





# From Front page...

## MHA Order Directing Companies To Pay Full Wages To Employees During Lockdown Withdrawn

**NEW DELHI:** The government has withdrawn its order directing companies and commercial units to pay full wages to workers even when they are not in operation during the COVID-19-induced nationwide lockdown, which began on March 25.

The lockdown, imposed to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, entered its fourth phase on Monday.

The government's move is expected to bring relief to a large number of industries and com-

panies which were unable to pay full wages to their employees.

While issuing guidelines for the lockdown's fourth phase, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla's order on Sunday said, "Whereas, save as otherwise provided in the guidelines annexed to this order, all orders issued by National Executive Committee (NEC) under Section 10(2)(1) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, shall cease to have effect from 18.05.2020."

The Sunday's guidelines men-

tioned six sets of standard operating protocols, mostly related to movement of people, which will continue to remain in force.

But it does not include the March 29 order issued by the Union home secretary that directed all employers to pay wages to workers on due date without any deduction even if the commercial unit was closed during the lockdown period.

The March 29 order had said: "All employers, be it in the industry or in shops and commercial es-

tablishments, shall make payment of wages of their workers, at their workplaces, on the due date, without any deduction, for the period their establishments are under closure during the lockdown.

Bhalla, while issuing fourth phase's guidelines, had said he, as chairperson of the NEC under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, has issued orders on lockdown measures on March 24, March 29, April 14, April 15 and May 1 specifying various issues related to implementation of the

lockdown and the exemptions given to various people and services from the curbs .

Interestingly, the Supreme Court on May 15 had asked the central government not to take any coercive action for a week against companies and employees who are unable to pay full wages to their employees during the nationwide lockdown.

There may be small companies which are not earning and therefore unable to pay, the top court had observed.

A bench of justices L N Rao, S K Kaul and B R Gava, hearing multiple petitions on the issue through video conferencing, observed that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) circular of March 29, directing companies to make payment of full wages to workers, was an omnibus order and there was a larger question involved which needs to be answered.

The top court issued notice on a plea of the Hand Tools Manufacturers Association, comprising of MSMEs seeking quashing of the

order asking private establishments to pay full wages to their workers during the lockdown.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehra, appearing for the Centre, said that he had a conference on the issue and needs to file a detailed response on the pleas.

The bench said there may be small industries, which are affected due to the lockdown as they can sustain for say 15 odd days but not more and if they cannot earn, how are they going to pay their workers.

## Covid-19 Claims 3 More Lives, Toll Reaches 16....

his back to back samples were taken at the CD hospital where he was admitted for several days after he tested positive for the disease initially, reports said.

Later, he was taken to SMHS for an emergency procedure known as tracheostomy—which involves creating an opening in the neck in order to place a tube into a person's windpipe to allow air to enter the lungs. It was there when his fresh sample, known as tracheal aspirate rather than the ordinary—nasal/oropharyngeal—swab was taken.

The test returned positive following which he was again taken to CD hospital where he died, the report added.

"He was continuously on ventilator from last eight days. He was suffering from Pneumonia. Last week a tracheostomy procedure was done on him at SMHS hospital," Medical Superintendent CD hospital, Dr Salim Tak said.

Hours after his death, a woman from the neighbouring Kulgam district also died of Covid-19 at the hospital to become 15th victim of the dreaded disease.

"A 65-year-old female from Kulgam, who was admitted in Surgical ICU in SMHS Hospital as case of sub dural haemorrhage (SDH) tested positive for COVID today morning and was shifted to CD Hospital Srinagar where immediately after admission she had cardiac arrest and instantly died," Dr Salim, concerned nodal officer said.

The third victim devoured by the deadly disease was a 75-year-old woman suffering from thyroid cancer.

The three deaths in a single day comes a day after a 29-year-old woman with underlying ailments died at the CD hospital here. She was the youngest victim of the dreaded disease in J&K so far.

With the latest fatality, 16 persons have died due to the disease so far in Jammu and Kashmir—13 of them in Kashmir and two in the Jammu division.

The Srinagar district has reported 5 of the deaths, highest in any district, followed by Baramulla and Anantnag with three deaths each while one each has been reported in Bandipora, Budgam, Kulgam, Udhampur, and Jammu. (with GNS inputs)

## 5 Doctors, 55 Cops Test Covid-19 Positive...

covid-19 testing lab in 24 hours till 5 p.m. today.

55 were from DPL Anantnag, 8 of them are patients admitted to SMHS Hospital.

Besides 3 ENT doctors of the Hospital and one doctor each at Government Dental College Srinagar and SKIMS MCH Bemina, The other patients include 2 from Anantnag, 2 from Srinagar (travelers from New Delhi), one patient admitted in LD Hospital from Bandipora, 2 from Jammu while one each is from Ganderbal, Kulgam, Handwara, Pulwama, Doda, Banihal, Kishtwar and Kathua.

"There is no policeman from district police Anantnag. The DPL Anantnag is a collection point and all the 55 personnel are from armed police," a senior police officer said. Among them, he said, one is a SP ranked officer.

Official sources said that five doctors whose samples returned positive include a 30-year-old from Bemina Srinagar (posted at SKIMS MCH), 27-year-old from Asham Sumbal Bandipora (posted in Orthodontics dental college Srinagar), 46-year-old from Ladakh (Consultant ENT SMHS), 42-year-old from Mahjoor Nagar Srinagar (Consultant ENT SMHS) and Registrar ENT SMHS, a 30-year-old doctor.

Among other patients who have tested positive at CD hospital's covid-19 testing lab include 50-year-old woman from Bemina Srinagar, admitted to isolation ward in SMHS. The others including 75-year-old woman of Kokernag, 55-year-old man from Fateh Kadal Srinagar, 65-year-old woman from Kulgam, 56-year-old from Kargil, 70-year-old woman from Budgam, 55-year-old man from Pattan Baramulla and 27-year-old from Sallar Anantnag were also admitted to SMHS hospital.

The 55 armed policemen who tested positive are aged between 25 to 56 years old and maximum among them are in 30s, they added.

The new cases in a day brought the tally to 1,289 in Jammu and Kashmir, they said.

"Of these, 1129 are in Kashmir, while 160 are in the Jammu region," the officials added.

A total of 609 people (549 in Kashmir, 60 in Jammu) have recovered from the infection, leaving 665 active cases in the Union Territory — 567 in Kashmir and 98 in the Jammu region.

The UT has witnessed 16 coronavirus-related deaths, including the three that took place on Monday.

Meanwhile, the media bulletin issued by the government today said that out of 88601 test results available, 87312 samples have tested as negative till today.

"Additionally, till date 114788 travellers and persons in contact with suspected cases have been enlisted for surveillance, including 29208 persons in home quarantine, 89 in hospital quarantine, 665 in hospital isolation and 18300 under home surveillance. Besides, 66511 persons have completed their surveillance period," the bulletin added. (With Inputs From GNS)

## 35 Sent Home On Recovery

were discharged from the Covid-19 designated Trauma Hospital, Bijbehara today after their recovery from the disease. All of them went through repeated tests before the officials sent them for home quarantine in presence of Deputy Commissioner Anantnag, Bashir Ahmad Dar, CMO Anantnag and Dy. CMO Anantnag after they were tested negative for the said disease.

The recovered patient said that they are highly thankful to the district administration and entire health department for serving such patients round the clock tirelessly.

They further said that they are hopeful that all the patients who are still undergoing treatment in hospital will recover soon and suggested common masses to stay homes and maintain physical distance to avoid the infection.

Similarly, eight more people were discharged from SKIMS Bemina after recovering from coronavirus, officials said.

Those discharged include 6 orthopedic patients tested Covid-19 positive at Bone and Joint Hospital

## J&K Govt To Take Call On

## Lockdown Extension Today

released by the MHA require State and UT Governments to delineate Red, Green and Orange Zones based on their assessment and prohibit or regulate such other activities or impose restrictions as deemed necessary.

The order by BVR Subrahmanyam said that it will require detailed assessment of the spread of COVID-19 in Jammu and Kashmir.

"In exercise of the powers conferred under section 24 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the undersigned (BVR Subrahmanyam) in (the) capacity as chairman of the State Executive Committee here by order that the guidelines/instructions issued vide order ...dated 03. 05.2020 shall continue to remain valid till 19.05.2020."

## No Change In Lockdown Guidelines: MHA...

earlier letters, I would like to reiterate again that States and Union Territories cannot dilute restrictions imposed vide the aforesaid guidelines issued by MHA. States and UTs, based on their assessment of the situation, may prohibit certain other activities in various zones, or impose such restrictions as deemed necessary.

"I would urge you to ensure compliance of the new guidelines and direct all concerned authorities for their strict implementation," Bhalla said in his letter to the chief secretaries on Sunday night.

He said under the new guidelines effective from Monday, the states and Union territories will categorise "red", "orange" and "green" zones taking into consideration the revised guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Sunday.

Inside the "red" and "orange" zones, containment and buffer zones will be identified by the district administration and local urban bodies with technical inputs at the local level and by taking into consideration the health ministry guidelines.

Within the containment zones, strict perimeter control shall be maintained and no movement of persons will be allowed across the zones, except for medical emergencies and maintaining the supply of essential goods and services, the letter said.

The home secretary said a limited number of activities will continue to remain prohibited throughout the country.

The ongoing nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus was extended till May 31 by the National Disaster Management Authority on Monday.

New guidelines on lockdown measures have been issued in supersession of the earlier lockdown orders, except the Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued on movement of persons.

In order to facilitate the movement of persons, various modes of transport have already been opened up in accordance with the SoPs issued by the MHA and all other activities will be permitted, except those specifically prohibited under these guidelines.

However, only essential activities shall be allowed in the COVID-19 containment zones, as mentioned earlier.

The lockdown announced by the prime minister came into effect on March 25 for 21 days initially. It was first extended till May 3 and then again till May 17. On Monday, the lockdown was extended till May 31.

## J&K Govt Notifies Domicile Rules...

eligible to get the domicile certificates from the designated authority which in all cases are tehsildars of different areas in J&K or other officials those may be notified by the government.

"Those in possession of the permanent resident certificates do not need any other document to get the domicile certificate. A person who has resided in the Union Territory for 15 years or studied in Jammu & Kashmir for seven years and has appeared in class 10th/12th examination in an educational institution located in Jammu & Kashmir.

"Or who is registered as a migrant by the relief and rehabilitation commissioner (Migrants) in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir as per procedure prescribed by government for migrants and displaced persons.

"Or who is a child of central government official, all India services officers, officials of public sector undertakings and autonomous body of central government, public sector banks, officials of statutory bodies, officials of central universities and recognised research institutes of the central government who have served in the UT of Jammu & Kashmir for a total period of 10 years are eligible to get domicile certificates", the spokesman said.

He also said a child of parents who are resident outside the UT of Jammu & Kashmir in connection with their employment or business or other professional or vocational reasons but who fulfill any of the conditions described in clauses (a) or (b) of the notification are also eligible for domicile certificates.

"To make the entire process transparent the designated authority will have to issue the certificate within 15 days of receiving the application. There is also an appellate authority that will dispose off appeals against the decision of the designated authority within a period of seven days," the spokesman said.

"A designated officer shall be bound by the decision of the appellate authority failing which a penalty of Rs 50,000 will be imposed on the designated official and this will be recovered from his/her salary", Kansal said.

## ACB Arrests Man Involved In Rs 223 Crore Bank Scam

application was endorsed to Registrar Cooperative Societies J&K for taking up the matter with Jammu and Kashmir State Cooperative Bank.

"Accordingly, J&K Co-operative Bank Srinagar sanctioned a loan to the tune of Rs. 223 crores without adhering to any codal formalities, ie obtaining the details of the Society Viz. Balance Sheet, Profit and loss Account business, activities being done by the Society, PAN No., Income Tax return, details of Construction of the Board Resolutions, etc," the ACB handout said.

It further said that during enquiry it also surfaced that River

Jhelum Cooperative Housing Building Society has not been even registered with Registrar Co-operative Societies, J&K.

The ACB spokesman said that the Mir by acting in league with bank Chairman and others had prepared a fake and fictitious Registration Certificate in the name of Society and managed the sanction of loan to the amount of Rs. 223 Crores.

"The above mentioned acts of omission and commission on the part of Mohammad Shafi Dar Chairman J&K State Cooperative Bank, Raj Bagh, Srinagar and others in conspiracy with Mir constitute and offences punishable u/s 5(1)(d) r/w section 5(2) P.C. Act and sections 465, 467, 468, 471, 120-B RPC, resulting in loss of Rs. 223 crores to the Bank. Accordingly, FIR No. 04/2020 P/S ACB was registered and investigation taken up," the Bureau statement said.

During investigation, the ACB spokesperson said it has been found the accused Hilal Ahmad Mir had managed to get issued a fake and fictitious Registration certificate bearing Registration No. ARK/SS/3, dated 31.03.1994 and on the basis of that fake and fictitious Certificate of Registration loan to the tune of Rs. 223 crores was sanctioned in favour of the non-existent society without adhering to the codal formalities and without any proper security.

"The loan amount was disbursed into the accounts of the land owners but the land has not been mortgaged to the bank. Further, investigation conducted by the Bureau has been successful in unearthing the siphoned out funds to the tune of Rs. 223 crores and amount to tune of Rs. 187 Crore have been frozen by ACB," the statement said.

It said that during investigation, the accused man person Hilal Ahmad Mir was arrested on 14-05-2020 to affect the recovery of documents required in the case which are purportedly lying in their possession and also to unearth the modus operandi, and the end use of funds and quid pro quo if any obtained.

"He was remanded to police custody till 18-05-2020. The interrogation of the accused person is in progress to ascertain further leads in the matter. More arrests are likely as the investigation progresses in this case," the Bureau statement added.

## Jailed DySp's Custody Extended Till June 16...

J-K jail.

DSP Davinder Singh was suspended from the Jammu and Kashmir Police in January this year.

The Special Cell had brought Davinder Singh to Delhi from Hira Nagar Jail in Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier the court had sent Syed Naveed Mushtaq and others to police custody till April 3 after the police said that he and other co accused were planning to execute militant attacks in Delhi and other parts of the country and targeted killings of protected person.

The police had said that Mushtaq, the commander of Shopian district of Hizbul Mujahideen, used to chat with other co-accused and militants through various internet platforms, including darknet chat.

Mushtaq, along with other militants of Hizbul Mujahideen, were planning to execute militant attack in Delhi and other parts of the country and targeted killings of protected persons, police had told the court.

Delhi Police had filed an FIR under Section 120B of IPC. The FIR said that the youths of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab are being trained for carrying out militant activities.

The FIR also mentioned of D Company and Chhota Shakeel. According to the FIR, the Delhi Police Special Cell had received an input that the D Company is funding to pro-Khalistan militant organisations in Punjab.

Under this very FIR Davinder Singh was taken in custody. He is currently in judicial custody in the case.

The Special Cell had also interrogated Davinder Singh regarding the Khalistan angle, police said.

Although Davinder Singh is not named in the FIR, but the Special Cell has some inputs on the basis of which the enquiry will be done carried out and Davinder Singh will be questioned.

## Probe Ordered Into Ambulance Driver's ...

had to be plastered. We have taken up the issue with the District administration as well as police," Block Medical Officer (BMO) Shopian, Dr Yusuf told Kashmir Observer.

Meanwhile, the colleagues of ambulance driver staged a protest seeking an FIR against the policeman accused of beating. The ambulance drivers threatened to go on indefinite strike if the action was not initiated.

It was only after the intervention of Medical Superintendent Shopian, Muhammad Ismail, the protesting drivers resumed their work, reports said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Pulwama has ordered a probe into the incident, news agency KNT quoted Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Choudhary Muhammad Yasin as saying.

## Covid-19: MMU Says No Shab-e-Qadr, Eid Gatherings

help and assistance to each other, especially to the needy, destitute and daily earners in these extremely hard times. He said the people should also assist religious and welfare organisations in reaching out to the needy.

"Members expressed hope that in the blessed and holy month of Ramadhan, Almighty Allah will grant refuge to humanity from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, and that the life will return to normal at the earliest," the joint statement read.

The statement also informed that the Sadqa-e-Fitr amount has been fixed at minimum Rs 55 per person which must reach the needy by Eid so that they are also able to celebrate the Occasion.

"Those who were not able to fast during Ramzan due to health concerns must offer Fidyaa of Rs 50 per day per person in the way of Allah," the MMU statement added.

## Rs 27 Lakh In 24 Hrs: A Conman's Coffe...

official from Aash Charitable Trust. "Even then, we were surprised to see his audacity to come up with that misleading video and fake his case."

Three other trusts, namely Aathrout, Tawheed Forum and Muslim Baitulmaal operating in the city, also refuted Shah's false claims.

"We've a fact-checking team on ground, who verified the claims of the person," said Bashir Ahmad, an official from the Aathrout Charitable Trust. "I can tell you honestly that the accused fooled people. He was provided every sort of help by many charitable organizations."

After the man's cover was blown by the NGOs, people demanded penal action against him, besides "his account should be seized".

Journalist's Role

Following the outrage, a Srinagar-based lawyer Mohammad Amin Najar filed a complaint before Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM), Srinagar saying that the man and his media accomplice are liable to be punished.

"They have willfully and intentionally concealed the real facts and managed to dupe general public," Najar said in his complaint.

The video according to the complainant was shot by the "journalist" Aquib Dar, correspondent at Young Bites (News Agency).

"He is in league with the person so as to gain illegally and unlawfully," the complaint said. "He has played a pivotal role in misleading, defrauding, deceiving and cheating the general public."

The complainant has sought criminal proceedings against the accused under section 415, 416, 417, 420, 424, 23, 25, 505 (1) IPC & sessions 03 of Epidemic Diseases of 1897, Section 66 D of Information and Technology Act, Section 54 of Disaster Management Act 2005, Section 68-72 of Central Excise & Customs Law (Amendment At. 1991).

"The accused person drives a van for livelihood and also owns some property at his native village," the complainant said. "He has also previously taken Rs 75,000 from the concerned MLA and Rs 50,000 from his in-laws."

Probe ordered

Taking cognisance of the claims, CJM, Srinagar on Saturday directed police to investigate the complaint against Shah and his alleged accomplice.

"I've perused the complaint and given my thoroughful consideration over the contents and the submissions made by the complainant," the order copy reads.

"In order to ascertain the truthfulness or otherwise, I deem it proper to get the complaint investigated through SHO police station concerned u/s 202 CRPC."

The detailed report is to be submitted by or before the next date of hearing."

A Brazen Audacity

Soon after his cover was blown, the accused went to the office of Authrout at Nawa Kadal on May 16.

"He had the same old story to tell, 'Kids have not eaten anything since last seven days, no one helping him', so on and so forth," Mohammad Afaaq Sayeed, a civil society member active on charity front during pandemic lockdown wrote on his Facebook wall.

"He [Shah] perhaps takes the whole Kashmiri population as emotional fools. He has been handed over to the police."

Growing Paranoia

The case has already cautioned many to be careful about the social media charity works.

"It takes one bad apple to spoil the barrel," said Zameer Mir, a Srinagar-based engineer who among others donated for the man.

"Since lockdown and during this holy month of Ramzan, people generously donate while taking note of any destitute case on social media."

But now, he asked, why won't the Hawal donation case make people paranoid?

"The conman's case is likely to hit those who are really deserving," Mir said. "I guess, people will now hesitate while donating to the needy."

## Highway Firm Booked After 2 Deaths...

(causing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others) 304 A (causing death by negligence) of IPC was registered against the construction company on Sunday at Ramban police station, police officials said.

However, no arrest has been made so far.

The 270-km Jammu-Srinagar national highway has become a nightmare for commuters due to the pathetic condition of the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country.

## 230 Cops Rewarded For Covid-19 Work, CI Ops...

42 constables and 18 followers and 27 special police officers. Apart from them, one Pharmacist and four nursing orderlies have also been rewarded.

"These rewards have been given to these officers and personnel for their dedication and devotion towards their assigned duties," the police spokesperson said.

He said that the DGP also expressed heartfelt happiness for the successes on the counter insurgency front and said that the efforts of Police and central forces will help in eradicating militancy from Jammu and Kashmir.

## 13 Held Over Illegal Sand Extraction...

under section 188, 269 was registered against the violators at police station Ganderbal. (KNT)

## Srinagar Passport Office Closed...

that the office will remain open for the employees only," Nagar said

The officer also said that in case of any emergency or any other passport related query, people can call on the follow numbers—01942500375, 374, 373, 371



# J&K to get Ola, Uber type Radio Taxi service soon: Samoon

SRINAGAR, MAY 18: In order to strengthen public transport system, Principal Secretary Transport, Asgar Samoon, today, has said that radio taxi service on patterns of (Ola & Uber) will be started soon across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

This was stated by the Principal Secretary while chairing an officers' meeting here convened to review establishment of IDTR (Institute of Driving Training and Research) at Kot Balwal and Budgam and ICC (Inspection and Certification Centre) at Harwan in Srinagar and at Samba in Jammu.

Stressing on the strengthening public transport services across J&K, Mr Samoon said that radio taxi service shall ensure better transport facility with safety of passengers besides creating employment avenues for locals. He said that technocrats, drivers, owners of taxis and auto rickshaws will be roped in this service, which will operate through a Google enabled app on patterns of Ola and Uber services. He said that Taxi service rules have been notified already and all related work is in progress to launch it soon in J&K.

Directions were also passed by the Principal Secretary to the management of SRTC to ensure early procurement of new buses including electric-ones. He asked them to deploy bus services on various routes including Gurez, La-



dakh and other remote areas to ensure better transport facility to the travelers.

During the meeting, Mr Samoon directed concerned officers to expedite work on the projects and ensure that pending work on IDRT at Kot Balwal and ICC at Samba in Jammu is completed by June this year. He also asked district administration Srinagar and

Budgam to ensure work on projects of IDRT at Budgam and ICC at Harwan in Srinagar is started at an earliest.

At the outset, the Principal Secretary while taking detailed review of Road Safety Funds, emphasized on the deployment of all safety equipments including 110 bikes procured last year. This year with the delay in the tender-

ing process, Mr Samoon said that an amount of Rs. 10 crore as Road Safety Fund will be released to DCs Rs 50 lac each for road safety management in their districts. He instructed for use of radons, identification of black spots, installation of cameras and other necessary equipment to avoid occurrence of accidents across the J&K.

## LMD Fine Manufacturer of Sanitisers

SRINAGAR, MAY 18: The Legal Metrology Officer Circle -I, booked a non-local manufacturer of Hand Sanitisers for violating Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011. The Central Government has declared hand-Sanitisers as essential commodity on 21st March, 2020 and has fixed a price of Rs100/- for 200 ml pack, whereas the erring manufacturer has printed an MRP of Rs 800/- for 500 ml, which ought to be Rs 250/-.

Moreover, the consumer care details were missing on the label. The Legal Notice was served to the company for over-charging on the product and for other violations. The management confessed the lapse and accordingly, a fine of Rs 25000/- was slapped on the company with an undertaking to comply with the Legal Metrology Laws.

## VC LAWADA visits Rakhi-Arth, meets locals

SRINAGAR, MAY 18 : Vice Chairman (VC), LAWADA, along with a team of officers, today, visited Rakhi-Arth Housing Colony Bemina and took stock of the developmental works coming up there. The people of the colony met with the VC and briefed about various problems they are facing there. The VC issued on the spot instruction to the officers for timely redressal of the problems of the people.

On the occasion, a structure constructed by the outsider for commercial purpose was also demolished. The V.C. appealed people not to indulge in any illegal such activities otherwise action under law will be initiated against the violators.

Meanwhile, the V.C took up the construction of Middle /Primary Schools in the colony with Director School Education and assured that land for the purpose will be transferred to Education Department to facilitate early construction of school buildings there.

Superintending Engineer and other senior officers of the Authority were accompanied by the VC.

## 4 Hydel Power Projects worth Rs. 189.85 Cr cleared by DLSWCC of I&C

SRINAGAR,:: To boost hydro-electricity in Kashmir valley, the Divisional Level Single Window Clearance Committee (DLSWCC) today cleared two hydro-electric power projects of 05 MW capacity each at total project cost of Rs. 83.09 Crore.

The meeting was chaired by Director, Industries & Commerce Kashmir and it was attended by General Manager, District Industries Centre, Anantnag, Joint Director, Fisheries, Joint Director, JKE-DA, Assistant Director, Planning (Industries & Commerce), Range Officer, Forest and District Officer, Pollution Control Board Anantnag.

meeting was informed that both these projects are being constructed by M/S O2z Trading and Industries Pvt. Ltd. These projects are being constructed at Ichoo Nallah Ahlan at a project cost of Rs.

43.33 Crore & Mavar Nallah Kokernag at a project cost of Rs. 39.76 Crore.

The meeting was informed that the project at Ichoo Nallah Ahlan is near completion and be commissioned soon. The projects were cleared after NOCs were sought from concerned departments.

During the meeting the Director stressed that such small projects will help in harnessing the hydro-electric potential of Kashmir valley besides being eco-friendly and economical. He said that Kashmir has vast hydroelectric potential and setting up these small Hyde's projects will provide job opportunities to skilled and unskilled youth of the catchment areas.

He said the UT Government has given highest priority for its development,

since hydro electric generation can meet the growing need of power for industry, agriculture and rural electrification.

Earlier, the Divisional Single Window Clearance Committee also cleared two hydro electric projects of 4.05 MW & 05 MW in Ganderbal district having total project cost of Rs. 106.76 Crore. These projects are 4.50 MW Butikulan Mini hydel power project constructed at project cost of Rs. 59.69 Crore and 5 MW Butikulan Mini hydel project constructed at project cost of Rs. 47.07 Crores. These projects are being constructed by M/S S.A. Power Utilities Pvt. Ltd and M/S Mass N-Ergy Pvt. Ltd. respectively.

The meeting was further informed that such more projects are in pipeline and same would be cleared in future.

### PRC For Admission To CET

## Govt Says BOPEE Notification Not In Tune With Reorganization Act

### Agencies

Srinagar: The Government on Monday informed J&K High Court that a notification by BOPEE, seeking Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) from candidates for participation in CET-2020, was not in consonance with the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganization Act 2019.

In the first week of this month, the High Court had issued a notice to J&K government, seeking its response on whether or not PRC has lost its relevance following abrogation of Article 35(A) by BJP-led government last year.

"After threadbare examination of the matter, the General Administration Department has advised the BOPEE vide communication dated 16.05.2020 that notification No. 003-BOPEE of 2020 dated 10.03.2020, issued by BOPEE is not in consonance with the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019 and the same is required to be modified in order to bring it in conformity," Additional Advocate General, F. A. Natnoo, submitted before a bench of Justice Rajnesh Oswal.

Natnoo who appeared on behalf of BOPEE as well as stated that the BOPEE is going to act upon the advice "very soon".

"The statement of Mr. Natnoo is taken on record," the court said as per global news service. "In view of the

statement, nothing remains in this writ petition for adjudication," the court said and disposed it off.

The petition was filed by one Aradhay Gupta through his counsel who contended that petitioner was born in Jammu and he has undergone all his studies in the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that authorities were demanding PRC so as to enable him to participate in the CET-2020. He had further contended that with the abrogation of Article 35(A), the concept of PRC has lost its relevance and as such the same cannot be demanded by the authorities.

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

## KCIC delegation calls on Advisor Baseer Khan

SRINAGAR, MAY 18: A delegation of Kashmir Chamber of Industries and Commerce (KCIC), today, met the Advisor to lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan and apprised him about their problems and various issues pertaining to the industry.

The delegation raised the issues of access to banks in Kothibag area, extending the tender license of parking by one year, tour and travels, inter-district movement passes for trucks, medicine distributors, waiving of electricity and water bills to hoteliers, disbursing rent charges to hoteliers, fixing of rent for hotel accommodation, permission to grocery vendors and other issues of tour and travels, tourism and handicraft industry.

The delegation also apprised the advisor that they are facing many difficulties during the movement and sought his intervention.

Advisor Khan assured the delegation that their demands will be addressed at priority and most of the demands including the inter district movement passes, permission to more grocery vendors shall be addressed to-day while other issues would be taken up with Lieutenant Governor, J&K.

The members also demanded that restaurants and Rangreth industrial Area may be allowed to resume the activities.

## RTI: DCs Asked To Ensure Video Conferencing Facilities

SRINAGAR, Jammu and Kashmir Government Deputy Commissioners to ensure that the video conferencing facilities available at NICs of District Headquarters are made available and accessible to all those who needed for appeals or complaints Central Information Commission.

"The Right to Information Act, 2005 has come into effect in the Union terri-

tory of Jammu & Kashmir. Second appeals arising out of the implementation of the Act alongwith complaints shall now be heard in the Central Information Commission, New Delhi," reads a government order, a copy of which lies with GNS.

"In view of the present COVID-19 situation, the CIC shall be hearing appeals through video, audio conferences."

In a video conference held by the

Chief Information Commissioner, CIC, it was brought to the notice of the Lieutenant Governor that the appellants or complainants are facing difficulties in availing the NIC video conferencing facilities at various District Headquarters.

"Accordingly, all the Deputy Commissioners are advised to ensure that the video conferencing facilities available at NICs of District Headquarters

are made available/accessible to all such appellants/complainants as and when their appeals/complaints are listed for hearing," the order said, adding, "Notices issued by the CIC in respect of such hearings may be treated as valid proof for availing the video conferencing facility. These instructions are circulated for strict compliance." (GNS)

### DIAL-EMMA



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

### AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



### RAILWAYS

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



### HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI

CALENDAR

25 Ramazan  
1441

## PRAYERS

FAJR 3: 50

ZUHR 12: 27

ASR 5:22

Magrib 7:31

ISHA 9:06

## This Day In History

- 1585 - Spain confiscates English ships
- 1635 - France's First Minister, Cardinal Richelieu declares war on Spain (Franco-Spanish War 1635–59)
- 1643 - Battle at Rocroi/Allersheim: French army destroys Spanish army
- 1643 Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut and New Harbor form the United Colonies of New England
- 1649 - England is declared a Commonwealth by an act of the Rump Parliament making England a republic for the next 11 years
- 1652 - Spanish troops occupy Grevelingen
- 1662 U - niformity Act of England goes into effect
- 1749 - George II grants charter to Ohio Company to settle Ohio Valley
- 1792 - Russian army enters Poland
- 1793 - Netherlands captures French island of St Maarten (held until 1795)
- 1796 - Game protection law restricts encroachment on Indian hunting grounds
- 1863 - Siege of Vicksburg, investment of city complete
- 1864 - Battle of Port Walthall Junction, Virginia (Bermuda Hundred)
- 1864 - Last engagement in series of battles known as Spotsylvania
- 1864 - Skirmish at Cassville, Georgia
- 1885 - German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck takes possession of Cameroon and Togoland
- 1900 - World's longest railroad tunnel (Simplon) linking Italy and Switzerland opens
- 1910 - Passage of Earth through tail of Halley's Comet causes near-panic
- 1919 - Kelud volcano on Java, erupts killing 5,160
- 1919 - Mustafa Kemal Atatürk lands at Samsun on the Black Sea coast, beginning the Turkish War of Independence
- 1926 - French air force bombs Damascus Syria
- 1929 - Chinese warlord Feng Yuxiang declares war on Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist government
- 1939 - Churchill signs British-Russian anti-Nazi pact
- 1940 - Amsterdam time becomes MET (Middle European Time)
- 1940 - French counter attack at Pronne under Gen De Gaulle
- 1941 - German occupiers in Holland forbid bicycle taxis
- 1941 - New Nazi battleship Bismarck leaves Gdynia, Poland
- 1943 - Berlin is declared "Judenrien" (free of Jews)
- 1943 - Churchill pledges Britain's full support to US against Japan
- 1944 - German defense line in Italy collapses
- 194 - 5 Start of the 1st Victory Test Cricket between England & Aust Services
- 1953 - Nuclear explosion in Nevada (fall-out in St George, Utah)
- 1958 - US & Canada form North American Air Defense Command (NORAD)
- 1959 - Jan de Quay becomes premier of Netherlands
- 1962 - Indonesian paratroopers land in New Guinea
- 1967 - USSR ratifies treaty with Britain & US banning nuclear weapons in space
- 1971 - USSR launches Mars 2, 1st spacecraft to crash land on Mars
- 1972 - US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site
- 1975 - Farm truck packed with wedding party struck by a train, killing 66 in truck, 40 miles south of Poona, India
- 1976 - Gold ownership legalized in Australia
- 1976 - Senate establishes permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
- 1976 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalatinsk USSR
- 1984 - STS 41-D vehicle moves to launch pad
- 1993 - Boeing 727 crashes into mountain at Medellin Colombia, kills 132
- 1995 - World's youngest doctor, Balamurali Ambati, 17, graduates Mount Sinai
- 1996 - STS 77 (Endeavour 11), launches into orbit
- 2011 - Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer, project to search for dark matter, led by Samuel C. C. Ting, installed on the International Space Station
- 2013 - Sweden defeats Switzerland to win the 2013 World Ice Hockey Championship

## From KO Archives

## PcK Invites Hurriyat Leaders To Travel On Kashmir Bus

RAWLAKOT – President Pakistan controlled Kashmir Sardar Muhammad Anwar Khan has invited leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference to travel to 'Azad' Kashmir on the Srinagar'-Muzaffarabad bus service

Addressing reporters at Rawalakote Press cub the PcK President said that the bus service was not solution of this core issue between Pakistan and India. However he said that it was a step towards permanent solution of this longstanding dispute

He said major objective of starting the bus service was to re-unify the divided Kashmiri families to facilitate them in this regard.

Anwar added the truck service between that between both parts of Kashmir would be started to boost trade between them.

Inviting Hurriyat leaders to visit Islamabad, Anwar said that such consultations among Kashmiri leadership on both sides of the Line of control will help in devising a joint strategy that would be acceptable to Kashmiris on both sides' of the LoC. He said no one he allowed to sell or cash the sacrifices rendered by one lac Kashmiris. He said Kashmiri martyrs were heroes of the Kashmiri people and they would realize their mission and will not leave any stone unturned in carrying forward their mission towards a logical conclusion.

(Kashmir Observer, 19 May, 2005)



KASHMIR  
OBSERVER

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## Mounting Economic Loss

**K**ashmir has suffered Rs 8416.2 crore loss over the first two months of the Covid19 lockdown, a report by Kashmir Trade Alliance has revealed. The general trade has suffered the highest loss of Rs 1620 crore followed by that of the industrial sector at Rs 1248 crore. The lockdown over coronavirus scare has come as a double whammy for Kashmir Valley. Following immediately after the six month long siege in the wake of the revocation of Article 370 in August last, the lockdown has inflicted a crushing blow to the state turned union territory's economy.

According to an estimate by Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), the Valley's economy suffered a loss of more than Rs 18000 crore during post Article 370 lockdown. Tourism, one of the mainstays of the local economy came to a halt and is unlikely to emerge from the slump in a long time. This has hit the hotel industry and travel operators hard. The handicrafts sector has been crushed. The fledgling IT industry and the start-ups have been wiped out. Horticulture, a Rs 6500 crore industry, that employs around three million people has suffered the heaviest loss. A significant portion of fruit has rotted on trees. Also, a significant portion lies stored in the cold storage house in the Valley. According to a news report, there are still 80,000 metric tonnes of apples lying in Kashmir, one lakh tonnes of apples which are in cold storage in Kashmir and may rot during the coronavirus lockdown. Reports have also pointed out how the inclement weather conditions, coupled with low temperatures throughout April, have hit the horticulture sector. Continuing wet weather conditions have also delayed timely spraying of tree oil and pesticides. This doesn't augur well for the sector.

This has created a depressing situation. More so, with uncertainty deepening over the world's and especially India's ability to control the pandemic in near future. Kashmir economy is thus in desperate need for a government support. It needs a bit of help over and above what has been given to country's economy in recent stimulus. Kashmir has now been more or less shut for more than nine months. So, the region can hardly endure the closure of businesses any more.

Kashmir is now looking forward to a post-Coronavirus period and hope it remains peaceful. The region has already been through a long period of disruption, so businessmen are pinning hope on near future. We can only hope that world is able to get a handle on this deadly virus and we get back to a normal life.

### OTHER OPINON

## Peaking: On India's coronavirus tally

**I**n 106 days since the first laboratory-confirmed novel coronavirus case was reported on January 30, India surpassed China's tally of 84,038. As on May 15, India had over 85,500 cases and the death toll stood at 2,752, as against 4,633 in China. There are only 10 other countries that have more cases than India. At the same time, the toll in the U.S. alone went past the total number of cases in China, while the total case load crossed 1.4 million. On March 18, when China reported zero fresh cases, India had just 162 cases and three deaths. Despite the country being under lockdown since almost end-March, the number of fresh cases and deaths reported each day has continued to rise steadily — on average, over 3,600 cases have been reported daily since May 8. This is of serious concern as contrary to the advice of WHO, India has not fully utilised the precious lockdown period to increase manifold the number of tests carried out daily while simultaneously tracing, isolating and treating COVID-19 patients. That even during the lockdown India has witnessed the shortest time, of 13 days, for cases to double compared with 14 other countries that have the most cases reported is testimony to the wide spread of the virus. A reason for this could be that cases in other countries, barring Russia and Brazil, have already peaked or are about to. Unfortunately, even as the number of cases has crossed 94,700, India is yet to begin investigating community transmission despite the strongly suggestive findings of sentinel surveillance among those hospitalised for severe acute respiratory infections. Given the high rate of asymptomatic transmission, high viral resurgence is inevitable when the lockdown is lifted.

With over 11,200 cases, Tamil Nadu has the second highest number of cases next to Maharashtra (over 33,000). But with over 4,000 tests per million, TN is testing nearly two times more than Maharashtra. It is not the States that report more cases that is a cause for concern, but those that have reported fewer. Active case finding and testing of most people with a travel history early during the lockdown could be one reason why Karnataka has reported fewer cases. Similarly, surveillance and case finding of those with a travel history early on have been good in Andhra Pradesh and could be a reason why it has reported fewer than 2,400 cases so far. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal have reported high case positivity. This could either be due to good surveillance, which is unlikely, or wider spread of the virus in the community, at least in specific regions. If the latter be the case, India can expect huge numbers to be reported in the coming weeks. No State, including Kerala, can thus be complacent

The Hindu

# The Political Economy Of Class And Social Power In Kashmir

WAJAHAT QAZI

**Life for the deprived classes has been nasty and brutish in Kashmir. It was perhaps only with the incipient advance of Kashmiri nationalism that a new constellation of classes and castes emerged but this was a relatively small class that called for both social and economic reform.**

**W**ORDS and their etymology are powerful in their own right but they are also signifiers of class, status and power in a given society. Kashmir and its social mix and constituents are no exception in this regard. Words such as 'khoje' (upper class wealthy person), 'waatal' (roughly the sweeper and the cobbler class), doomb (the lowest classes), peer (the priestly class), 'haenz' (the boat people of Kashmir, who live almost in a different world and zone), 'groos' (peasant) and so on are signifiers of social class in Kashmir suggesting the class or caste (used interchangeably here) of persons in what was and is a deeply hierarchical society. All these words have, over time, acquired pejorative connotations as well. But, this is the least of the issues. The real problem begins when such signifiers assume dimensions that can either hold back a person (or persons) or even advance them in a social hierarchy.

Consider the pirs and khojas of Kashmir first. The former stood on a higher social pedestal because of their monopoly on/of religion and learning thereof. The latter owed their prestige to either ownership of land or monopolization of the trades and crafts of Kashmir. Both fed on the lower, uneducated classes of Kashmir and the peasants- the pirs were held in awe by the groos and others. This politico-socio-economic condition held and endured almost throughout the rule of various rulers of Kashmir with each class instrumentalized by the rulers for pure reason d'etat. For example, the doomb, because of their lower status were associated with a degree of crudeness and rudeness formed the constabulary and informants of the various rulers. The khojas and the pirs, held to be the polite castes or the 'shareefs' of Kashmir, served as intermediaries of the governing classes.

Life, under these conditions for the deprived classes, was nasty and brutish in Kashmir. It was perhaps only with the incipient advance of Kashmiri nationalism that a new constellation of classes and castes emerged but this was a relatively small class — an educated cohort that assumed a new consciousness and thereby called for both social and economic reform. The Land to Tiller reforms instituted by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, under socialist influences, aimed to empower the groos (peasant) altered the social dynamic. (But, it was only after land prices skyrocketed in Kashmir that the groos reaped financial benefits. The unintended effect was



that the groos landowner and land holder who was supposed to reap fruit from the land and contribute to agricultural efflorescence of agriculture promptly sold his land as a get rich quick scheme).

It was in marriages that class or caste configurations also were reflected; these were almost endogamous. Corresponding to the typology and category of, say Khojas—the wealthy elite- married into Khoja families, the waatals into waatal families, the pirs into pir families and so on.

But, like in other societies, of course, in varying degrees, did education and the crystallization of the state structures alter these social and class dynamics in Kashmir? Not fundamentally is the answer. This is primarily because in the initial days access to the state and thereby was monopolized by the privileged classes who continued to be extractive and exploitative toward the lower classes. The same held true for businesses and trades till Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad, for political reasons, created new classes in Kashmir. For example, by giving bus and taxi licenses to tongawal-lahs, Bakhshi derived political patronage from these classes and other allied ones. Access to resources of the state was, for instance, contingent on patronage of the wealthier classes. Forest lessees and so on for example, were given rights for lumbering, denuding Kashmir's forest and green cover in the process.

By and large, the condition of the waatals, the doomb, the haenz and so on remained the same till the eruption of open militarized conflict in Kashmir. This opened all the fault lines of Kashmir and the social order got inverted. The aspiration of the lower classes was to mimic

the upper classes in the changed socio economic order. (Some nouveau riche people who made their wealth during this period are called TK's in Kashmir meaning 'tehreeki khojas', the implication being that they made their money in less salubrious ways) But, underneath this change, counter intuitively, the aspiration for education cutting across classes gained traction and momentum. Even though the provision of education was and is shoddy, but people from all walks of life began educating their children. The pirs, even though till a potent force, especially in rural Kashmir, lost their pre eminence; the groos was now educated and aspired to be a government official or a bureaucrat or a professional; some underprivileged classes also by virtue of education became doctors, engineers and so on, forming the middle class firmament in Kashmir.

But, even though there were some inter marriages, the underlying social and prejudicial dynamics remained. Behind his back the educated and professional groos was still called a groos pejoratively; the groos, in turn, when he was in a position of power made it a point to throw his weight and position around and so on. The larger point here is that while education rendered malleable social classes and social mobility, to a degree was made possible but the aspirational dynamic was not entirely the kind that would correspond to modernization of outlook and temperament and therefore equality. It, actually, in a different permutation and combination gyrated to the old dynamic of classes and castes in Kashmir in a somewhat different idiom. Will the age of technology and the internet change this?

## 21st Century & Gaming

Violent games should be considered a health risk as great as drug addiction. Repeated exposure to violent video-games may have cumulative effect of aggression on an individual.

JALIB BEIGH

**C**hildhood development is influenced by wide range of factors, governed by both nature and nurture. There are several factors which influence the development process of children especially the environment which has time and again proved to be of more crucial value than any other factor. From print media to internet our environment has changed drastically from past several years. Internet is ruling our lives in modern times. Same is the case in gaming.

From BRICK GAME to PUBG, video gaming has also changed considerably. From last decade, video games have become the dominant form of entertainment worldwide. Not surprisingly, the ubiquitous nature of video games coupled with children and teens who do not know when to stop playing once started. Talking about the latest trend in gaming, the violent video games like "PUBG" are on the tip of tongue of every child, young as well as adults. With 20 million daily active users globally PUBG is one of the most popular violent video game today. There are many other games which are of the same category show casting sheer violence and killing. With these games, the gamer learns to associate violence with pleasure, rewards for hunting another character while under normal conditions, human emotional wiring is designed to abhor violence and feel rewarded for helping



others. Those who play violent video games build opposite intuitions that they take into rest of life. Whatever a person practices repeatedly becomes an automatic response.

Studies have found short term and long term negative effects of playing violent games that include increased aggressive thoughts, feeling, behaviour and decreased prosocial behaviour. Neuro-scientific studies show reduced cognitive brain functions in individuals exposed to violent games. The lower was the activation of brain areas for learning, thinking, reasoning and emotional control. Violent video games instruct children how to behave like a criminal and intentionally hurt others.

Diminishing empathy, pleasure in the pain of others, well-practiced criminal behaviour, decreased capacity for mature decision making, Bad physical health, bad mental health, less sleep and bad academic scores were some of the effects of exposure to violent games. With the advent of these games children neglect hobbies, sports, friends, argue frequently with family members who try to limit gaming and put little or no effort into school work. The WHO in 2018 declared gaming addiction as mental health disorder. Addiction to video games increases the depression and anxiety levels.

Violent games should be considered a health risk as great as drug ad-

dition. Repeated exposure to violent video-games may have cumulative effect of aggression on an individual. From past more than a few years parenting has also changed. There was no surfing Instagram, checking email, or returning text messages while nursing the baby or having family time in the living room. We were engaged with our parents as children. These days, whether we'd like to admit it or not, there is less direct communication due to distraction our parents didn't text us to come downstairs when it was time for dinner. They didn't text us a list of to-dos or a thought that came to mind. Families communicated to each other face-to-face because internet wasn't so popular at that time. Now, Parents feel nurturing of their children as a burden on them. Parenting shouldn't be a burden on parents they should guide their children for their betterment. Parents must restrict their children to play these kinds of violent games. There are plenty of games with creative and educational value. The most obvious example is the building simulator Minecraft, which can teach players everything from architecture and physics to electronics and geology. Anyone can have a child and call themselves a parent, but a real parent is someone who teaches and guides their children about the value of time, health, and lives.

...  
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# The Unsung Heroes of Covid-19

RIYAZ AHMAD DAR

Right from the day one, our frontline warriors are engaged in fight against pandemic covid-19. They are doing a remarkable job and it has been well recognised. But there are many others whose noble and tireless work has gone unnoticed.

MOST of the times, we waver in purpose or action. We have no idea about the choices and situations that can push us into the troubles. We might stagger and stumble without learning from our failures or mistakes. When we are saddled with difficulties, only few have ingenuity and guts to find the solution or path to success. Only those few make an impact who observe, absorb and act. They deserve to be heard, applauded and followed.

They bring an assurance in us to reaffirm our beliefs. They give us a reason to challenge the limitations. Challenges and crises define our inner strength. Anything for which we toil hard to get what we want, leaves behind an indelible mark. Those feats are always cherished and remembered. Success doesn't mean to be rich but resourceful when by any small or large means we add value to our society and bring the profound changes. That is what real men strive for. Nothing is so satisfying than working for the welfare of others. They are doing it for their lord. Their hearts are at peace and don't need anyone's approval or appreciation.

Life is full of intimidating challenges. Sometimes we cannot help but have to dance with the unknown. We cannot be hardwired to resist them. Deep, deep down, we have to be very strong to overcome the crises. It is the only way to make our existence meaningful. Through challenges we grow and bloom otherwise an idle life is nothing but a burden on the earth. In the face of crises we have to stretch beyond our limitations and ride these challenges to become glorious human beings. These are the times which define us. Our prosperity lies in reaching out to the deprived and down trodden. We have to take them along, otherwise our wealth or worth is good for nothing, if it doesn't serve anyone.

The duties that we are supposed to perform shouldn't in any way create a notion that we are doing any favors to others. We are being paid and paid sufficient to put blood and sweat in our work. It is our professional obligation to deliver. We have pledged to meet the expectations of our work assignments. Our work is our choice, so there are no If's and but's. What we are supposed to do, we have to do it sincerely and seriously. We have to come out of fancy world. We are not doing any charity, we are being taken care of and given decent perks. Understand it's tax payers money, value your work. Ain't many of us lucky to have a job in our hands when thousands of highly educated unemployed people are moving from pillar to post. They are ready to compromise on any menial job. Appreciate and be grateful for what you own.

Right from the day one, our frontline warriors are engaged in fight against pandemic covid-19. They are doing a remarkable job. Almost every newspaper is flooded with the struggling stories of these professionals who are at the risk. A lot has been written about these brave hearts but today my story is not about doctors or DC's, mayor or municipality worker's, press or police, professors or para medics, teachers or tehsildars. It is about those person's who are doing their bit and carry on a noble mission and message. We shouldn't falter as well but to our own self awakening find a purpose in all those inspiring stories which always retain a spark and never fail to inspire us.

One such name which always strikes my mind is Dr. Sajjad Wani who is a batch 2012



Friends in Need: Volunteers getting ready to distribute masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Srinagar. Photo Credit: PTI

KAS officer. Teaching has always been his main forte. He is also the ace photographer who always strives for the excellence. Most of the aspirants who are preparing for different JKSSB exams and other competitions like UPSC, KAS, NT, NEET etc are well familiar with his YouTube channel 'Genesis Academy'.

Being my senior colleague, I have known him from very close quarters. This young chief accounts officer is currently posted at Anantnag treasury. It is highly appreciable to see how he strikes the balance between his official work and other pursuits. It is a herculean task to handle the treasury operations and still produce more than 100 videos on different subjects for the students. It is not an easy task to maintain the consistency for the finance professional like him to achieve such a feat. The current crises and concerns gave him impetus to help the aspirants who are stuck in covid lockdown.

On 23rd March, when the lockdown was announced, the major concern for the patients was the closure of clinics and Opd's. So as to ease off their sufferings and burden on the doctors, Mr. Shakeel Khan M.Tech CSE (Dy. Register JKBOTE) and Mr. Rameez Rashid faculty computer Engineering at Govt polytechnic, Jammu, developed online portal 'Dr4U.COM' within two days. Around 30 doctors have volunteered their services. More than 250 patients are already registered and benefitted. The follow up, test reports are keyed for each patient for future reference. It has been very helpful for the doctors to create and access the patient history by a single click. If all goes well, the same modus operandi should be adopted and implemented across the valley. I am sure the efforts of these techies will go a long way.

Due to the scarcity of manpower and resources

it was not possible for the administration to handle the situation all alone. To augment the efforts of frontliners, Basij group of Anjuman-e-Sharie Shayan under the leadership of Aga Syed Mohammed Hadi Al Mousavi came forward. He started 'Anti Covid 19 drive and the volunteers of the group are active from the day one. They took the initiative to provide the PPE kits to the doctors and paramedics at the CD Hospital and SKIIMS. PPE kits were also distributed to the ground workers in many districts including Bandipora which has highest number of covid positive cases. These kits are well protective and dress material/design has been appreciated by one and all. When the panic gripped the entire valley, they executed the sanitation drive at a very large scale covering the far flung villages. From Budgam to Baramulla, door to door awareness and sanitation drive was done by the volunteers. The quarantine facilitation centers were also arranged by the group. Thousands of food packets were distributed to the needy.

## Bottomline

Hats off to all those who are contributing in their own significant or simple ways to fight the covid-19. People might strive for rewards or recognitions but nothing is more meaningful than what has been promised to us when we do it in the name of Allah (F-i-Sabillillah). In these selfless services there is absolute abundance and joy. There is peace and purification of souls in those noble deeds. Let's strive hard for our salvation. Help others whatever little might be possible and take them along to sail through these difficult times.

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# What I Learned From Chaiwallas And Autowallas Of Kashmir

WAJAHAT QAZI

A CERTAIN ideological political spectrum blames the poor for being poor. According to this ideology defined by intellectual poverty itself, the poor are indolent, lazy, welfare queens (or kings as the case may be) and by implication and inference then, they don't have dignity. This view is far from the truth. I do not predicate my assertion upon a sentimental and mushy view about the poor but on real experiences I had in Kashmir. While the sample size is small, the assessment is neither impressionistic nor anecdotal. Here is what it is based upon.

My commute to work in Kashmir was a staggered one: I would drive to town, park my car at the slot near my friend's café, and then either walk toward office or take an autorickshaw (the famous tuk tuk in the Western schema). I would repeat this routine on my way back. It became so entrenched and such a regular affair that almost all autorickshaw drivers in town knew me. They were not only incredibly nice and polite to me but also usually offered me some discount. The tea and coffee at work was horrible. Because I am fond of either, I would bring my own mug and walk down to the tea vendors near the office to get my hot cup of tea laced with ginger. Yet again, I was given preference by way of giving me more tea than they would any other customer. (Initially, my favourite vendor (Ali Mohammed - real name withheld) would ladle spoons of sugar into tea - a cultural practice in certain quarters of Kashmiri society that denotes respect!).

It may be noted that tea vendors of Kashmir and autorickshaw drivers are daily wagers. They make their money on a daily basis; it is not much and uncertainty of the place eats away



into their earnings.

On day, Ali Muhammad came rushing into my office premises and sought me out. He said, 'Sahib (an honorific in Kashmir), my wife and kids are trapped in Jammu. They cannot return home because the highway is closed due to heavy snowfall. They have run out of money. Can you help them out?' There was worry and concern in his eyes and tone. I said I'd see what I could do. I organized a sum of 3000 rupees and asked someone in Jammu to go to the bus station where his wife, children and other stranded passengers were. The money was handed over to them. I thought that this was the end of the matter. But, nay, I was wrong.

The next day, a beaming Ali Muhammad came to the office, showered prayers and blessings on me.

Taking a wad of notes from his pocket, Ali Muhammad returned me the money. I was embarrassed. The sum of 3000 rupees was not a huge one but he insisted, I refused. This went on for a few minutes till Ali Muhammad kept the money on my table and left.

The tea vendor(s) and the auto rickshawallas had become friends of mine. I admired their grit and determination to make a living against all odds.

During a petrol crisis in Kashmir, Maqsood

(not his real name), after coming to know I had run out of fuel, came to my home one early wintry morning. 'Sir, I realized you have no petrol for your car. Here's 30 litres'. I was overwhelmed and asked how he had obtained it. The response was, 'Arrey sir, I depend on petrol for my rickshaw. So, I was waiting till 2 am in the morning at the petrol station. When it arrived, I filled my tank and got some for you'. I wanted to tip after I paid him for the petrol. A sheepish, rather embarrassed smile on his face and a big No said it all.

After leaving Kashmir in September to the West, I did not forget about them. I'd call them and my query, stated very diplomatically, lest they be offended was whether they needed anything. The response invariably was the same, 'Sahib, khoda thaevnai sehat' meaning May God keep you always happy and in good health. Decoded, this was a polite no.

Now that Kashmir is in a Covid 19 induced lockdown, and now that Eid al Fitr (the Muslim festival commemorating the end of Ramadan) is approaching, I called the autorickshawallas - the ones whose numbers I had on my phone and Ali Muhammad, the tea vendor.

Ali Muhammad's typical response was emblematic of all. 'Eid is approaching,' I said. Its been a long time since the lockdown. Do you need anything? After a pause, Ali Muhammad, effusive and gushing with prayers for me and my family said, 'Khodah theavanai vaare, khoshaal te theavnai sehat' meaning 'May God always keep you happy, healthy and well'. It was yet again a polite no.

Tailpiece: Poverty is a structural, contextual and developmental issue. The poor cannot and must not be blamed for it. The poor have dignity but, at times, poverty can kill it. It then is an imperative to alleviate the burden of poverty and make the world a fairer place to the extent can be.



# COVID-19: PEOPLE WITH METABOLIC Syndrome Take Longer To Recover



Press Trust Of India

People with "metabolic syndrome" take longer in recovering from coronavirus infection as it causes further health complications, experts have said and suggested a healthy lifestyle and diet to keep the pandemic at bay.

Metabolic syndrome is characterised by hypertension and high levels of blood sugar and cholesterol.

Dr Ravi Dosi, who heads chest department of Indore-based Sri Aurobindo Institute of Medical Sciences (SAIMS), said at least 150 of 1,100 COVID-19 patients he came across so far in Indore district had metabolic syndrome.

Indore, worst-hit by coronavirus pandemic, has so far reported 2,470 cases and 100 deaths.

"Of the 1,100 COVID-19 patients, about 150 men had metabolic syndrome (co-morbidities)," he said.

According to Dr Doshi, patients with metabolic syndrome need a longer time to recover as their underlying health conditions further exacerbate the complications

caused by coronavirus.

Dr Doshi suggested a healthy lifestyle and proper diet to keep the coronavirus at bay.

In a related development, the Indian Institute of Management, Indore (IIM-I) has undertaken a detailed study with international collaboration on the relationship between COVID-19 and metabolic syndrome.

Their six-member research team comprises an assistant professor at IIM-I and fellows from the University of Michigan and the Columbia University of America.

A member of the team, Assistant Professor and Biostatistics expert Sayantan Banerjee said people with metabolic syndrome are vulnerable to coronavirus pandemic.

"After analysing the data of the fourth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), we have come to (know that) people with metabolic syndrome were vulnerable to pandemic," he said quoting a synopsis.

Banerjee further said red and orange zones have more number of metabolic syndrome patients with high blood and sugar levels.

**ACCORDING TO DR DOSHI,** patients with metabolic syndrome need a longer time to recover as their underlying health conditions further exacerbate the complications caused by coronavirus.

## Early Blood Clot Tests May Help Save Critically Ill COVID-19 Patients From Stroke

Press Trust Of India

**HOUSTON-** Critically ill COVID-19 patients face a high risk of developing kidney failure, stroke, and other complications associated with blood clot formation, according to a study which suggests that early tests may help save those severely affected by the disease.

The study, published in the Journal of American College of Surgeons, builds on growing evidence that COVID-19-infected patients are highly predisposed to developing blood clots.

In the study, the scientists, including those from the University of Colorado in the US, linked blood clotting measurements with actual patient outcomes.

The researchers said they are also currently conducting a randomised clinical trial of a drug that breaks down blood clots in COVID-19-infected patients.

"This is an early step on the road to discovering treatments to prevent some of the complications that come with this disease," said Franklin Wright, lead author of the study from the University of Colorado.

According to the study, patients



who are critically ill, regardless of cause, can develop a condition known as disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC).

In this condition, the blood of these patients initially forms many clots in small blood vessels, the scientists said.

The body's natural clotting factors can form too much clot, or eventually not be able to effectively form any clot, leading to issues of both excessive clotting and excessive bleeding, they explained.

However, in patients with COVID-19, the researchers said, the clotting appears to be particu-

larly severe.

Citing COVID-19 case studies in China and from different parts of the world, they said the clots in these patients do not appear to dissipate.

Assessing the condition further among patients, the scientists saw the potential of using a specialised coagulation test to examine clotting issues in COVID-19 patients.

One such test they mentioned is the thromboelastography (TEG), which is a whole blood assay that provides a broad picture of how an individual patient's blood forms clots.

This test, according to the re-

searchers, also reveals how long clotting takes in a patient, how strong these are, and how soon the clots break down.

TEG is highly specialised and used primarily by surgeons and anesthesiologists to evaluate the efficiency of blood clotting, but is not widely used in other clinical settings, the study noted.

"The COVID pandemic is opening doors for multidisciplinary collaboration so trauma acute care surgeons and intensivists can bring the tools they use in their day-to-day lives and apply them in the critical care setting to new problems," Wright said.

In the study, the researchers analysed 44 patients treated for COVID-19 infection between March 22 and April 20.

They assessed the outcomes for all patients who had a TEG assay as part of their treatment.

The scientists also evaluated the outcomes of the COVID-19 patients who were tested with other conventional coagulation assays such as the ones that measure the levels of the molecule D-dimer in their bodies.

D-dimer, they explained, is a protein fragment that is produced when a blood clot dis-

solves, whose levels are elevated when large numbers of clots are breaking down.

Those whose bodies were not breaking down clots most often required hemodialysis, and had a higher rate of clots in the veins, the study noted.

These patients, according to the researchers, could be identified by TEG assays showing no clot breakdown after 30 minutes, and a D-dimer level greater than 2600 nanogramme per millilitre (ng/mL).

Eighty percent of patients with both affirmative test findings were placed on dialysis, compared with 14 per cent who tested for neither finding, the scientists said.

According to the study, patients with positive test findings also had a 50 per cent rate of venous blood clots.

This was compared with zero per cent for those patients with neither finding, the scientists said.

"These study results suggest there may be a benefit to early TEG testing in institutions that have the technology to identify COVID-19 patients who may need more aggressive anticoagulation therapy to prevent complications from clot formation," Wright said.

## How Digital Therapeutics Could Aid Asthma Management

Agencies

**NEW DELHI-** For an individual diagnosed with asthma, it is a daily struggle with the condition and how it affects their lives. It could mean an increasing number of sick days at work, shortness of breath while climbing stairs or playing with children, and low energy levels to perform daily tasks.

What we don't see is the constant fear of an attack, if left untreated, could lead to permanent damage to lung function.

Approximately 300 million individuals are currently suffering from asthma worldwide and 10 percent of it, 30 million patients, are in India. A big challenge is that patients often wean off their medication with initial relief, and follow up only when they experience an asthma attack or when they can't cope. This kind of care is episodic, reactive and usually leads to a higher number of medications to control the situation from worsening or leading hospitalisation, Dr. Sid Kolwan, AVP - Clinical and Product, Wellthy Therapeutics says.

But what if we could live in a world where we can prevent such attacks?

**Knowing one's triggers**

Attacks are usually triggered by allergens such as dust, mould, pollution or bird droppings that inflame and narrow the airways and make it difficult to breathe. These triggers are hard to identify as they need to be continuously monitored and mapped to the patient at the time of the attack. Patients are unable to reveal their full-history, and time-strapped doctors don't have enough time to probe. They're also difficult to predict especially when unavoidable environmental factors play a large role. Digital modes can now help create a system where one was forewarned. One could take steps to avoid, reduce exposure or even keep medication handy to act quickly. Even a minute's delay is costly.

**Right intake of medication**

Doctors often recommend inhalers for long term treatment. They're more effective than oral medications if taken correctly, as they reach the affected area more directly than oral pills. Yet, with the social stigma that being asthmatic carries, it is not uncommon for one to use



their inhalers infrequently or abandon them altogether. Fears around addiction and side effects are cloud better judgement and results in drop-offs.

For those that do use inhalers, according to Dr Kolwan, they have not been taught how to use it properly, because of which suboptimal medication is delivered. So even when one gets over the stigma that asthma carries, they still don't receive full care.

**Disease awareness and education**

Patients often resort to self-management techniques that get in the way of them receiving effective care. What if they could be more informed on how to better manage asthma? Patients stand to gain tremendously from knowing about their condition, treatment plan, how it affects their body, and the right course of action in case of an attack.

Moreover, with support, patients can make small changes in their behaviour to reduce the occurrence of attacks daily. Unfortunately, time-strapped doctors are often unable to dedicate more time towards counselling patients to get the most out of their treatment or to deal with asthma, the doctor adds.

**Digital therapeutics**

Asthma is a chronic condition where one could benefit greatly from continuous care. And digital therapeutics can play a large role in delivering optimal care. Digital therapeutics delivered through a smartphone application on the patient's phone can identify triggers based on symptoms and behaviours over time. It can alert the patient about weather conditions and the air quality index based on location.

Patient education delivered digitally can help coach patients on right use of inhalers, which carries long term impact on the overall quality of life. Digital therapeutic solutions have been proven to reduce the number of flare-ups in the west, its high time India got a solution made for India too.

## Social Media Playing Important Role To Keep People Motivated

Agencies

**NEW DELHI:** As the recent lockdown may prove daunting on our physiological and psychological well-being, due to lack of social mingling, outdoor and office routine, many famous celebrities and normal people across the globe are sharing motivational posts on the social media platforms to help people remain positive and inspired during the pandemic.

Recently, superstar Shah Rukh Khan had posted a song titled 'Sab Sahi Ho Jaayega' from his Twitter handle, sending out positivity and hope to everyone amid the lockdown. The song was sung by SRK himself.

Speaking to IANS on psychological well-being, Samir

Parikh, Director, Mental Health & Behavioural Sciences, Fortis Healthcare in New Delhi, said: "Amidst the ongoing global pandemic, there is likely to be an adverse impact on our mental as well as physical health, being cooped up indoors, coupled with the anxieties and uncertainties associated with what is going on, especially related to the future. And such concerns are inevitable, be it financial, professional, or interpersonal."

"At such a time, it is indeed helpful if celebrity figures come forward to share their thoughts, and help encourage people to follow the guidelines, stay safe, and yet maintain positivity in their lives," Parikh said.

A few days back, veteran Bollywood actor-filmmaker



Satish Kaushik released a motivation video on Twitter, in which he was seen singing the song 'When life gives you banana' to motivate people and stay positive during the lockdown. "There is despair, sadness, sense of loss everywhere. Should we succumb to this pressure? To answer the question here is a light-hearted,

inspiring song, 'When Life Gives U A Banana', Kaushik wrote on the social media platform.

Parikh also added that people need to understand this is would pass if we all stay connected and responsible.

"They should be motivated by reading about the good deeds of altruism people are doing and contribute their own bit to it. We all need to together become a solution," he added.

This lockdown period has led to increased anxiety and depression amongst people. And many people from all over the world uploading motivational videos, songs, poetries, etc., to help those who are facing anxiety and other psychological issues. For example, in a musical video uploaded by a Twitter

user, in which a family man can be seen performing daily home tasks and singing

"Each day is more like a creepy dream, from a movie scene. All-day at home with family, can't see anyone."

From motivational movie dialogues, songs to reading and sharing inspirational quotes on social media, people are doing all possible things to spread positivity among people.

"Mentally the toughest week I've had so far in lockdown, but I soon realised how blessed I am to still have all my loved one's here, who are safe and healthy! It was the motivation I needed to keep positive/going Rainbow We will get there in time Orange heart #StaySafe-SaveLives," a user tweeted.



## Mecca Has Highest Number Of COVID-19 Cases In Saudi

### Agencies

Dubai: Seven cities and governorates in Saudi Arabia have together recorded 2,378 cases, 87 per cent of 2,736 coronavirus infections reported yesterday, the Saudi Alwatan Newspaper reported Sunday.

Makkah with 557 cases topped the list on Sunday. It was followed by Riyadh with 488 cases, 392 in Medina, 357 in Jeddah, 286 in Dammam and 149 each in Hufuf and Al Jubail.

There were also 81 new infections in Taif, 51 in Al Khobar, 24 in Qatif, 18 in Tabuk, 15 each in Dhahran and Baish, 14

Al Abdali reiterated that the spread of virus in the kingdom is under control, adding: "It is known during pandemics that the curves will be go up and down gradually, and it is important during these times to have a view of its rapid spread. However, the virus spread in the Kingdom is under control, and the rise in numbers is attributed to redoubling our tests efforts, which results in the early detection of cases."

Saudi Arabia has so far reported 54,752 cases, of which 28,718 are active cases receiving treatment at the Kingdom's hospital. There are also 2020



in Bisha and 12 in Buraidah.

The Ministry of Health spokesperson, Dr. Mohamed Al Abdali, affirmed that the number of recovery in the Kingdom has been increasing, and is now about 47 per cent thanks to the early detection of cases, which contributes to early recovery.

cases in critical condition are receiving intensive care, while the total number of patients recovered jumped to 25,722.

Makkah has the highest number of COVID-19 cases followed by Riyadh with 10,176 cases overall, while Jeddah reported 9,285 cases followed by Madinah with 7602 cases.

## Pakistan Resumes Domestic Flights, Insists On Masks And Empty Seats

### Agencies

Islamabad: Pakistan resumed domestic flights between major cities for the first time in nearly two months on Saturday with the requirement that face masks be worn and vacant seats left between passengers.



gers, officials said.

International flights will remain suspended till May 31.

The first Pakistan International Airline (PIA) flight carrying 84 passengers departed from Karachi for Lahore at 1300 local time (0800 GMT), along with flights for Lahore and Islamabad operated by a private airline, local media reported.

"In view of the difficulties faced by passengers in traveling between major cities, the Federal Government has allowed limited domestic flight operations from five major airports, Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta with effect from May 16," said a statement issued by the Aviation Division.

Domestic and chartered flight operations will require disinfection of the aircraft prior to boarding, at least one vacant seat between the passengers and compulsory wearing of masks and use of hand sanitizers. No food and beverages will be allowed during domestic flights, the statement added. On Saturday, the Aviation ministry released pictures of passengers seated with a gap of a seat in the flights.

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday said that the country could not afford an indefinite lockdown and the nation would have to learn to live with the pandemic.



Crowds on the shoreline in Laguna Beach, California, May 9, 2020. The costs of the shutdown, economic and otherwise, have driven many people to the breaking point. But governors are increasingly worried about the costs of reopening, too.

## At least 1,000 Rohingya stuck at sea, says Amnesty International

### Agencies

Madrid: Summer weather is enticing much of the world to emerge from coronavirus lockdowns as centres of the outbreak from New York to Italy and Spain gradually lift restrictions that have kept millions indoors for months.

People are streaming back to beaches, parks and streets just as a heat wave hits southern Europe and spring-like temperatures allow Americans to shed winter coats. As they venture out again, most are keeping their distance and some are wearing masks.

However, protests are also heating up from Germany to England to the United States, arguing the government restrictions demolish personal liberties and are wrecking economies.

Greeks flocked to the seaside on Saturday when more than 500 beaches reopened, coinciding with temperatures of 34 Celsius.

Umbrella poles had to be 4 metres apart, with canopies no closer than 1 metre as the country sought to walk the fine line between protecting people from COVID-19 while reviving the tourism sector that many depend on for their livelihoods.

"This is the best thing for us elderly ... to come and relax a bit after being locked in," Yannis Tentomas, who is in his 70s, said as he settled down on the sand.

White circles were painted on the lawn in Brooklyn's Domino Park in New York City to help sunbathers and picnickers keep a safe distance. About half the people in the park appeared to be wearing some form of face covering as they congregated in small groups on a warm Saturday afternoon with police officers in masks keeping watch.

In Paris' Bois de Boulogne, health training worker Anne Charand was carrying disinfectant gel and a mask but said she felt a sense of freedom again for the first time after weeks of confinement.

"It's as if we were in Sleeping Beauty's castle, all asleep, all frozen, and suddenly there's light and space, suddenly we can experience again the little joys of everyday, in the spaces that belong to us, and that we're rediscovering." On the French Riviera, many who took a dip in the sea wore protective masks. Fishing and surfing were also allowed, but

sunbathing was banned.

"We're semi-free," said one local bather sporting a straw hat as he strolled the rather empty pebbly beach in Nice.

### 'Make corona go away'

Bathers seeking relief from the heat in Tel Aviv in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan Valley mostly tried to stay apart.

"We hope that the hot water, weather, make corona go away," said Lilach Vardi, a woman who came to swim in the Dead Sea in Israel, as a lifeguard tried to fry an egg in a pan in the scorching sand nearby.

In Tunisia, which reported no new COVID-19 cases over four consecutive days last week, people flooded into the streets and to recently reopened shops with little social distancing.

Muslims are nearing the Eid al-Fitr holiday ending the month of Ramadan, when many celebrate with new purchases.

"I stayed at home for two months and almost went crazy," said one woman at Tunis' Manar City Mall. "I'm surprised by the crowd but I need to buy clothes for my children for Eid."

## COVID-19: In Jerusalem, Ramadan restrictions last seen during Crusades return

### Agencies

Jerusalem: The last time Muslim worshippers were kept out of the Aqsa Mosque compound throughout the entire month of Ramadan was when crusaders controlled Jerusalem in the Middle Ages.

Now the coronavirus pandemic has done what the intervening centuries had not: largely emptying the often crowded and chaotic spaces of Islam's third-holiest site, where Muslims believe the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) ascended to heaven.

The restricted entry to the compound is only one example of how the pandemic has radically transformed the way Muslims in Israel and the Occupied Territories have experienced the sacred fasting month of Ramadan as they cope with government social distancing measures.

Instead of attending elaborate fast-breaking feasts with extended family members and smoking water pipes at

thronged cafes, Palestinians of the 1948 era (Arab citizens of Israel) and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories have spent much of their time in unwelcome isolation.

Standing outside one of the shuttered entrances to the Aqsa compound, Mohammed Suleiman, a school security guard from occupied Jerusalem, held back tears as he spoke about his desire to pray at the mosque.

"The Aqsa is healthy, but we aren't," said Suleiman, clutching a green and red prayer mat. "I hope we can return to it soon because I feel lonely without it."

### Health concerns

In April, the Islamic Waqf, the Jordanian-backed religious body that administers the mosque compound, decided to close the site to the public throughout Ramadan, citing public health concerns.

In one of the few large open spaces near the Aqsa compound last week, some 30

worshippers, including Suleiman, gathered under the blazing sun for traditional Friday afternoon prayers, while keeping a distance of several feet between each other. Nearby, a large contingent of the Israeli occupation regime's police officers stood guard.

The Aqsa has been closed to the Muslim public, the imams who work there have continued to deliver sermons in it, livestreaming over Facebook special Ramadan evening prayers (taraweeh), as well as Friday afternoon prayers. Tens of thousands of social media users have viewed the broadcasts.

Other organisations have also been providing online content to Muslims during this Ramadan like no other.

Ramadan Nights from [occupied] Jerusalem, a coalition of Israeli and Palestinian organisations, has created a website featuring daily virtual events about Islam, the fasting month and Arabic culture in Arabic, Hebrew and English.

## Iran Media Warn US Against Any Move On Fuel Shipment To Venezuela

### Agencies

Tehran: An Iranian news agency close to the elite Revolutionary Guard said on Saturday that there would be repercussions if the United States acted "just like pirates" against an Iranian fuel shipment to Venezuela.

A senior official in President Donald Trump's administration told Reuters News Agency last week the US was considering measures it could take in response to Iran's shipment of fuel to crisis-stricken Venezuela.

The oil sectors of Iran and Venezuela, members of OPEC, are both under US sanctions. The Trump administration official declined to specify the measures being weighed, but said options would be presented to Trump.

"If the United States, just like pirates, intends to create insecurity on international waterways, it would be taking a dangerous risk, and that will certainly not go without repercussion," Iran's Nour news agency said.

At least one tanker carrying fuel loaded at an Iranian port has set sail for Venezuela,

according to vessel-tracking data from Refinitiv Eikon, which could help ease an acute scarcity of petrol in the South American country.

"Venezuela and Iran are both independent states that have had and will continue to have trade relations with each other," Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiei was quoted as saying by the YJC news website, linked to Iran's state broadcaster.

"We sell goods and buy goods in return. This trade has nothing to do with anyone else. We have to sell our oil, and we have ways to do it," Rabiei said, adding he had no information about the Venezuela-bound vessel.

### British tanker experience

Separately, an Iranian analyst suggested Tehran may retaliate against US vessels in the Gulf if the US takes action against the Iranian tanker.

"The US Navy and its allies in the Persian Gulf are hostages to any kind of violation against Iran's legal international shipping," Mahdi Mohammadi said on Twitter.

## Yemen: Press Saudi-Led Coalition Into Letting In Medical Supplies

### Agencies

Sanna: Yemen has asked the international community to try and pressure the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which has been attacking the impoverished country since 2015, into letting in medical supplies that are urgently required for diagnosing and treating the new coronavirus.

war, been enforcing an all-out aerial, naval, and land blockade on the country under the pretext of preventing the transfer of arms to Yemen's popular Houthi Ansarullah movement that has been defending the nation against the military campaign.

The war has killed tens of thousands of Yemenis and turned the country into the



infection.

"We ask this of nations to pressure the Saudi coalition into relieving Yemen's siege and allowing in medical equipment and the equipment that are used for diagnosis of the coronavirus," Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, chairman of the Supreme Revolutionary Committee of Yemen, tweeted on Sunday.

World countries should busy themselves doing so instead of just assessing the number of the infected Yemenis, he noted.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its allies invaded the Arab world's already most impoverished nation in March 2015 to try and restore power to its former Riyadh-backed officials.

The invaders have, throughout the course of the

scene of the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The coalition has kept up its aggression despite the viral outbreak that has infected 128 people and claimed 20 lives across Yemen. The invading forces have also reportedly violated a ceasefire that they themselves had announced on the occasion of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

### FAO warns of 'catastrophic' food security situation

Yemen is already on the brink of famine by the five-year Saudi war. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said on Monday Yemen could see a "catastrophic" food security situation due to the coronavirus pandemic.

## China's ambassador to Israel found dead in Tel Aviv home

OCCUPIED Jerusalem: China's ambassador to Israel was found dead in his home in a Tel Aviv suburb on Sunday, an Israeli police spokesman said. He did not comment on the cause of death of ambassador Du Wei, who was 57 years old and became ambassador to Israel in February, according to the embassy's website.

"As part of the regular procedure, police units are at the scene," the spokesman said.

Israel's Channel 12 TV, quoting unidentified emergency medical officials, said initial indications were that Du died in his sleep of natural causes.



## Man angry about COVID-19 closure attacks 2 with machete

Nashville : A Nashville couple were in critical care after a man attacked them with a machete because he was angry about shutdowns that were taking place during the coronavirus pandemic, police said.

Kelvin D. Edwards attacked Kevin Craft, 55, and his wife Leanne Craft, 50, on Sunday afternoon in a Public Storage in the city, the Metro Nashville Police Department said in a statement.

Edwards took the machete from his bin at the storage facility and continued striking the couple even after they were bleeding on the floor, police said. The victims were transported to a hospital after officers who responded to the scene used multiple tourniquets to control their bleeding.



Police said they found Edwards, 35, with his hands raised in surrender on the street outside the facility three minutes after they got a 911 call about the attack.

Investigators said Edwards, who is homeless, told them he attacked the couple to demonstrate his anger about the coronavirus shutdowns and his inability to

get into Rescue Mission, an organization that serves homeless people. According to its website, the Nashville Rescue Mission has remained open to individuals without shelter during the pandemic.

Police said Edwards, who carries an Arkansas driver license, has been in Nashville since 2016. He had a prior felony vandalism conviction in 2017 and was also convicted for assault after spitting on two Davidson County sheriff's deputies while in jail.

He was arrested and charged with two counts of attempted murder for the attack Sunday, police said. It was not immediately clear if he had a lawyer who could comment on his behalf.

## Obama was a grossly incompetent president, says Trump

Washington: US president Donald Trump on Sunday called his predecessor Barack Obama a grossly incompetent president.

Trump's reaction came after Obama on Saturday criticised the US authorities' response to the coronavirus outbreak.

"He (Obama) was an incompetent president. That's all I can say. Grossly incompetent," Trump told reporters at the White House on his arrival from Camp David.

Trump was responding to a question on the virtual commencement address by Obama a day earlier.

In his address to college graduates, Obama had said that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the American leadership.



"More than anything, this pandemic has fully, finally torn back the curtain on the idea that so many of the folks in charge know what they're doing," Obama said without naming officials.

"A lot of them aren't even pretending to be in charge," he added.

There was no immediate response from the office of the former president on the remarks made by Trump.



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