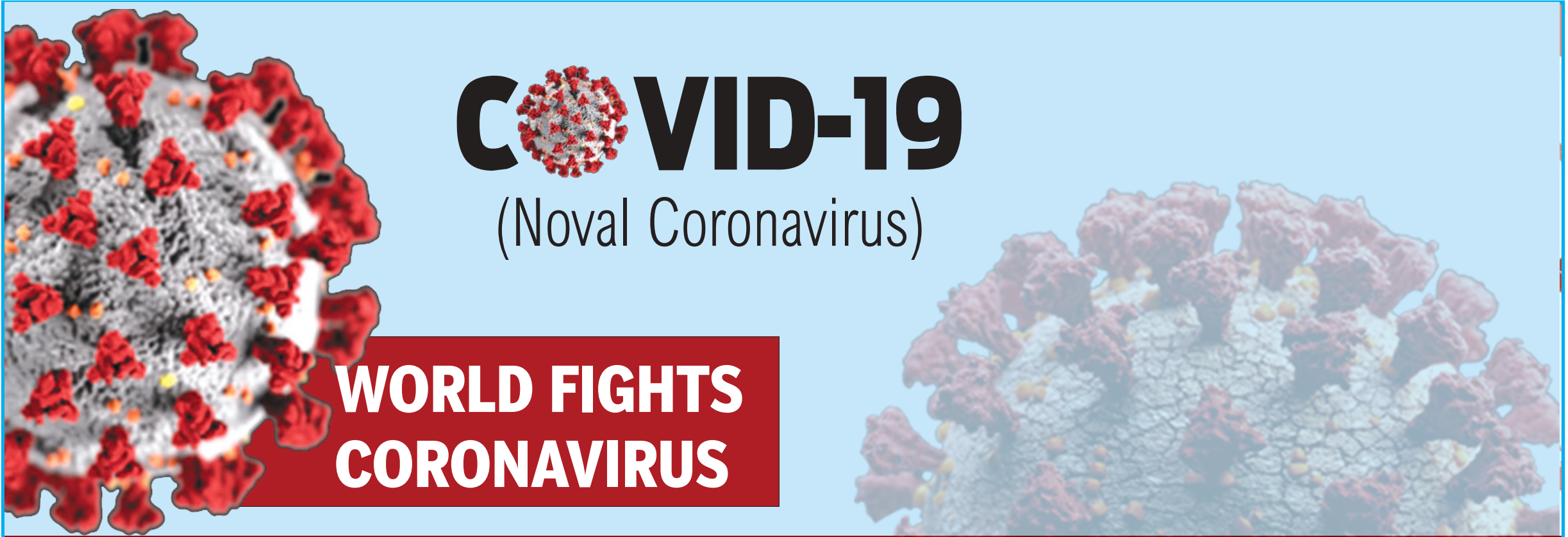
Bright, a vaccine expert



Richard Bright, former director of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, testifies before a House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health hearing to discuss protecting scientific integrity in response to the coronavirus outbreak, Thursday, May 14, 2020, on Capitol Hill in Washington

who led a biodefence agency in the Department of Health and Human Services, said the country needs a plan to establish a supply chain for producing tens of millions of doses of a vaccine, and then allocating and distributing it fairly. He

said experience so far with an antiviral drug that has been found to benefit COVID-19 patients has not given him much distribution confidence. Hospital pharmacies have reported problems getting limited supplies.



COVID-19

(Noval Coronavirus)

WORLD FIGHTS
CORONAVIRUS

HOW TO SELF-ISOLATE

STAY HOME

- Do not use public transportation, taxis or rideshares.
- Do not go to work, school or other public places.
- Your doctor or public health unit will tell you when it is safe to leave.



LIMIT THE NUMBER OF VISITORS IN YOUR HOME

- Only have visitors who you must see and keep the visits short.
- Keep away from seniors and people with chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lung problems, immune deficiency).



AVOID CONTACT WITH OTHERS

- Stay in a separate room away from other people in your home as much as possible and use a separate bathroom if you have one.
- Make sure that shared rooms have good airflow (e.g. open windows).



KEEP DISTANCE

- If you are in a room with other people, keep a distance of at least two metres and wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth.
- If you cannot wear a mask, people should wear a mask when they are in the same room as you.



COVER YOUR COUGHS AND SNEEZES

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hand.
- Throw used tissues in a lined wastebasket, and wash your hands.
- Lining the wastebasket with a plastic bag makes waste disposal easier and safer.
- After emptying the wastebasket wash your hands.



WASH YOUR HANDS

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Dry your hands with a paper towel, or with your own cloth towel that no one else shares.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.



WEAR A MASK OVER YOUR NOSE AND MOUTH

- Wear a mask if you must leave your house to see a health care provider.
- Wear a mask when you are within two metres of other people.



LEARN ABOUT THE VIRUS

COVID-19 is a new virus. It spreads by respiratory droplets of an infected person to others with whom they have close contact such as people who live in the same household or provide care.

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