



Maximum : 27°C  
Minimum : 14°C  
Humidity : 48%

SUNSET  
Today 07:31 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 05:25 AM



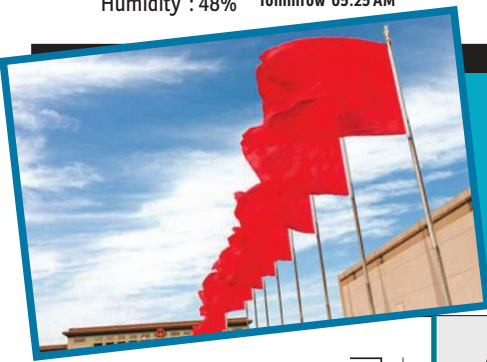
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## CHINA, BETTER PREPARED FOR THE POST- COVID WORLD

Several weeks before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, India's Minister for External Affairs, S. Jaishankar, had observed (at a lecture) that "what defines power and determines national standing is also no longer the same... Technology, connectivity and trade are at the heart of the new contestations...." The Minister could never have imagined that within a few weeks, his prediction would be overtaken by a tectonic shift in the global situation thanks to a virus and a pandemic. The Minister did mention a point about "known unknowns", but what he could hardly have anticipated is how radical the changes would be, thanks to the phenomenon of "unknown unknowns" .....

.....OPINION  
**P4**



## News Digest

28 <sup>TH</sup> RAMAZAN		
IFTAR	SEHRI	
TODAY	TOMMOROW	
FIQAH HANAFIYA	07:33	03:46
FIQAH JAFARIYA	07:43	03:44

### B R Sharma Appointed PSC Chairman

Jammu: Government of Jammu and Kashmir has appointed B R Sharma, former IAS Officer, as Chairman Public Service Commission for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. As per an order issued here today in this regard, Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has appointed Sharma as PSC Chairman who shall hold the position of the Chairman, Public Service

### Govt Transfers 4 KAS Officers

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Thursday shifted four KAS officers in the interest of administration. In an order issued here today by the General Administration Department (GAD), Farooq Ahmad Shah, KAS, Custodian General, J&K, has been transferred and shall await further orders of adjustment in the GAD. Suriya Jabeen, KAS, Managing Director, JAKFED, has been transferred and posted as Custodian

### Minor Hurt During Pulwama Clashes

Srinagar: Clashes broke out between protesters and government forces on Thursday during a cordon and search operation (CASO) in Karimabad area of south Kashmir's Pulwama district. According to the reports, police and CRPF laid a siege around Karimabad village this afternoon after a militant attack in the neighbourhood village of Prichoo left a cop dead and another injured. When the joint team started searches,

### 15 ITBP Coys Withdrawn From J&K

Srinagar: The government of India has ordered withdrawal of 15 companies of Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) from Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, officials said Thursday. They said that among the 15 units comprising over 1,500 personnel, 8 are being withdrawn from Kashmir region, three from Jammu and four from Ladakh. The order by Ministry of Home Affairs follows withdrawal of 10 CAPF companies, three belonging to the CISF and the ITBP each besides two each

## Amid Contagion Curbs, Siege Mentality Returns To Haunt Kashmir

Rakshanda Afrin

SRINAGAR: After a certain point in pandemic lockdown, Shagufta, 18, couldn't take her besieged routine anymore. Feeling vexed, she started raising her pitch against her parents, and refused to come out of her room for hours together.

In seclusion, she kept thinking of her classmates—with whom she shared the last 'normal' class before August 4, 2019.

"Although we're not new to lockdowns, but I and my classmates are finding it hard to adjust to these repeated restrictions now," said Shagufta, who was looking forward

to join college this year.

"Such a cursed life makes you captive in your own home."

Coming from the volatile Rajouri Kadal of Srinagar, the citadel of cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Shagufta's is a classic case of the 'siege mentality' — a peculiar socio-psychological state arising collectively, if a person is not free, the way he or she wants to be.

"I've witnessed the 2016 and 2019 lockdowns," she said. "To some extent, that besieged life was bearable. But I don't know why this present lockdown feels a different experience."

### Expert Take

Living in such an atmosphere



of perpetual siege gives rise to 'besieged' minds, Dr. Mushtaq

Margoob told Kashmir Observer. Due to lack of freedom, he con-

tinued, such minds have been seen in erstwhile Soviet Union, North Korea and Syria.

"When a population is confronted with an insecure and uncertain situation, this troubled mentality seeps into almost every human endeavor," Kashmir's ace mental specialist said. "It impacts psychological as well as behavioural social patterns and practices."

Human beings are supposed to have some sort of control and some feeling about their future, but in a conflict situation, perception of world changes, he said.

"Kashmiris are already overburdened. And when the population is locked up constantly, they're

being deprived of mobilising their pent up emotions with their peer group, neighbours or relations."

According to the 2015-survey conducted by MSF, Doctors without Borders, nearly 1.8 million adults (45% of the adult population) in the Kashmir Valley show symptoms of significant mental distress.

"Diagnosable psychiatric or psychological problems are more prevalent in a conflict prone zone like Kashmir," the doctor, with over 28 years of clinical experience in Kashmir, said.

"As nobody knows how long it will continue, people mobilise their own inbuilt mechanism

## 2 More Covid-19 Deaths In Kashmir, Toll Reaches 20



Pic Abid Bhat

Funeral of a Covid-19 deceased woman being offered in Bemina area of city on Thursday.

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: A 70-year-old woman, who had tested COVID-19 positive, died at a hospital here on Thursday, while another woman, who passed away on Wednesday, also tested positive for the infection, taking the novel coronavirus-related death toll to 20 in the Union Territory, officials said.

The 70-year-old from Patisabad area of central Kashmir's Budgam district died around

noon at the Chest Diseases Hospital here, they said.

The officials said the woman was initially admitted to the SMHS hospital on May 15, but after testing positive for the coronavirus, she was shifted to the Chest Diseases Hospital on May 18 as a case of COPD with restrictive lung disease and COVID Pneumonia.

She died at the intensive care unit of the hospital around noon after a sudden cardiac arrest, they said. The other woman (80) from Bemina in Srinagar was admitted at the

### 21 Cops, Intern Doctor Among 59 Test Positive

Coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir continued an upward trend on Thursday as 59 more people, including 21 policemen and an intern doctor tested positive to the virus, taking the

SMHS hospital with bilateral pneumonia and hypertension

### Cleric Who Led Militant's Funeral Denied Bail

Agencies

SRINAGAR: A special NIA court in Anantnag has denied bail to a cleric, who was arrested on March 3 this year, 726 days after leading funeral prayers of a militant from his native village, Damhal Hanjipora in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

The funeral of the militant Amir Tantray, killed in an encounter with joint team of police and army on 25 October 2018 at Arwani Bijbehara, was held next day.

As per prosecution, when the militant's body was brought to his native village, the people of the area assembled. "The accused Mohammed Iqbal Bhat being cleric and one another cleric namely Tariq Ahmad headed and performed funeral of the deceased militant. In the meanwhile few miscreants raised anti-national slogans and raised slogans in favour of the Pakistan. They also instigated the youth for providing assistance in carrying out the militant activities," the prosecution said.

On receiving the information, the prosecution said that a case (FIR No. 107/2018) for the offence under section 153 RPC, 13 ULA(P) Act and 2 PINH was registered with Police Station D.H.Pora and investigation commenced.

"During the course of investigation statement of witnesses were recorded under section 161 Cr.PC. The accused was also found to have perpetrated the crime and as

### Govt Issues Guidelines For Domestic Flight Operations



File Pic.

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- A day after announcing the resumption of domestic commercial passenger flights from May 25, the Civil Aviation Ministry on Thursday issued detailed guidelines for airlines, airports, passengers and other stakeholders on issues ranging from control on air fares to restrictions on number of bags.

The ministry said it will prescribe lower and upper limit on air fares and airlines will have to adhere to it "during the period of COVID-19 pandemic".

"On the day of commencement (May 25), limited operations (about one-third) would be permitted," it said.

It said passengers will have to report at the airport two hours prior to their flight's scheduled departure time and only those who have done web check-in will be allowed to enter the terminal building.

Only one check-in bag would be allowed and airlines will not provide any meal services in flights, the ministry said.

Boarding for a flight will commence 60 minutes before departure and the boarding

**ALL SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL passenger flight operations have been suspended since March 25, when the Modi government announced the nationwide lockdown to combat the coronavirus pandemic.**

### Private School Teachers To Get Financial Help

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: The private school teachers affected by the Covid-19 lockdown will receive one-time financial assistance from the Jammu and Kashmir government under the State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF).

In an order issued, the government has asked the school education department to explore the possibility of providing one-time financial assistance to needy private school teachers.

The order states that

### KP Groups Hail Domicile Law, Call It 'Historic Milestone'

JAMMU: While all the major social, political parties of Jammu and Kashmir have criticised the government over the new domicile law, many Kashmiri Pandit organizations on Thursday termed the decision as a 'historic milestone' and expressed their gratitude towards the Modi-led government at the centre.

According to an official spokesperson, several delegations of Kashmiri Pandit Community including All Parties Migrants Coordination Committee and Kashmiri Pandit Welfare Organization called

on the Lieutenant Governor, Girish Chandra Murmu at the Raj Bhavan on Thursday and expressed their gratitude towards Government of India and J&K UT Administration for the introduction of new Domicile Law in J&K.

"The members of these delegations termed the new Domicile Law of Jammu and Kashmir as historic. They also reiterated that the removal of Article 370 and Article 35A, which proved to be a stumbling block in the path of development, would take the UT to new heights of growth and

### Cop Killed, Another Injured In Pulwama Attack



Pic: Shih Lunalid

Observer News Service

Pulwama: A policeman on Thursday was killed and another injured

in a militant attack in south Kashmir's Pulwama district, barely 24 hours after two BSF personnel were shot dead in central

### 3 Militant Recruits Held In Kupwara: Police

Police on Thursday claimed to have arrested three youths who had purportedly posted photographs on the social media holding guns and announced that they had joined militant ranks. The trio was arrested from Gujarpatti Ganbugh area in Sogam Lolab in this north Kashmir's Kupwara district. SSP Kupwara Shri Ram Ambarkar said that on basis

### KPC Condemns Harassment Of Journalists

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir Press Club on Thursday expressed its concern over the continued harassment of journalists by the police and said that such acts are a clear violation of press freedom.

In a statement issued to media, KPC said that a Kashmir based journalist Fahad Shah, has brought to the notice of the club that he was summoned by Jammu and Kashmir Police's Cyber Cell on Wednesday afternoon.

"As per his statement he was let go after over four hours and during his stay at the Police Station was questioned about the reportage in his newspaper of an encounter in Srinagar," the KPC said.

Citing earlier instances when other journalists were summoned by the police for their stories, the KPC said that it has condemned all such incidents

## Humans, History, Headmaster: Kashmir in Virtual Classroom

Jyotsna Bharti

A group of young Kashmiris have found a voice online where they're humanizing the conflict-battered lives of commoners. The effort remains to highlight the shrugged off stories which don't find a mention in the full-of-happening news ecosystem of the valley.

At about the same time, the effort is being made by a Kashmiri woman to take education to the grassroots for enlightening and empowering the unprivileged community. And then, there's some budding Kashmiris making history appealing for netizens.

All this and more is happening on Instagram and getting eyeballs at a



time when the perpetual dissolution is once again hogging headlines.

Humanising Valley

There're rags to rich stories, the inspiring accounts of underdogs making big in life, and the tales of

those who never got their due in the society grappling with searing struggles and strife.

All these stories have found home in the Instagram handle, called Humans of Kashmir.

It acts as a conveyor belt of many inspiring stories, which in the larger happenings of Vale often get sidelined.

### Popularising Kashmiri

If you've a huge appetite for Kashmiri language, then you're going to love the Instagram handle of Kashmiri Dictionary.

It comes up with the most beautiful and crafted words of Kashmiri language every day with the explanation of the word too.

They also teach proverbs and sayings, making the entire

## Landslides Close Highway, 2000 Vehicles Stranded

SRINAGAR: The Jammu-Srinagar Highway, only surface link connecting Kashmir Valley with the outside world, was again closed for traffic on Thursday afternoon.

Official sources said that the strategic highway was closed after landslides at Panthyal in Ramban district on the highway. Around 2000 vehicles, mainly trucks, are stranded due to the closure, they said.

"The highway is still blocked due to landslide and shooting stones at Panthyal," a police official said.

Around 2000 vehicles are stranded between Ramban and Jawahar Tunnel, the official said.

He said subject to fair weather and clearance of road the stranded vehicles shall be allowed to their



destinations tomorrow.

After remaining closed for several hours due to landslides at Morh Ghori, the Highway was opened on Wednesday afternoon.



# China Slams US Diplomat’s Remark On Ladakh Skirmish

Press Trust OF India

**BEIJING:** China on Thursday dismissed as nonsense a senior US diplomat’s remarks blaming it for using constant aggression on the border with India to try to change the status quo and said consultations were going on through diplomatic channels between Beijing and New Delhi, which has “nothing to do” with Washington.

Responding to a question on the flare-up of border tensions between India and China, Alice G Wells, the senior US diplomat for South and Central Asia, on Wednesday described Beijing’s aggression as “not always rhetorical” and accused it of continuing with its “provocative and disturbing behaviour” to try to shift the status quo.

“There’s a method here to Chinese operations, and it is that constant aggression, the con-

stant attempt to shift the norms, to shift what is the status quo. It has to be resisted, Wells, the outgoing Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, told the Atlantic Council think-tank at a virtual event on Wednesday.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here that China’s position on the China-India boundary issue is consistent and clear.

The US “diplomat’s remarks are just nonsense, he said when asked about Wells’ comments.

“China’s border troops firmly safeguard China’s territorial sovereignty and security, and firmly deals with the Indian side’s cross over and infringement activities,” Zhao said.

“Our troops firmly safeguard the peace and stability in the border region. We urge the Indian side to work together with us, abide by our leadership’s im-

portant consensus, comply with the agreements signed, refrain from unilateral actions complicating the situation,” he said.

“We hope they will make concrete efforts for peace and tranquillity in the border region. There are consultations and diplomatic channels between the two sides that have nothing to do with the USA, Zhao said.

On May 5, around 250 Indian and Chinese army personnel clashed with iron rods, sticks, and even resorted to stone-pelting in the Pangong Tso lake area in Eastern Ladakh in which soldiers on both sides sustained injuries.

In a separate incident, nearly 150 Indian and Chinese military personnel were engaged in a face-off near Naku La Pass in the Sikkim sector on May 9. At least 10 soldiers from both sides sustained injuries in the incident, according to sources.

Neither the Indian Army nor

the Ministry of External Affairs commented on the escalating tension between the two armies.

In its reaction to the two face-offs, the Ministry of External Affairs last week said it remained committed to maintaining peace and tranquillity along the border with China noting that such incidents could have been avoided if there was a common perception about the frontier. The troops of India and China were engaged in a 73-day tense stand-off in Doklam tri-junction in 2017.

The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control, the de-facto border between the two countries. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet while India contests it.

Both sides have been asserting that pending the final resolution

of the boundary issue, it is necessary to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

China has been critical of India’s reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, and has particularly criticised New Delhi for making Ladakh a union territory. China lays claim over several parts of Ladakh.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held their first informal summit in April 2018 in the Chinese city of Wuhan, months after the Doklam standoff.

In the summit, the two leaders decided to issue “strategic guidance” to their militaries to strengthen communications so that they can build trust and understanding.

Modi and Xi held their second informal summit in Mamallapuram near Chennai in October last year with a focus on further broadening bilateral ties.

Pak Summons Indian Diplomat Over 'Ceasefire Violations'

Press Trust Of India

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan summoned a senior diplomat from the Indian High Commission on Thursday, the third time this week, to protest over the alleged ceasefire violations by the Indian forces along the Line of Control.

The Foreign Office claimed that the indiscriminate and unprovoked firing by the Indian forces on Wednesday in Chirikot Sector resulted in serious injuries to a 45-year-old villager.

However, a spokesperson of the Indian Army on

Wednesday said that Pakistani troops opened fire and heavily shelled forward areas along the LoC in two sectors of Jammu and Kashmir’s Poonch district, drawing retaliation from the Indian forces.

It was the fifth consecutive day of firing and shelling by Pakistani troops along the LoC and IB in Jammu and Kashmir, he said.

This was the second consecutive day and third time in a week that the Indian diplomat was summoned by Pakistan.

The Foreign Office had summoned the Indian diplomat on Monday and Wednesday.

## Delhi violence: Police slap UAPA against Jamia student Asif Iqbal Tanha

**NEW DELHI:** The Special Cell of Delhi Police has booked Jamia Millia Islamia student Asif Iqbal Tanha under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for allegedly being part of a larger conspiracy behind the February riots in northeast Delhi, officials said on Thursday.

This comes days after the Delhi Police’s crime branch arrested the 24-year-old in connection with the violence in the Jamia area during a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act in December last year, they said. The police said Tanha, a resident of Abul Fazal Enclave in Shaheen Bagh, is

a member of the Students Islamic Organization and was part of the Jamia Coordination Committee which spearheaded protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act. He was arrested on production warrant by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police on Tuesday and booked under the UAPA for being

part of a larger conspiracy of the riots in Delhi, said a senior police official, who did not wish to be identified.

“We had evidence and wanted him in a case that we were investigating. So we arrested him on production warrant on Tuesday and have been granted seven days of custody,” he said.

## Over 100 Students Stuck In Hostels At Jamia Millia Islamia Leave For Bihar In Special Buses

**NEW DELHI:** Over 100 students hailing from Bihar, who were stuck in hostels at Jamia Millia Islamia due to the lockdown in view of COVID-19, left for their hometown in five special buses arranged by the varsity on Thursday, officials said.

Buses left for Katihar, Purana, Muzaffarpur, Nalanda

and Bhagalpur districts of Bihar, carrying around 130 students with a student group leader in each of the bus to coordinate during the journey, the varsity said.

Three students of West Bengal are also travelling in one of the bus going to Katihar. Two university guards

(ex-army personnel) also accompanied the students in each bus, it added.

Information about travel details of concerned students have also been conveyed to Bihar government and local administration of all 30 districts of the state by the Chief Proctor of the university, the varsity said.

## Amid Contagion Curbs, Siege Mentality Returns...

at individual and collective levels to face it.”

‘Kashmir is in quarantine for long’

Siege mentality, said Prof. Noor Baba, has become a way of life in Kashmir for years now.

“We’ve got accustomed to this,” the political science professor told Kashmir Observer.

“When I started teaching during the early 80s, I was young and it was usual after office hours for us to travel and go to restaurants, and socialize. A lot of social activities were happening in the valley.”

But after the 90’s insurgency and violence, restrictions increased, Prof Baba, a senior faculty at the Central University of Kashmir, continued.

“There was a time when curfew would be imposed at 3pm, so people had to rush homes. That was deeply seeded into our minds. Social lives were deeply impacted, but somehow we’ve learned to live with this.”

Kashmiris had been quarantined for a very long time, the professor said. “If people were expecting relaxation, in our case it got more reinforced after the Covid-19 situation.”

Playing a Therapist

Life under such a siege tremendously affects every aspect of lives, said Dr Arif Maghribi, a Srinagar-based psychiatrist.

“Some people recover, but many do not, even after 20 years. Some cases change into major depressive disorders.”

But as relentless restrictions and curbs only deepens siege mentality, Dr. Maghribi focuses on awareness.

“I’ve started telephonic counselling for the last three-four years,” the mental specialist said. “However, with little awareness of mental health, the stigma continues to be associated with it.”

A Glaring Change

Away from lockdown-plagued home last summer, when Af-dista of Anantnag went to Mumbai for studies, she marveled the idea of free-world for a long time.

“I wasn’t used to seeing so many people roaming and driving cars till late hours of midnight,” she said. “Since childhood I had seen many nights even before the day ended.”

Growing up, she lived through many days of long curfews, watching forces roughing up locals for merely being on the street.

“This would make me believe that we were some besieged people,” she said. “Maybe we were made to accept that reality, which otherwise is totally inhuman.”

time as a precautionary measure, it said. “When one such sample turned positive four days ago, Health authorities were requested to take samples of all the officials present in the reserve,” the police said, adding, “There is no need to panic as all the officials have been and are in isolation and were never put on public interface duties such as nakas, police stations, etc.”

At SKIMS, Valley’s premier healthcare institute 14 people tested positive for Coronavirus. Among those include 26-year-old from Maisuma, 21-year-old from Bemina and seven from Kawi, Reshigund and main Kupwara, all travelers with history of travel to Delhi, Ambala, Dehradun and UP.

Besides, a 37-year-old from Ganderbal and 22-year-old youth from Safapora also tested Covid-19 positive today. The three other samples that turned positive were from DH Pulwama and include 60-year-old man and two women—one aged 20 and other 50—from Chatabal Kulgam.

Three people, including a female also tested positive for Covid-19 in central Kashmir’s Budgam district.

Seven cases were reported from private Lab—two from Kathua, one each from Haryana, Jodhpur Rajasthan, Dyala, Kishtwar and Anantnag.

## Cleric Who Led Militant’s Funeral Denied Bail...

such he was booked in the offences and was accordingly arrested on 03.03.2020. The accused is under proper judicial remand,” the prosecution said, contending that accused “is involved in heinous offences against the sovereignty and integrity of the country.”

On the other hand, the accused, Mohammad Iqbal Bhat, said he is a farmer by profession and one of the peace-loving citizens who has been “falsely implicated.”

Bhat said he is a respected persons, most particularly in the area where he resides and does not having any previous criminal record.

Surprisingly, Bhat said he received a telephone call from Police Station D.H. Pora that an FIR has been lodged against him and asked him to appear before the police. On approaching the police station on March 3 this year, he said, police detained him.

“On over all analysis of the matter in its totality, I am of the considered opinion that applicant/accused has failed to establish a reasonable and cogent ground for grant of bail at this stage and as such in view of the preceding analysis, there appears to be no merit and substance in the bail application of the applicant/accused,” said Special Judge (Designated Court Under NIA) Additional Sessions Judge Anantnag Khalil Ahmad Choudhary and accordingly dismissed the application being “devoid of any merit.” (GNS)

## Govt Issues Guidelines For Domestic Flight Operations

gate will be closed 20 minutes before departure, it said.

All scheduled commercial passenger flight operations have been suspended since March 25, when the Modi government announced the nationwide lockdown to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had announced on Wednesday that domestic flights will resume from May 25 in a calibrated manner.

The guidelines said the passengers should expect a slower process at the airport and avoid last-minute arrival.

“Passengers, before entering the terminal, to ensure wearing of protective gear, as per the prevailing requirement. He will continue to wear the mask throughout the journey,” it said.

It said the passengers should not travel if they are staying in a containment zone. The passengers who have been tested positive for COVID-19 will not be allowed to travel.

“The passengers are expected to certify the status of their health through the Aarogya Setu app or a self-declaration form,” said the ministry’s guidelines.

Vulnerable persons such as very elderly with co-morbidities, pregnant ladies, passengers with ailments are advised to avoid air travel, it said.

Airports have been advised to earmark areas for isolation and COVID-19 testing for suspected passengers. Airports should also have separate areas for change of PPE (personal protective equipment) gear by the staff using it.

The guidelines said the airports would have to ensure easy availability of hand sanitisers at all entry points and also to be available at various touch points.

All food and beverages (F&B) and retail outlets to be opened with COVID-19 precautions. Take-away, digital payments, self-ordering booths at F&B and retail outlets to be encouraged to prevent crowding, it said.

Mats or carpets soaked with bleach (sodium hypochlorite solution) would be placed at the entrance for disinfecting shoes, it said.

The guidelines said passengers are expected to follow social distancing and sanitisation at all times from arrival to departure.

## Private School Teachers To Get Financial Help...

the assistance may be provided on details of fee charged by such schools. The order further states that the detailed information in this regard shall reach the department within a weeks’ time.

## KP Groups Hail Domicile Law, Call It 'Historic ...

development,” the official spokesperson said.

He said that while interacting with the delegations, the LG observed that the new Domicile Law will ensure equitable, balanced and inclusive development of Jammu and Kashmir and its people.

Interestingly, senior Apni Party and former Chief Secretary, Vijay Bakaya also expressed their gratitude towards Centre and UT Administration for the introduction of new Domicile Law, contrary to the stand of his party, which has termed framing of new rules as inappropriate and untimely in absence of a popular government in J&K.

“It is big step towards reaching out to the community and a confidence building measure,” former chief secretary and leader of Jammu and Kashmiri Apni Party Vijay Bakaya told PTL.

The official spokesperson further said that on being apprised of the issue of protection of shrines; the LG maintained that the Government has already taken up the issue to ensure the safety and security of the shrines and devotees.

## Cop Killed, Another Injured In Pulwama Attack...

Kashmir’s Ganderbal district.

Unknown militants appeared in Prichoo area of the district this afternoon and fired randomly towards a checkpoint manned by paramilitary CRPF and police personnel, reports said. Two militants were injured in the initial burst of fire that caught the forces off guard.

Both the policemen were removed to the district hospital Pulwama for treatment. However, the doctors there declared one of the cops identified as Anoop Singh of IRP 10th battalion as brought dead on arrival.

Medical Superintendent, District hospital Pulwama, Dr. Jameel Ahmad told Kashmir Observer that one policeman was brought dead to the hospital while another had received multiple gunshot injuries.

“We referred him to Srinagar hospital for advanced treatment,” he added.

The injured cop has been identified as Mohammad Ibrahim. Meanwhile, the militant attack created panic in several villages of the district prompting people to stay indoors.

According to reports, additional forces reached the shootout spot and started a search operation to nab the attackers. Apart from Prichoo, Karimabad and Wagum areas were also placed under siege and search operation was launched.

Pertinently, this was the second attack on state forces in the Valley in the last 24 hours. On Wednesday, militants shot dead two BSF personnel at Pandach area of central Kashmir’s Ganderbal district.

## 3 Militant Recruits Held In Kupwara: Police...

of specific information, a joint team of Police and army’s 28 RR launched a cordon-and-search-operation in Gujarpatti Ganbugh, a forest area.

During searches, he said, there was a brief exchange of firing, but all the three persons were caught alive along with as many weapons. The arrested are residents of Shalgund, Lalpora, of Kupwara.

Pertinently on Wednesday last night, the pictures showing the trio holding weapons had surfaced on social media.

## KPC Condemns Harassment Of Journalists

and has noted that such summons and FIRs are aimed at harassing and intimidating the journalists and thus are a clear

violation of the press freedom.

The club urged the highest authorities in the administration & police to take a look at these issues, so that the journalists reporting from the valley are provided a conducive atmosphere to work.

## Humans, History, Headmaster: Kashmir in Virtual Classroom...

process of language learning during quarantine period a meaningful engagement.

Hearty Headmaster

She first rose to prominence when her decision to serve the downtrodden over pursuing her promising career made headlines.

After inspiring all and sundry, Sabbah Haji of Doda has come of age, while leading the education mission from the front.

As someone who calls spade a spade, the headmaster—who’s owner and founder of the iconic Haji Public School—has shown what nurturing is all about.

Her Instagram handle makes her a well-articulated and well-versed person.

“Just being a woman is God’s gift,” she says. “The origin of a child is a mother, a woman. She shows a man what sharing, caring, and loving is all about. That is the essence of a woman.”

The Songbird

A Kashmiri folksinger, Aabha Hanjura, seems on a trail of letting the world know the beauty and serendipity of Kashmiri language through her stage performances.

After leaving her corporate job for a full-time folk-singing passion, she became an internet sensation.

She not only presents Kashmiri folk flare, but also represents her identity by donning traditional Kashmiri attire on stage.

Know Kashmir

The effort to project Kashmir beyond its striking countenance is being made by some Kashmir-based instagrammer these days.

This Instagram handle is making Know Kashmir learning process easy for people by sharing historical facts.

The effort seems to tell the Kashmir story beyond the studio shrill and the dominant discourse.

## B R Sharma Appointed PSC Chairman...

Commission till he attains the age of sixty two years.

LG has made the appointment in exercise of powers conferred by section 93 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019, and S.O. 3937 (E) dated 31st October 2019, read with the order issued in terms of sub-clause (i) of clause (c) of the proclamation issued by the President dated 31st October 2019.

## Govt Transfers 4 KASOfficers

General, J&K.

Ravinder Sharma, KAS, Deputy District Election Officer, Ramban, has been transferred and posted as Custodian, Evacuee Property, Jammu.

Tariq Hussain, KAS, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Marh, has been transferred and posted as Custodian, Evacuee Property, Kashmir.

“Pawan Kumar, KAS, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Jammu (North), shall hold the charge of the post of Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Marh, in addition to his own duties, till further orders,” reads the order issued here.

## Minor Hurt During Pulwama Clashes...

reports said, the locals, mostly boys hit the streets and staged a protest.

The protesters clashed with the government forces as the latter used teargas canisters and fired pellets to disperse them.

In the clashes, a few people were injured. A minor identified as Shahid Fayaz was injured after being hit by pellets in his eye.

He was shifted to district hospital Pulwama for treatment.

## 15 ITBP Coys Withdrawn From J&K...

from the CRPF and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), last week.

As per reports, several hundred additional companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) were rushed to Jammu and Kashmir last year. Around hundred companies have been already moved out, they added. (GNS)



## COVID-19

## For The First Time In Century, Kashmir's Revered Shrines, Masjids Remain Silent On Shab-E-Qadr Eve

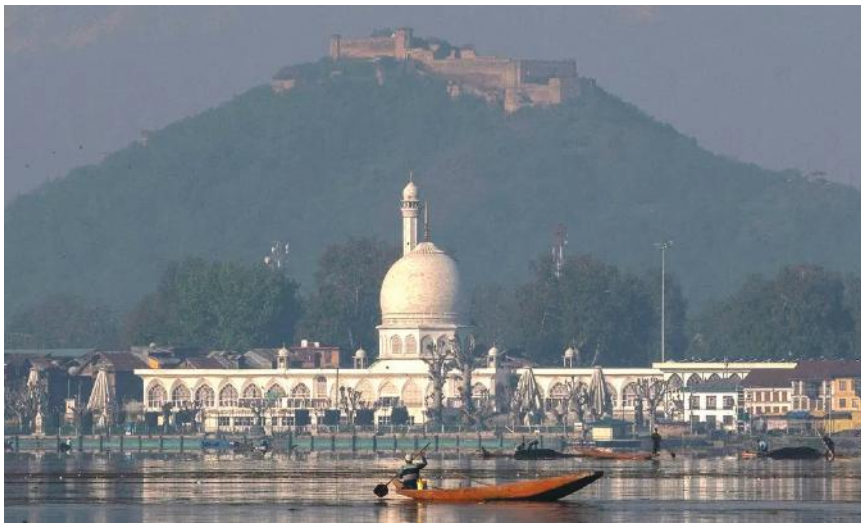
Agencies

**S**rinagar: For the first time in almost over 100 years, Kashmir's revered shrines and masjids remained silent on the most revered night of Shab-e-Qadr (night of blessings) in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed 20 lives in J&K so far and affected nearly 1400 people so far.

Shab-e-Qadr was observed across Kashmir on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. The closure of shrines and masjids across the Valley known as peer year (abode of sufi saints), left the religious sentiments of thousands of people hurt who were confined to their houses to pray on this auspicious occasion.

For Abdul Majeed Bhat, a resident of Pampore area of Pulwama district, would travel to the Kashmir's most revered shrine at Hazratbal that houses the holy relic of prophet Muhammad (SAW), ever year on the occasion of Shab-e-Qadr.

"But this year, Covid dampened his spirits as he was not even able to pray at a local masjid in his locality. I am almost touching 80-years of age, and this is for the first time in my life that I have missed Shab-e-Qadr prayers at Hazratbal. The pandemic has badly hurt by religious feel-



ings," he said told news agency.

He said that this has never happened before and that it was for the first time that there were no congregational gatherings at revered shrines like Hazratbal and other shrines in the Valley.

Similarly, Ghulam Nabi Khan, a resident of Pantha Chowk, who had been rushing to the revered shrine of Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom popularly known as Makhdoom Sahab (RA)

in downtown Srinagar, every year on the occasion of Shab-e-Qadr also missed the congregational "mass prayers for repentance on Shab-e-Qadr eve."

"I missed the spirituality of the shrine and the aura. I prayed at my home all alone. Whatever I could recite, I did, but couldn't find the spirituality and the level of satisfaction which is praying the shrine of Makhdoom sahib," said Khan, who is in his late 70's.

As per an ailing Ghulam Muhammad Bhat, who according to his family members, has crossed 105 years of age, this is for the first time in his life that Shab-e-Qadr prayers were not held in Shrines and Masjids.

Bhat, a resident of Bagaat-e-Kanipora on Srinagar outskirts, has been rushing to the historic Jamia Masjid Srinagar, the grand masjid of Kashmir, for Shab-e-Qadr prayers. He has not been able to move out of his house for the past over 10 years due to his ailing health.

"In my childhood, I would walk from Kanipora to Nowhatta to offer prayers at Jamia Masjid. I would often travel on my cycle to reach Jamia Masjid on the occasion of Shab-e-Qadr and Shab-e-Baraat prayers.

At Jamia, one finds solace, and gets satisfaction when Mirwaiz leads the prayers for repentance," said Bhat, who has witnessed sermons of many former Mirwaizeen including Moulana Muhammad Farooq and also the present Mirwaiz Muhammad Umar Farooq.

In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, the government of J&K had asked people to offer prayers at home as congregational prayers in shrines and masjids remain banned to prevent spread of the pandemic -(KNO)

## Kashmir to celebrate unfamiliar Eid this time

Agencies

**S**rinagar: With large gatherings being prohibited and social distancing rules in place to prevent deadly covid-19, people here in Muslim-majority Kashmir region will have a low key on Eid al-Fitr this time.

Many of Ramzan rituals and traditions were already disrupted due to the physical distancing norms and the lockdown.

During the lockdown, the people here have changed the way they observe their faith as places of worship have been closed to the public and social distancing rules have been in place.

Eid ul Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, and is celebrated

with Eid prayers, family gatherings and a feast. The Eid, is expected to fall on May 24 or 25.

But as large gatherings are prohibited and social distancing rules are still in place, Eid celebrations will look very different this time.

Ajaz Ahmad lives in HMT Srinagar with wife Afroza and their young daughter, Alisa usually, they spend Eid day with both of their families.

"Normally on Eid day, we go to the mosque for Eid prayers. Then we spend our time by visiting to our parents, and seeing other relatives before a big get-together at home. But on this EID, the family-of-three will stay at home and make it about Alisa," he told news agency KINS.

Usually the Eid al Fitr celebrations are held in vari-

ous gardens here in Srinagar, but due to coronavirus, these celebrations won't be enjoyed this time.

On Eid day at famous Mugal Gardens and on the banks of Dal lake, the events attracts several people where a funfair is held alongside food vendors, family games, activities and more.

Shabir Ahmad of Bemina said: "Usually I go to Pratap park with my children to celebrate the Eid. This year I have told my kids that we won't be able to celebrate like the way we used to. I don't like it but we should listen to Government instructions to save lives. When we get back our normal lives we can celebrate, but now, we just have to wait," (KINS)

## Bakery items destroyed as shop runner tests positive in Sopore village

AGENCIES

Sopore:- : Authorities on Thursday destroyed bakery items of a bakery shop in Wategam area of Sopore in north Kashmir's Baramulla district after the shop runner was tested positive for COVID-19

An official told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), that a team civil officials, police and revenue officials visited Wategam area and destroyed all the bakery items in the shop after the shop runner was tested positive for COVID-19.

He said that the bakery items were destroyed as per the protocol in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the area.

The officials said that they had already advised bakery owners, butchers and other traders to get tested for COVID-19 before

they could open their business establishments on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr—(KNO)



## Ahead of Eid, FCS&amp;CA intensifies Market checking in Srinagar

**SRINAGAR** : Special market checking squads of Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) Kashmir today conducted inspection of various markets in Srinagar ahead of Eid festival to keep a check on hoarding, profiteering and black marketing.

On the directions of Director FCS&CA Kashmir enforcement teams of the department headed by Assistant Director Supplies and Srinagar North/ South conducted extensive drive

of market checking across Srinagar in wee hours of the morning keeping in view of the upcoming holy festival of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The teams visited various areas which include Sanat Nagar, Rawalpura Chanapora, Baghi Mehtab, Barzulla, Mehjoor Nagar, Bata-maloo, Baghi-Nund Singh Chattabal, Palayarbal, Bota Kadal, Nowshera and Buchpora to curb the unwarranted practice of hoarding and profiteering especially in respect of mutton and poultry items.

## Govt releases Rs 170 Cr as MGNREGA wages ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr

SRINAGAR, MAY 21: In order to mitigate the economic hardships faced by the rural poor during COVID-19 pandemic, Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (RDD&PR) has disbursed Rs 170 crore under MGNREGA ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr to help the workers to celebrate the occasion with fervour and joy.

The department has disbursed around Rs 183 crore to benefit the poor which have been otherwise ren-

dered jobless due to the prevailing lockdown imposed across the country to stop the spread of the outbreak. Following the resumption and roll out of MGNREGA works since April 20, 2020, the Department has taken up more than 14000 development projects under MGNREGA which include 1670 water conservation and irrigation works, 4000 rural infrastructure works and 8300 PMAYG houses generating as many as Rs 5.28 lakh

person-days in J&K.

The additional tranche of funds of Rs 170 crore disbursed with an aim to boost the rural economy stand transferred through more than 11 lakh transactions directly in a single day into the accounts of beneficiaries through electronic-Fund Management System (e-FMS) via digitally signed Fund Transfer Orders (FTOs) so that these people don't have to venture out of their homes to collect the wages physically.

J&K PET WELFARE SOCIETY (REGD.)  
Sponsors: J&K PEOPLE'S EDUCATIONAL TRUST (PET).

We the Board of Trustees of J&K People's Educational Trust and the Board of Governors of J&K PET Welfare Society wish Ramdhan Mubarak with all its blessings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Unfortunately Coronavirus has restricted mobility due to which we cannot reach our esteemed donors in person. You are aware that huge sums of money are needed to carry forward manifold activities of the organisation which include running of two orphanages at Baramulla for girls and at Sopore for boys; granting Scholarship to the deserving students undergoing training in vocational courses, providing financial assistance to indigent people and medical aid to deserving people suffering from chronic diseases; helping people who suffer from natural calamities besides arranging seminars, symposia and debates for creating awareness among people regarding matters of educational and social interest.

Therefore not withstanding the prevailing circumstances, we approach all affluent people to donate liberally Zakat, Sadkat and dues in the name of J&K PET Welfare Society through J&K Bank account numbers given below:

**01) SB-0347040100011616 TP Sopore**

**02) SB-0002040100025189 Amira Kadal Srinagar**

**03) SB-1112040100002129 (Scholarship), Polo view Srinagar**

**04) SB-0397040100003990 Azad Gunj, Baramulla**

**05) SB-0070040100010284 KB Adda, Baramulla**

**Prof Mohammad Muzaffar Var  
Chairman,**

**J&K PET Welfare Society Contact No: 9906585516**

Government of Jammu & Kashmir  
Mechanical Hospital & Central Heating Division, Srinagar

(Phone No: 0194-2496089, www.medkmr.org,  
e-mail id: xenmhchdk@yahoo.in)

Subject: - Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 400 KVA Servo stabilizers along with allied works for oxygen Plant at Govt. LD Hospital, Srinagar.

References: This office NIT no: MHCHD/TS/2020-21/10/e-tendering Dated: 18.05.2020.

## CANCELLATION

Due to Administrative reasons, the above NIT issued by this office is hereby cancelled and shall be retendered in due course of time.

DIPK-958/20

No: MHCHD/TS/701-04  
Dated: 20-05-2020

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
MHCHD, Srinagar

## DIAL-EMMA



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

## AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



## RAILWAYS



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

## HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI

CALENDAR

28 Ramazan  
1441

## PRAYERS

FAJR 3: 47

ZUHR 12: 27

ASR 5:24

Magrib 7:33

ISHA 9:09

## This Day In History

- 334 BC - The Macedonian army of Alexander the Great defeats Darius III of Persia in the Battle of the Granicus
- 1849 - Abraham Lincoln receives a patent (only US President to do so) for a device to lift a boat over shoals and obstructions
- 1902 - US President Theodore Roosevelt signs a treaty with Mexico under which both countries agree to submit a long-standing dispute over interest payments to the Court of Arbitration at The Hague
- 1906 - Wright Brothers are granted a patent for their "flying machine," having applied for one 3 years earlier (patent no. 821,393)
- 1919 - A. E. Douglass establishes the relative dates of two archaeological sites using ancient wood samples, marking a major step forward in the dating of archaeological sites.
- 1926 - Chiang Kai-shek replaces communists in Guomindang China
- 1939 - Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini sign "Pact of Steel"
- 1940 - UK Premier Winston Churchill flies to Paris to decide with General Maxime Weygand a strategy to save the city
- 1941 - British troops attack Baghdad
- 1942 - Mexico declares war on Nazi-Germany & Japan
- 1943 - Stalin disbands Komintern
- 1947 - 1st US ballistic missile fired
- 1950 - Celal Bayar elected President of Turkey
- 1955 - Oldest man to drive in the Grand Prix (aged 55) finishes 6th
- 1957 - South Africa's government approves race separation in universities
- 1967 - Egyptian president Nassar closes Straits of Tiran to Israel
- 1972 - Ceylon becomes Republic of Sri Lanka as its constitution is ratified
- 1972 - US President Nixon begins visit to Moscow
- 1973 - President Nixon confesses his role in Watergate cover-up
- 1976 - NASA launches space vehicle S-179
- 1979 - Canadians elect conservatives, Joseph Clark replaces Pierre Trudeau as the 16th Prime Minister of Canada
- Jim Henson
- 1981 - Soyuz 40 returns to Earth
- 1990 - Microsoft releases Windows 3.0
- 1990 - North & South Yemen merge to form Republic of Yemen
- 1992 - India launches its Agni rocket
- 2006 - Results from the Montenegrin independence referendum, 2006 are announced. 55.4% of voters vote to become independent from the Serbia and Montenegro Union.
- 2010 - Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus' remains are reburied in Frombork Cathedral, Poland after a 200 year search for his tomb
- 2014 - Royal Thai Armed Forces, led by General Prayut Chan-o-cha stage a coup in Thailand, suspending the kingdom's constitution and taking control of the government, the 12th since the country's first coup in 1932

## From KO Archives

## Major Among 3 soldiers killed

Observer News Service

**J**AMMU - An Army Major was among three soldiers killed and an equal number injured when militants ambushed their patrol party in Rajouri district Friday afternoon.

Brigadier General Staff (bgs) 16 corps, Brig. Dhruv Katoch, told reporters the militants ambushed a patrol at Mouhla area in Rajouri district, 160 km north of Jammu, at 11 a.m. "The attack left Major Satyajet Shinde and three soldiers dead," Katoch said.

The attack took place when an army patrol party of 14 Maratha Light Infantry was on its way for an operation in Dharamshal area of the district following a tip off that militants were present in the area, the sources said.

Militants had set-up ambushes at Bandri area in Kalarara forests in the belt and as the troops led by Major Shinday reached the place militants hurled the grenades and opened indiscriminate fire around 1300 hours, they said

Troops took positions and fired back, they said adding that in the subsequent fire fight four army personnel were killed and four others injured.

The bodies of dead and injured were ferried in a helicopter to military hospital in Rajouri, reports said. The condition of two injured jawans is reported to be serious, they said. Hizbul Mujahedin has claimed responsibility for the attack. Brig Katoch was quoted by reports Friday evening saying that additional troops have been sent to the area and a fierce gunbattle was going on.

Meanwhile in a separate incident in the same district an army jawan was critically injured in a landmine blast near the Line of Control (LoC) to-day. Army sources said Sepoy Ajay Kumar inadvertently stepped over a landmine near LoC in Rajouri while he was on routine patrol in the area. In the explosion, Ajay sustained critical injuries. He was airlifted to army command hospital in Udhampur

Another soldier was injured when militants triggered a powerful Improvised Explosive De-vice (IED) at Komoh Kulgam in south Kashmir today.

Kashmir Observer, 22 May, 2005



## KASHMIR OBSERVER

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## Remember Your Brethren in Distress

**E**id-ul-Fitr follows a period of unmitigated distress in the Valley. Ever since the revocation of the Article 370 in August last, Kashmir has been in a lockdown. It was only by February that the Valley had partially emerged from a six month long siege. But within a month and a half of some relaxation, the Valley was plunged into another lockdown. Though COVID-19 lockdown across the country has been strict, it still can't beat the severity of the post August 5 Kashmir siege. Unlike India or anywhere in the world, Kashmir had no means of communication, not even a landline, used by a small number of people, for a month. Mobile phones were restored after three and a half month and the slow-speed 2G internet after six months.

In the process, Kashmir had to bear a colossal loss to its economy: As a local business body has calculated, the Valley lost an estimated Rs 18000 crore in six months of siege followed by around Rs 13000 crore more in the lockdown over the past two months..Tourism, one of the mainstays of the local economy has come to a halt. 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. Ditto for Horticulture, a Rs 6500 crore industry, Its fallout on the livelihoods of people has been far-reaching. Lakhs of people have lost jobs. What is more, there is little hope to look forward to. Recent rise in violence has further deteriorated the situation turning lives of many more people upside down. For example, the recent razing of 15 houses at Nawakadal during an encounter between militants and security forces. These people have nowhere to go.

While we celebrate Eid, a festivity which is incumbent on all Muslims, we need to be mindful of the immediate tragedy that has befallen a large section of our society, over and above the trauma and grief that we have been experiencing for the past three decades. This calls for us to be much more austere in our celebration. We need to show that we care on Eid too. Those of us who can afford to spend should instead donate the amount they would otherwise spend on consumables for their brethren in distress. Same goes for the people who spend lavishly on Eid feast. They would earn more Sawab and God's goodwill should they also contribute some amount to the people who have nothing. Let this Eid further strengthen and sustain the spirit of community effort that has made us resilient in the face of worst adversity.

### OTHER OPINION

## Law As Weapon

**A**dharna in Agra over the movement of buses to ferry migrant labour led to the arrest of the Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lal- lu and two of his party colleagues — all three subsequently got bail. Amongst the laws weaponised by the UP police to detain the Opposition leaders is a late-19th century statute, The Epidemic Diseases Act. Drafted by the colonial state in 1897 “to take special measures and prescribe regulations” for “the better prevention of the dangerous epidemic diseases”, the law has been summoned in the past to deal with outbreaks of cholera, swine flu and dengue. But its heavy-handed and arbitrary use, or misuse, during the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic is new. Patients, journalists and Opposition leaders have been at the receiving end of this blunt instrument that does not actually define an epidemic, leave alone a pandemic.

Of course, combating COVID-19 does require extensive surveillance, including identification of the carriers of the virus and their contacts. But in most parts of the world, including India, a growing body of literature has underlined that such extraordinary measures are best undertaken by taking citizens into confidence, using persuasion and involving the community. At several places, however, the state authorities are giving the go-by to these imperatives and asserting state power in heavy-handed ways, by taking cover under Clause 4 of the Epidemics Act — actions taken under the law are provided immunity from “legal proceedings” for they are deemed to have been “undertaken in good faith”. In early April, when knowledge of the virus was still uncertain among large sections of the people, an FIR was slapped against the family of a Bengaluru technician, who had contracted COVID-19, for “hiding information”, and they were charge-sheeted under the Epidemics Act. Also last month, the Mumbai Police invoked the law to arrest a journalist, alleging that his social media posts led to unrest among migrant workers in suburban Bandra.

A toxic mix of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, Section 144 of the CrPC and the Epidemics Act may well be on its way to becoming the new sedition law, which has been invoked with disturbing frequency in the recent past to criminalise criticism and dissent. Last week, the Gujarat government combined the sedition law with the Disaster Management Act to charge a journalist for reporting that Chief Minister Vijay Rupani may be removed by the BJP High Command for his handling of the pandemic. Also last week, this paper reported that at least four FIRs have been filed against journalists in Himachal Pradesh for highlighting the condition of stranded labourers in the pandemic. The FIRs allege that these reports are “fake” and “sensational” news; the cases are being investigated. But governments must realise that the discourse on citizens' rights and public health has moved on from the times when the colonial government charged Bal Gangadhar Tilak for sedition for criticising its handling of the 1897 bubonic plague. Else, the Supreme Court must intervene to allow people to voice their opinions freely during a crisis, and especially in a crisis, without the threat of their being criminalised.

*The Indian Express*

M.K. NARAYANAN

“It is important to understand the implications of all this, when shrill voices are being heard that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to end China's ambitious power outreach, and that countries such as India would be the beneficiaries. The converse may actually turn out to be true, given that China has, for years, adopted a policy of gaining a strategic advantage not only in military matters but also in economic and technical areas. This must not be lost sight of.

# China After Covid-19

**S**everal weeks before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, India's Minister for External Affairs, S. Jaishankar, had observed (at a lecture) that “what defines power and determines national standing is also no longer the same... Technology, connectivity and trade are at the heart of the new contestations...” The Minister could never have imagined that within a few weeks, his prediction would be overtaken by a tectonic shift in the global situation thanks to a virus and a pandemic.

The Minister did mention a point about “known unknowns”, but what he could hardly have anticipated is how radical the changes would be, thanks to the phenomenon of “unknown unknowns”. Within the span of a few weeks, following the Minister's dissertation, pronounced unpredictability created an unprecedented situation. Seldom have so many lives been lost across continents in a single tragic event.

### Deep economic impact

By now, India has surpassed China with regard to the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, and has moved past the figure of 100,000 cases. What distinguishes the present pandemic from earlier ones is its economic impact, which is perhaps even more threatening than the human costs involved. In the case of India, all forecasts have had to be shredded. Job losses have been massive, specially in urban areas. India's exports in the month of April, for instance, were the worst in the past 30 years. The harrowing plight of India's migrant workers and the images of hungry, aimless, dispossessed migrant worker families trudging along the highways of the nation have seared the conscience of the nation. It could well have been equated to China's May Fourth Movement (1919), except that, unlike in the case of China, the event has yet to catalyse the nation.

Well before this, India had been witnessing a persistent economic downward slide. The pandemic could, thus, not have come at a more inopportune moment. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of a 20-lakh crore stimulus package was, hence, timely even though economists now believe that in real terms it amounts to around 2% of GDP rather than 10% as the government makes out. Finding resources for even this stimulus package will, however, not be easy. The Centre's finances are not in the best of health. It has already had to resort to a second tranche of \$1 billion loan from the World Bank to support COVID-19 relief measures. The finances of States are, to say the least, in a perilous state. Questions are, thus, bound to be raised as to whether adequate funds would be forthcoming for relief purposes.

### Package is more a mosaic

Following the Prime Minister's announcement, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has provided several details of the stimulus package. Most critics affirm that it has been a financial stimulus at best, and much less likely to provide the much needed stimulus to the economy. Among the more important items are: providing a stimulus to Micro, Small and Medium Enter-

prises (MSMEs) through a 3-lakh crore loan scheme; helping other stressed business sectors such as non-banking financial companies, or NBFCs, power distribution companies and the real estate industry; provisioning of free food grains to migrant workers for the next two months; provisioning of a 1-lakh crore subsidy to agricultural cooperative societies; hiking the allocation for the Mahatma



Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, or MGN-REGS, by 40,000 crore; extension of credit facilities to street vendors; interest subvention for small businesses, etc.

A valid criticism is that the patchwork of stimulus packages reveals a disjointed mosaic of ideas and thoughts. Also, that these would be more relevant to a Budget discussion than a stimulus package. In the list of items mentioned as part of the stimulus package are aspects such as throwing open of defence production and coal sectors to the private sector, references to opening up of defence and aerospace for private companies, support to budgetary provisions for domestic defence procurement, bringing out a negative import list of weapons and military platforms, etc. Many are, hence, viewing the stimulus package as a panic reaction to an increasingly difficult situation rather than a deliberate plan of action. It is indeed difficult to see how in the absence of a proper and well designed plan, a patchwork of stimulus packages would enable India to return to growth rates of 7% to 8%.

### China's calibrated moves

In the extant circumstances, comparisons with China have, hence, become inevitable. China may not have anticipated the latest COVID-19 pandemic, but since its early recovery, China has followed a calibrated approach — one that stems from a policy of deliberate strategic progression conceived over the years. It may be worthwhile to understand the facts so as to underscore the gap that currently exists between China and India.

Almost five years ago, China's President, Xi Jinping, had floated the idea of “a Community of Common Destiny of Mankind”, in the course of an address to the UN General Assembly (2015). In this, he outlined China's viewpoint on aspects such as economic globalisation and the information technology revolution. The Belt and Road Initiative — which encompasses policy, infrastructure, trade, financial, and people-to-people connectivity, and, implicitly also, security ties — was an adjunct to it. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (2017), thereafter, gave its imprimatur, considering it essential to enable China to achieve pre-mi-

nence status within the global order. Ever since, China has embarked on not only attaining economic and technological progress but also in defining how power would be determined in the new globalised era through devising new international norms in many emerging domains such as cyber, space, artificial intelligence, etc.

### Setting the standards

China also set about rewriting international rules, premised not so much on governing where global goods are made, but on setting standards that define production, exchange and consumption. China Standards 2035 plans to set new standards with regard to the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) and define next generation information technology and biotechnology infrastructure. China is hoping, thereby, to reap the “early bird” advantage, even as other industrial nations struggle to recover from the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Internationalisation of Chinese standards would provide China a clear advantage by providing it an opportunity to set the standards in emerging industries such as high-end equipment manufacturing, unmanned vehicles, new materials, cybersecurity and the like. This would enable it gain a dominant position in the global economy.

It is important to understand the implications of all this, when shrill voices are being heard that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to end China's ambitious power outreach, and that countries such as India would be the beneficiaries. The converse may actually turn out to be true, given that China has, for years, adopted a policy of gaining a strategic advantage not only in military matters but also in economic and technical areas. This must not be lost sight of.

### India must plan well

Mounting an effective challenge to China at this time would require a well-conceived and carefully calibrated plan of action by India. As of now, this is not evident. India and China will certainly emerge from the pandemic more diminished than previously, but to varying extents. Each country will, no doubt, suffer an economic setback, but while both nations would be among the very few that would still have a positive growth rate in the near future (1% in the case of China and 1.8% in the case of India, according to the International Monetary Fund) — given the size of China's economy, it does not translate into a massive shift in India's favour.

Admittedly, there is a great deal of talk of companies demitting China at this time, partly due to the pandemic and partly due to other reasons. India would more than welcome some of the entities exiting China, but there are no “green shoots” to suggest that such a shift has, or is, about to take place. Many alternatives are available to these companies and it would be excessively optimistic on our part to hold on to the belief that India is the only alternative choice for most of them.

*M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal*



OBSERVER  
MAIL

All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name and address, even if a pseudonym is used. Letters are edited as clarity, spaceand accuracy of expression require. Our publishing a letter does not mean we agree with everything or even anything in it. -EDITOR

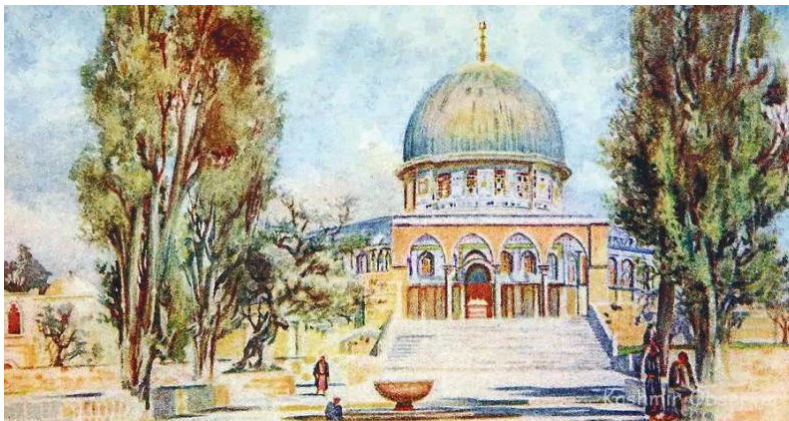
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## Al-Quds Day- A Pledge of Allegiance

**I**NTERNATIONAL Al-Quds Day gives voice to voiceless, hope to hopeless, help to helpless, identity to nameless, courage to oppressed, consolation to bereaved and strength to weak. It's a weapon for un-armed. Quds Day is the day to pledge allegiance to Al-Aqsa. It's the day of resistance, the day of victory of oppressed and dispossessed over the tyranny and arrogance.

Quds Day was declared by late Ayatollah Rohullah Khomeini after he led the first triumphant Islamic Revolution in centuries and kicked out America's biggest lackey from the Middle East's most prized nation in 1979. He declared the last Friday of the holly month of Ramazan as annual Quds Day lest nations forgot in their duty to liberate the most valued land for all monolithic religions, called Palestine and its most admired landmark, the Al-Aqsa.



As the last Friday became an annual feature of anti Zionist demonstration drawing Muslims and people of conscience alike against oppression and tyranny, arrogant powers became uneasy and felt vulnerable with the rising tide of global solidarity.

Quds Day is now firmly an inter-

national occasion and has crossed the confines of Palestine. It is the day of defenceless and subjugated peoples against the organised global tyranny. It is a day of pledge of liberation for long subjugated people of the world now. From Palestine to Kashmir and from Yemen to Myanmar world is one.

The International Day of Quds amplifies the cry of the oppressed and shakes the pillars of injustice, tyranny and oppression. Although it is for one day and has a specific symbol, this anniversary has a louder message which resonates in the streets and hamlets of all subjugated lands.

Quds Day also conveys a stark message for Muslims globally. The continued suffering of al-Quds reflects the reality of Muslim paralysis. If Muslim's can not rise on the painful cries from the minarets of their first Qibla how can one expect them to stand up for the meek and voiceless elsewhere.

Quds Day has come to heal the wounds, console the bereaved, encourage the weak, reward the dead, stand with the right and bring down the cruel.

Quds Day is the day of unity. Day of vow. Day to shun hypocrisy.

*Saif Ali Budgami  
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This year, there was a delay in the migration of Gujjar and Bakarwal community in Jammu and Kashmir. But after cleared for the summer movement, the gypsies of J&K look uncertain about the problems that lay ahead in the journey.

## Staring At Uncertain Future: Pensive Pastoralists Back To Business

SWATI JOSHI

**The advisory states that Gujjars and Bakarwals traversing the long distance from different parts of J&K should avoid the intermingling of transit camps. It advises to avoid taking old aged persons, women, and children for the journey. They can join them once the pandemic is over.**

**F**OLLOWING the long-established tradition, Gujjars and Bakarwals start summer seasonal tribal migration in the first week of April every year to reach their destinations within 40-45 days of foot journey.

But due to COVID lockdown and the hate-campaign, they started their journey quite late this year.

"We're already late this year due to the situation," says 24-year-old Jaheen, who belongs to a Muslim nomadic tribe that has already embarked on their traditional journey.

Due to strict lockdown and fear of catching coronavirus, the tribals had to halt their caravan.

But when the lockdown was extended till May 3, they had no choice but to start the movement to preserve their cattle.

"It's necessitated that the seasonal migration is allowed for the upper reaches to get adequate green fodder for their livestock [sheep and goat]," the official notification in

this regard reads.

The order underlines that the movement of tribals shall only be allowed with "valid permit issued by a competent authority".

Gujjars and Bakarwals bi-annually migrate to the lower, middle, and higher mountain ranges in the north-western Himalayan mountains, with their cattle, which is their source of livelihood.

These tribal communities constitute around 15 to 20 per cent of the total population of J&K.

Amid lockdown, Jaheen has ration for a few days. After that, he says, he'll be dependent on external sources.

Almost every shop is closed and he doesn't know for how many days he will manage with the food he has. The trail which he has been taking for a long time is closed.

Earlier, an advisory was issued for the safety of pastoralists and chopans by the office of the district sheep husbandry officer Bandipora on April 17.

The advisory states that Gujjars

and Bakarwals traversing the long distance from different parts of J&K should avoid the intermingling of transit camps. It advises to avoid taking old aged persons, women, and children for the journey. They can join them once the pandemic is over.

The advisory restricts the movement of the nomads through the red zone areas. It promises the establishment of first aid camps from May 15 at various transit routes for the welfare of the livestock.

The government has also reportedly disallowed vehicles and milch animals (cows and buffaloes) to go along with these gypsies.

In response to the issue, the J&K Advisory Board for Development of Gujjars and Bakarwals have written to the district magistrates of Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Udhampur, Kishtwar, Doda, Poonch, Rajouri, Reasi, and Ramban.

The letter states the inconveniences caused by the order and requests the magistrates to include "pet animals in the permit as per past

practice after proper verification" to solve the tribal communities' problems while migrating.

To create awareness about COVID amongst the nomadic Gujjar and Bakarwal communities, the government made Indian army to distribute pamphlets in bilingual language in remote areas.

Already, Gujjars are facing hate campaign for being the "carriers of coronavirus" pertaining to the Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Delhi's Nizamuddin in March this year.

The congregation is being termed as "a COVID hotspot" as several participants who attended the gathering are tested positive for the virus.

"Whenever we pass through a village, people stare at us and murmur," complains Jaheen, hoping that the conditions will improve in the coming time.

"The rumor-mongering has affected our business a lot. People don't want to buy milk from us anymore."

## Children Will Miss The Power Of Touch

J.W. FREIBERG

**A** child psychiatrist friend and I were recently discussing how her adult daughter and three-year-old granddaughter came to visit her in her back yard. They were masked and stayed six feet away. The child, who throughout her infancy and right up until the appearance of Covid-19 had been picked-up and soothed and codled by her loving grandmother, now found herself sternly disciplined for repeatedly running over to be picked up by her. How will this sudden interdiction of grandmotherly hugs, kisses, and nurturing impact this child? And more generally, what effect will the social distancing that surely will be imposed on child-to-child contact have on children in the months and years to come?

I approach these questions by drawing upon my understanding of the critical importance of affective parental nurturing in establishing an infant's neural pathways of connection, and the follow-on role of inter-child, non-sibling free play in instilling socialisation skills in young children.

Humans are small-pod herd mammals, like certain of the great apes, elephants, and the cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises). Each of these species suckles and nurtures their young, and their offspring press against them for comforting and connection. Humans, of course, do far more holding and touching of our young and we do so over a much longer time. We invest years in holding, hugging, kissing, bathing, and dressing our offspring - all in response to the identical soothing touch we ourselves enjoyed as infants.

Thanks to contemporary brain imaging techniques, we now know that the physiological effect of parental loving touch is the biochemical imprinting of the neural pathways of connection that children



later use to approach and bond with others. We humans, in other words, actively train our offspring to seek soothing and loving touch in their connections with others. These activities are very much required for the survival of our species - just as other species actively train their young in the skillsets they will need to keep safe from predators, hunt for food, and find their way to water.

If phase one of learning how to connect is an infant's experience of loving parental - (and grandparental!) - soothing touch, phase two involves the critically important social lessons children learn from each other during free play and unstructured

activities. This is where they learn and hone their social skills: how to become included in a circle of friends, how to survive the pain of rejection, and how to recognise and deal with bullies. Remember those thousands of hours spent interacting with other children in the school hallways, at recess, on the play field, on your neighbourhood streets, and in those endless summers of childhood? Think about how physical those interactions were - the running together, the holding of hands, the pushing and shoving, and then, later, that first kiss. The playful wrestling and nipping at each other of young puppy and kitten littermates provides is the parallel to the

physical horseplay of human children. That's just the kind of mammal we are.

What lessons about interpersonal connection will my friend's small grandchild learn (or fail to learn) where fear has been introduced around being close to and embracing her grandmother? Following on, what relational skill-building will this child miss when social distancing and non-touching rules and norms control her play with other children in the years to come?

*J.W. Freiberg studies chronic loneliness through the lens of a social psychologist turned lawyer.*

*-Psychology Today*

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# Your Degree Gives Your Children Significant Advantage In Maths, Faster FUTURE GROWTH

Agencies

Kids of parents who have degrees do better than others in maths, suggests a new study. Children of parents with a degree are almost a year of schooling ahead in maths by age 11 than peers whose parents have just GCSEs, a new study by the University of Sussex has discovered. Greater parental education is the strongest predictor of maths attainment and faster future growth for children moving into secondary school even after adjusting for their intelligence (IQ), research by University of Sussex psychologists published today by the Royal Society reveals.

The study also showed that boys achieve significantly higher grades in maths at age 11 but this gap did not grow through secondary school. Academics believe the gap at 11 could be explained by girls' increasing maths anxiety and decreasing enjoyment of the subject at this age. Statistically significant but very weak evidence that pupils with higher emotional symptoms in early childhood had lower maths attainment when they were older. The study's authors recommend that strategies focusing on improving parental education could be a very effective method of increasing attainment in children. "Our study shows that increased maths growth was significantly

predicted by higher IQ, higher socioeconomic status and greater parental education, suggesting that children with greater intelligence and higher socioeconomic status progress at a quicker rate across the transition to secondary education compared with their peers," said Danielle Evans, researcher in achievement in mathematics at the University of Sussex. "While this finding is not unexpected, it demonstrates the importance of parents within their child's education and suggests that having higher-educated parents may potentially 'buffer' the negative impacts of the transition to secondary education on children's attainment," added Evans. "Recent campaigns launched by

the BBC in collaboration with the National Numeracy Charity focusing on promoting adult education and maths training is a step in the right direction but much more work is needed to overcome the extent of poor numeracy in the UK and the negative effects associated with underachievement in maths," said Dr Darya Garsina, senior lecturer in psychology at the University of Sussex. The study examined working memory and internalizing symptoms as predictors of children's maths attainment trajectories across the transition to secondary education through analysis of the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) involving almost 9,000 children born between

1 April 1991 and 31 December 1992. The study focuses on the transition from primary to secondary education because of the reported declines in academic achievement and maths specifically during the move from primary to secondary schools - it is reported that more than a third of children do not show any progress in maths during the transition year. The study's authors believe higher-educated parents support the transition to secondary education in different ways that lessen the negative impact of the transition on maths attainment including their own positive attitudes towards education, involvement with school activities or helping with homework in a

supportive environment. The authors had hypothesised that emotional temperament in early childhood could be a very early indicator of poor maths attainment later on in adolescence but later concluded that it was not possible to predict later problems with underattainment in maths using emotional difficulties early on in childhood. The study's authors say additional research is needed to further uncover the relationship of memory during a task (working memory) and internalizing symptoms such as anxiety on attainment, using more time-appropriate measures. "The current state of maths attainment and performance of

children and adults in the UK is particularly alarming with almost half of all working-age adults in the UK having the maths skills expected of primary-school children," said Andy Field, Professor of Quantitative Methods at the University of Sussex. "Poor maths attainment in childhood persist well into adulthood and can be associated with several negative outcomes such as poorer employment prospects, greater likelihood of homelessness, poorer health outcomes and mental health difficulties such as depression. The ability to identify predictors of maths attainment as early as possible in childhood could have life-changing consequences," added Field.

## Google Ai Could Predict Eye Condition Behind Vision Loss

Agencies

San Francisco- Google has developed an Artificial intelligence (AI)-based system that performed as well as, and in certain cases better than, clinicians in predicting progression of a common eye condition that can cause vision loss. The results, published in the journal Nature Medicine, suggest that the AI model, built in partnership with Alphabet subsidiary DeepMind and Moorfields Eye Hospital in Britain, could help doctors study preventive treatments for age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the third largest cause of blindness across the globe. Around 75 per cent of patients with AMD have an early form called "dry" AMD that usually has relatively mild impact on vision. A minority of patients, however, develop the more sight-threatening form of AMD called exudative, or "wet" AMD. This condition affects around



15 per cent of patients, and occurs when abnormal blood vessels develop underneath the retina. These vessels can leak fluid, which can cause permanent loss of central vision if not treated early enough. Wet AMD often affects one eye first, so patients become heavily reliant upon their unaffected eye to maintain their normal day-to-day living. Unfortunately, 20 per cent of

these patients will go on to develop wet AMD in their other eye within two years. The condition often develops suddenly but further vision loss can be slowed with treatments if wet AMD is recognised early enough. The new research showed that the Google Health AI model has the potential to predict whether a patient will develop wet AMD within six months. The researchers trained their

model using a retrospective, anonymised dataset of 2,795 patients. These patients had been diagnosed with wet AMD in one of their eyes, and were attending one of seven clinical sites for regular 3D optical coherence tomography (OCT) imaging and treatment. For each patient, the researchers worked with retinal experts to review all prior scans for each eye and determine the scan when wet AMD was first evident. The AI system is composed of two deep convolutional neural networks, one taking the raw 3D scan as input and the other taking a segmentation map outlining the types of tissue present in the retina. It used the raw scan and tissue segmentations to estimate a patient's risk of progressing to wet AMD within the next six months. In the future, this system could potentially help doctors plan studies of earlier intervention, as well as contribute more broadly to clinical understanding of the disease and disease progression.

## Obesity Not Related To How Close You Live To Fast Food Restaurants Or Gyms

Agencies

A new study from Lund University in Sweden has shown there is no correlation between obesity and how close you live to fast food restaurants or gyms. Studies from other countries have previously indicated that these factors may be important in adult obesity. The areas where we live are known to be important for our health. For example, obesity is more prevalent in deprived neighbourhoods. Deprived neighbourhoods are typically defined by low socio-economic levels, e.g., low average income and high unemployment rates. The reason why obesity is more prevalent in such neighbourhoods have been a topic of interest among both researchers and policy makers for a long time, and commercial facilities, like fast food outlets and physical activity facilities, have



attracted much research attention and debate. "However, our large-scale study in Sweden, using longitudinal national registry data of more than 1.5 million adults, did not find a statistically significant association between these two types of facilities and obesity," said Kenta Okuyama, PhD student at Center for Primary Health Care Research at Lund University. The researchers say it is unlikely that the availability of fast food outlets or lack of gyms are causes of obesity in Swedish adults. "Although reducing fast food

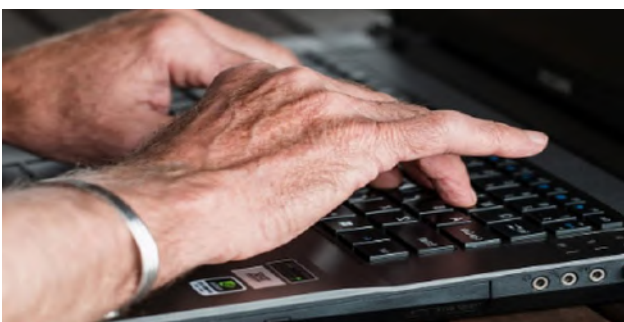
outlets or introducing physical activity facilities might in theory promote healthy eating and exercise, it may not be very effective in all countries and regions, because the contexts vary by its culture and lifestyle that may affect how often people utilize these facilities in their daily lives," said Kenta Okuyama. The study did show a correlation between neighbourhood deprivation and obesity. "The next goal is to investigate further what other factors can possibly impact the risk of obesity in Sweden," added Kenta Okuyama.

## Daily Internet Use May Lead To Social Isolation Among Elderly

Agencies

LONDON- Spending too much time using the internet? Read this carefully. Researchers have found that older adults who go online every day are more likely to be socially isolated than those who use the internet less frequently. Published in the journal Ageing and Society, the study examined data from 4,492 adults in England, with an average age of 64. Overall, 19 per cent reported high levels of loneliness and 33 per cent were classified as socially isolated. "Our findings suggest that older adults who reported using the internet weekly or

monthly may have a better balance between their real-world and online contacts, and it's possible that many in this category are simply too busy to go online every day," said study lead author Stephanie Stockwell from the Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in the UK. Social isolation is an objective measure of a person's social relationships, including the size and diversity of their social network, and the frequency of contact. The research, which took place before COVID-19 social distancing measures were introduced, found no link between internet use and loneliness. The study found that older adults who went online occa-



sionally (once a week or once a month) were less likely to be socially isolated than daily internet users, with daily users recording levels of social isolation similar to those who never went online. Searching for information, sending emails and shopping

were the three most common online activities, and over two-thirds of those in the study (69 per cent) reported using the internet every day. The findings showed that those going online daily were more likely to use a smartphone, while laptops were preferred

by less frequent users. "We were surprised that daily internet users recorded similar levels of social isolation as those who never use the internet. It might be that many of these people go online to combat their social isolation," Stockwell said. Alternatively, going online more frequently might actually cause greater social isolation among some older adults as they reduce their physical contacts. "Older adults with access to the internet are likely to be using it much more often at the moment due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions, but our findings indicate this is unlikely to improve levels of social isolation," Stockwell noted.

## Is Your Job Killing You? Workplace Stress Can Lead To Death

Agencies

NEW YORK- Researchers have revealed that stress, lack of autonomy and ability at the workplace or due to the demanding jobs can lead to depression and death. The study, published in the Journal of Applied Psychology, found that our mental health and mortality have a strong correlation with the amount of autonomy we have at our job, our workload and job demands, and our cognitive ability to deal with those demands. "When job demands are greater than the control afforded by the job or an individual's ability to deal with those demands, there is a deterioration of their mental health and, accordingly, an increased likelihood of death," said study lead author Erik Gonzalez-Mule

from Indiana University in the US. For the findings, the researchers used data from 3,148 Wisconsin residents who participated in the nationally representative, longitudinal Midlife in the US survey. Of those in their sample, 211 participants died during the 20-year study. They examined how job control -- or the amount of autonomy employees have at work -- and cognitive ability -- or people's ability to learn and solve problems -- influence how work stressors such as time pressure or workload affect mental and physical health and, ultimately, death. "We found that work stressors are more likely to cause depression and death as a result of jobs in which workers have little control or for people with lower cognitive ability," Gonzalez-Mule said





## Iran 'Will Support' Anyone Fighting Israel: Khamenei

KO Web Desk

TEHRAN- Iran will support any nation or group that fights Israel, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei said on the eve of annual Quds (Jerusalem) Day while a poster showing Palestinian flag



raised over Al-Aqsa Mosque was released on his official website. The image depicts Jerusalem being captured from Zionist state by the Iran led resistance axis.

"We will support and assist any nation or any group anywhere who opposes and fights the Zionist regime, and we do not hesitate to say this," Iran leader said in a post on his official English-language Twitter account.

Iran, Israel's arch-enemy in the Middle East, has been a key supporter of Syria, a front-line Arab country bordering Israel and resistance groups like Hamas and Hezbollah in Gaza and Lebanon.

Israel, which monitors neighboring Syria intensively, has carried out hundreds of air strikes in Syria targeting suspected arms and troop movements by Iran and Hezbollah

guerrillas that have bases across areas bordering Israel now.

Earlier his website displayed a poster and text above the image says: "Palestine Will Be Free. The final solution: Resistance until referendum."

The poster evoked a sharp reaction from US and Israeli officials including Benjamin Netanyahu and US secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that Iran's enmity toward Israel was not the same as hostility toward Jewish people.

"The elimination of the government of Israel does not mean the elimination of Jews. We don't have an issue with Jewish people," he said.

"Elimination of Israel" means the Muslim, Christian and Jewish people of Palestine choose their own government themselves and push out foreigners and thugs like [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu," the post added.

Iran leader is scheduled to speak on Friday to commemorate Quds Day.

Iranian leaders have frequently called for the abolition of the state of Israel which was formed in 1948.

In a statement on Thursday Iran's Revolutionary Guard or the IRGC condemned the continued occupation of Palestine and said,

"This old wound continues to afflict Muslim and freedom-seeking nations around the world, and the issue of Palestine still tops (our) major regional, international and Islamic concerns."

## Iran to US: We Will Brook No Harassment Of Our Oil Tankers In Intl. Waters

Agencies

Tehran: Iran's defense minister has warned the US of a firm and crushing response should it continue to harass the country's ships and oil tankers in international waters.

"We will definitely give a firm and decisive response if harassments continue or escalate," Brigadier General Amir



Hatami told reporters on the sidelines of a weekly cabinet session on Wednesday.

Hatami said US acts of harassment of tankers run against international law and endanger global security, calling on international organizations and those countries abiding by laws governing the security of waterways to adopt an appropriate reaction to the US moves.

He described the US acts of harassment at high seas as "piracy" but added, "Our policies are crystal clear and we announced explicitly that we will tolerate no act of harassment."

The US has recently intensified its anti-Iran rhetoric, threatening to seize or target Iran's fuel-carrying vessels crossing the Caribbean to sanctions-hit Venezuela.

US officials say Washington is mulling over possible measures against Iran in response to its fuel shipment to crisis-stricken Venezuela, according to reports.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday said the US' provocative acts amounted to a form of piracy and a constituted a big threat to international peace and security.

The top Iranian diplomat highlighted the responsibility of the US administration with regard to the consequences of any illegal move, reiterating Iran's right right to adopt appropriate and necessary measures in the face of such threats.



## WHO Warns Against Using Hydroxychloroquine Outside Clinical Trials

Agencies

Geneva: A senior official of the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned against using hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine, the drugs for malaria and other diseases, in the treatment of COVID-19, saying these drugs should be reserved for use "within clinical trials".

Responding to question on hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine being used to treat COVID-19 patients in certain countries, Dr Michael Ryan, executive director of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, told a press conference on Wednesday that,

despite that both drugs are already licensed for many diseases, at this stage, they "have

been as yet found to be effective in the treatment of COVID-19 or in the prophylaxis against coming down with the disease", Xinhua reported.

"And in fact the opposite, warnings have been issued by many authorities regarding the potential side effects of the drug and many countries have limited its use to that of clinical trials or during clinical trials or under the supervision of clinicians in a hospital setting that's specifically for COVID-19, because of a number of potential side effects that have occurred and could occur," Ryan stressed.

"Having said that, again it is for each national authority to weigh and assess the evidence for and against the use of this drug," he added.

Ryan said that hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine are included in the ongoing "solidarity trials" that take place across multiple countries. "And as WHO, we would advise that, for COVID-19, that these drugs be reserved for use within such trials."

Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead of Health Emergencies Programme, noted that "As of today we have more than 3,000 patients enrolled from 320 hospitals in 17 countries, and so that's a show of solidarity and called the solidarity trial, but it's really a show of collaboration and willingness to work towards a common goal of understanding which therapeutics are safe and effective against COVID-19".

## Global coronavirus cases surpass 5 million with over 3,26,000 deaths

Global coronavirus cases surpassed 5 million on Wednesday, with Latin America overtaking the United States and Europe in the past week to report the largest portion of new daily cases globally.

It represents a new phase in the virus' spread, which initially peaked in China in February, before large-scale outbreaks followed in Europe and the United States.

Latin America accounted for around a third of the 91,000 cases reported earlier this week. Europe and the United States each accounted for just over 20%. A large number of those new cases came from Brazil, which recently surpassed Germany, France and the United Kingdom to become the third-largest outbreak in the world, behind the United States and Russia.

Cases in Brazil are now rising at a daily pace second only to the United States.

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At more than 5 million cases, the virus has infected more people in under six months than the annual total of severe flu cases, which the World Health Organization estimates is around 3 million to 5 million globally.

The pandemic has claimed

over 326,000 lives, though the true number is thought to be higher as testing is still limited and many countries do not include fatalities outside of hospitals. Over half of the total fatalities have been recorded in Europe.

Agencies

## New Low In India's Ties With Nepal After Its PM's Virus Comment

Agencies

New Delhi: Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Oli has blamed India for the spread of coronavirus in his country and accused New Delhi of building a road that encroaches on the Himalayan nation's territory, marking a new low in bilateral relations between the traditional allies.

Nepal has approved a new political map demarcating the Lipulekh mountain pass, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura — places it says India has claimed by building a road despite repeated objections, Press Trust of India reported citing Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali.

Ruling Nepal Communist Party lawmakers have also tabled a special resolution in Parliament de-

manding the return of Nepal's territory in Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh, the report said.

Oli told the Parliament Wednesday his government would "bring back at any cost"



the three territories, before blaming India for the spread of coronavirus in his country, NDTV reported, citing a video tweeted by Nepal's government.

India has nearly 107,000 confirmed virus cases, while Nepal has 402, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

## Afghan Mosque Attack Kills Eight Worshippers Breaking Ramadan Fast



Agencies

Kabul: Gunmen opened fire in a mosque in central Afghanistan on Tuesday evening, killing eight worshippers breaking their Ramadan fast and wounding five others, officials said. "Unknown gunmen fired on people praying inside a mosque during iftar time," said Wahida Shahkar, spokeswoman for the governor of Parwan province, referring to the meal eaten to break daytime fasting during the Islamic holy month.

The Ministry of Interior confirmed the attack in Parwan's provincial capital Charekar, blaming it on the insurgent Taliban. The Taliban denied responsibility and said Afghan security forces were to blame.

The United Nations has warned of an alarming uptick in violence against civilians in Afghanistan. A shocking attack on a Kabul maternity ward last week killed 24 people, including newborn babies.

Violence increased around the country even after a Feb. 29 U.S.-Taliban pact on the withdrawal of U.S.-led foreign forces in exchange for Taliban security guarantees.

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Security forces largely repelled the Taliban offensive with the help of air support and Assadullah Khalid, acting minister of defence, said during a visit to the city that more than 50 insurgents and eight security force members had been killed.

The Taliban have rejected repeated calls for a ceasefire by the Afghan government. They deny any involvement in the maternity ward attack and the United States believes the Islamic State was responsible.

The United States has sent special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad to Doha and Kabul to press the Afghan government and the Taliban to start stalled peace talks. Khalilzad has said he will push for a reduction in violence during the trip.

## NEWS MAKERS

## US arrests 2 men accused of smuggling ex-Nissan boss out of Japan in a box

Washington: A former Green Beret and his son have been arrested in Massachusetts on charges they smuggled Nissan Motor Co. Chairman Carlos Ghosn out of Japan in a box while he awaited trial there on financial misconduct charges.

Michael Taylor, a 59-year-old former Green Beret and private security specialist, and Peter Taylor, 27, are wanted by Japan on charges they helped Ghosn escape the country in December after he was released on bail.

The Taylors were arrested by the US Marshals Service in Harvard. They appeared before a federal judge from jail via video conference, wearing orange jumpsuits and tan face coverings because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Assistant US Attorney Stephen



Hassink said Japan plans "as quickly as possible" to submit a formal request to extradite the Taylors.

An attorney for the Taylors said they plan to challenge Japan's extradition request "on several legal and factual grounds."

"Michael Taylor is a distinguished veteran and patriot, and both he and his son deserve a full and fair hearing regarding these is-

sues, both before the courts and the executive branch," Paul V. Kelly said in an email.

The tale of the daring escape began on December 28, 2019, when Peter Taylor arrived in Japan and met with Ghosn at the Grand Hyatt Tokyo for about an hour, authorities said.

Just before 10 a.m. the next day, Michael Taylor flew into Osaka, Japan, on a chartered Bombardier Global Express jet from Dubai with another man, George-Antoine Zayek, carrying two large black boxes with them.

The elder Taylor was experienced with sticky situations. Over the years, he has been hired by parents to rescue abducted children, gone undercover for the FBI in a sting on a Massachusetts drug gang and worked as a contractor for the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## Pakistani man arrested for killing 2 teenage girls over leaked video

Islamabad: Police in Pakistan's North Waziristan has arrested a man suspected to have killed two teenage girls in the name of 'honour' after a short mobile video of them with a young man surfaced online, the media reported on Thursday.

The girls were gunned down on May 14 in Shamplan Garyam village after their 'objectionable' video footage went viral on social media, said the Dawn news report.

On Wednesday, North Waziristan district police officer Shafiqullah Gandapur said the suspected killer, Mohammad Aslam, who was a cousin of the two girls, was held during a raid in an unidentified location.

He had gone into hiding after the murders.

Earlier in the day, a central character of the incident, Umer

Ayaz, confessed before a local court that he had recorded the video.

A senior police official said Ayaz told the court that he used the mobile phone of his friend, Fida Wazir, who had already been held by the police.

Meanwhile, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police Sanaullah Abbasi announced cash reward and commendation certificates for police officials over arrests in the honour killing case.

Besides Aslam, the police police have arrested four suspects in the case—Ayaz, Fida Mohammad, father of one of the girls, Zardwal Khan, and the girl's cousin, Roohuddin.

The police claimed that the family of the deceased had kept the killings a secret, so the relevant station house officer registered the FIR as the complainant, reports Dawn news.

## World Bank names Harvard professor as chief economist

Washington: World Bank Group President David Malpass announced that Harvard University professor, Carmen Reinhart has been appointed as its new vice president and chief economist, effective on June 15.

"I am very pleased to welcome Carmen to the World Bank Group, as we boost our efforts to restore growth and meet the urgent debt and recession crises facing many of our client countries," Malpass said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Carmen has dedicated her career to understanding and surmounting financial crises in both advanced and developing economies in order to achieve growth and higher living standards," he said.



# Train Ticket Bookings At Physical Facilities From Monday, More Rails Soon: Centre

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said booking of train tickets will resume at around 1.7 lakh common service centres across the country from Friday.

Common Service Centres are physical facilities for delivering e-services of the government at rural and remote locations where availability of computers and internet is negligible or absent.

The minister also said that bookings will also resume at counters at specific stations over the next two to three days.

"We are developing a



protocol to identify the stations...we will also soon announce the resumption of more trains," Goyal said

during a conversation with his party colleague and BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra.

The Railway Minister also praised Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath and Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani for their cooperation with the railways in running the Shramik Special trains and criticised West Bengal and Jharkhand for their non-cooperation.

Goyal also said within 2.5 hours of opening bookings for the 100 pairs of special trains that will run from June 1, 4 lakh passengers

# Over 50 Mn Indians Lack Handwashing Access, At High Covid-19 Risk: Study

**NEW DELHI-** More than 50 million people in India do not have access to effective handwashing, putting them at a greater risk of acquiring and transmitting the novel coronavirus, according to a study.

Researchers from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington in the US found that without access to soap and clean water, over 2 billion people in low- and middle-income nations — a quarter of the world's population — have a greater likelihood of transmitting the coronavirus than those in wealthy countries.

According to the study, published in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives, more than 50 per cent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania lacked access to effective handwashing. "Handwashing is one of the key measures to prevent COVID transmission, yet it is distressing that access is unavailable in many countries that also have limited health care capacity," said Michael Brauer, a professor at IHME. The study found that in 46 countries, more than half of people lacked access to soap and clean water.

In India, Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Indonesia, more than 50 million persons in each country were estimated to be without



handwashing access, according to the study. "Temporary fixes, such as hand sanitizer or water trucks, are just that — temporary fixes," Brauer said. "But implementing long-term solutions is needed to protect against COVID and the more than 700,000 deaths each year due to poor handwashing access," Brauer said. He noted that even with 25 per cent of the world's population lacking access to effective handwashing facilities, there have been "substantial improvements in many countries" between 1990 and 2019.

Those countries include Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Nepal, and Tanzania, which have improved their nations' sanitation, the researchers said.

The study does not estimate access to handwashing facilities in non-household settings such as schools, workplaces, health care facilities, and other public locations such as markets. Earlier this month, the World Health Organization predicted 190,000 people in Africa could die of COVID-19 in the first year of the pandemic, and that upward of 44 million of the continent's 1.3 billion people could be infected with the coronavirus, the researchers said



World Bank says covid19 to push 60 million into poverty; 160 billion assistance to 100 countries . (AFP Photo)

# World Bank Estimates 60 Million People May Fall Into Extreme Poverty Due To Covid19

**WASHINGTON:** The coronavirus pandemic is expected to put over 60 million people into extreme poverty globally, the World Bank has said as it announced emergency operations worth USD 160 billion in 100 developing countries to fight the deadly virus.

"The pandemic and shutdown of advanced economies could push as many as 60 million people into extreme poverty -- erasing much of the recent progress made in poverty alleviation," World Bank President David Malpass told reporters during a conference call on Tuesday.

"The World Bank Group has moved quickly and decisively to establish emergency response operations in 100 countries, with mechanisms that allow other donors to rapidly expand the programmes," he said.

Of the 100 countries, home to 70 per cent of the world's population, 39 are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly one-third of the total projects are in fragile and conflict-affected situations, such as Afghanistan, Chad, Haiti, and Niger.

"To return to growth, our goal must be rapid, flexible responses to tackle the health emergency, provide cash and other expandable support to protect the poor, maintain

the private sector, and strengthen economic resilience and recovery, Malpass said.

"This represents a significant milestone in the World Bank Group's effort to deploy USD 160 billion over a 15-month period. So this is a milestone in the USD 160 billion that we have committed to," he said.

Malpass said the programmes are tailored to the countries to effectively respond to the health, economic and social shocks that each of them are facing.

The programmes will reinforce healthcare systems and also help procure vital life-saving medical equipment and supplies. And these programmes contain mechanisms that allow other donors to rapidly expand the programme, he added.

"We invite that. There can be co-financing, there can be additional donors parallel with these programmes, so it is important that we note that the programmes are expandable. And because of the breadth that means the interested donors and other multilateral banks can reach countries around the world," the World Bank President said.

The Bank Group's support through grants, loans and equity investments

will be supplemented by the suspension of bilateral debt service, as endorsed by the Bank's governors.

IDA-eligible countries that request forbearance on their official bilateral debt payments will have more financial resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and fund critical, lifesaving emergency responses.

The International Development Association (IDA) is the part of the World Bank that helps the world's poorest countries.

"The bilateral debt-service suspension being offered will free up crucial resources for IDA countries to fund emergency responses to COVID-19," Malpass said.

"Nations should move quickly to substantially increase the transparency of all their governments' financial commitments. This will increase the confidence in the investment climate and encourage more beneficial debt and investment in the future," he added.

More than 310,000 people died due to the coronavirus pandemic and over 4.8 million people infected around the world. The US is the worst-hit country with over 91,900 deaths and more than 1.5 million COVID-19 cases, according to Johns Hopkins University.

# Case Filed Against Sonia Gandhi For Congress Tweet On PM-Cares Fund

**BENGALURU:** A case has been registered against Congress president Sonia Gandhi in Karnataka in connection with a tweet posted on the party's official handle alleging misuse of PM-CARES Fund, police said.

The Sagara town police in Shivamogga district registered the case on Wednesday based on a complaint by Praveen KV, who alleged that @INCIndia, the official Twitter handle of the Congress, tried to create distrust among masses with its tweet by spreading 'baseless charges.' The state Congress condemned the registration of the case.

The case has been registered under Sections 153 and 505 (1)(B) of



the IPC, which relate to wantonly provoking people and inciting them to commit offence against any other class or community.

The complainant alleged that on May 11 at 6 pm, the INC India Twitter account posted messages against Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging 'misuse' of PM-CARES Fund set up to enable people contribute to help the government fight against coronavirus and "similar distressing situations".

He sought legal action against Sonia Gandhi and Congress workers involved in handling the Twitter account.

Karnataka Congress spokesperson Subhash Agarwal condemned the registration of the case and said, "It is the role and responsibility of the opposition to question the government. Democracy will die if the opposition's voice is muzzled."

# India Rejects China's Allegations That Indian Troops Trespassed Across The LAC

**NEW DELHI:** India on Thursday rejected China's allegations that Indian troops crossed over to the Chinese side of the frontier in Ladakh and Sikkim, asserting that New Delhi has been taking responsible approach towards border management.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said it was the Chinese side that recently undertook activities hindering India's normal patrols in the areas.

"Any suggestion that Indian troops had undertaken

the Line of Actual Control in the India-China border areas and abide by it scrupulously. All Indian activities are entirely on the Indian side of the LAC," he said.

The LAC is the de-facto border between the two countries.

"In fact, it is the Chinese side that has recently undertaken activity hindering India's normal patrolling patterns. Indian side has always taken a very responsible approach towards border management. At the same time, we are deeply committed to



activity across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Western Sector or the Sikkim sector is not accurate," Srivastava said.

"Indian troops are fully familiar with the alignment of

ensuring India's sovereignty and security," he said.

China has accused India of unilaterally attempting to change the status of the un-demarcated border in Ladakh. PTI

# Work-From-Home Policy For Over 70% Firms May Continue For Six Months



**NEW DELHI:** More than 70% of companies are likely to continue the work-from-home (WFH) policy for a percentage of their total staff for the next six months to maintain social distancing and for business continuity, according to a survey by Knight Frank.

The property consultant surveyed over 230 executives who handle the corporate real estate portfolio in large companies across various sectors. Most respondents to the survey said their company produc-

tivity was not affected due to the forced WFH arrangement since the lockdown.

The nationwide lockdown was imposed from March 25 to control the spread of Covid-19. However, relaxations have been given from the beginning of this month, barring some hot spots.

The survey, however, found out that connectivity and distraction from family were two critical challenges faced by the companies' workforce while operating from remote locations. — PTI

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Cancer Society of Kashmir

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