

Maximum : 28°C
Minimum : 14°C
Humidity : 45%

SUNSET Today 07:34 PM
SUNRISE Tomorrow 05:22 AM

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FILMMAKER VIDHU VINOD CHOPRA RESPONDS TO ARBENA & ASIF

Eid Mubarak to you and everyone else in Kashmir! I read your open letter addressed to me about my film Shikara in the Kashmir Observer. I have read it multiple times. I liked the approach and the tone you have taken to present your views. You have already won the first battle of engaging someone in a conversation. This to me is the most important aspect of having a conducive dialogue. Let me tell you why I made Shikara. I started work on this movie post my mother's demise in 2007. She came on my request from Srinagar to Mumbai to attend the premier of Parinda in 1989 with a single suitcase. She could never return.....

.....PANORAMA
P5

News Digest

3 Injured In Tosa Maidan Blast

Srinagar: At least three people on Tuesday were injured when a shell exploded in the picturesque Tosa Maidan meadow of central Kashmir's Budgam district. "An accidental shell blast took place in Tosa Maidan (old artillery range) Khag area of Budgam. 3 persons are reported to be injured, who are being shifted to hospital," a police spokesperson said. He added that further details will be shared accordingly. According to the reports, the condition of one of the injured was life threatening. In past, the scenic Tosa Maidan meadow

Sopore Youth Hangs Self

Srinagar: A youth allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself inside his house in Sopore town of Baramulla district, reports said Tuesday. The 30-year-old Azad Ahmad of Mahrajpora, Sopore allegedly hanged himself inside his home during the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday. The youth was found hanging inside his room by his family members following which they rushed him the Sub-District hospital Sopore where doctors declared him brought dead. A police officer said that a case has been registered.

UBGL Grenades Recovered During CASO

Kupwara - Police and army on Tuesday recovered two UBGL grenades during a cordon and search operation here at Zunreshi area of Kralpora, reports said. They said that, upon receiving specific inputs, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by Army's 14 SIKHLI and Special Operations Group (SOG) of Police at ChaupanMohalla, Zunreshi. During the operation, they said, two UBGL grenades were recovered in the area.

3 'Stalkers' Arrested In Awantipora

Srinagar: Police on Tuesday claimed to have arrested three youth who were stalking and harassing a minor girl in south Kashmir's Awantipora. Irfan Ahmad Najar, Tawseef Ahmad Joo of Wuyan and Mudasir Ashraf of Chandhara were arrested by police on the basis of a complaint by the father of a minor girl alleging his daughter was being harassed and stalked by the trio since one month, a police spokesperson said.

Horse Sent To Home Quarantine In Rajouri

Rajouri: Amid panic and scare over the deadly COVID-19 outbreak, the authorities in Rajouri district have sent a horse to home quarantine for a period of four weeks after a man along with the horse managed to reach the district from Kashmir Valley on Tuesday, officials said. Officials said that the care takers of the horse have been directed to use all protective

'Prepare For War': Chinese President Directs Army

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday ordered the military to scale up the battle preparedness, visualising worst-case scenarios and asked them to resolutely defend the country's sovereignty.

Xi, 66 who is also the General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) and head of the two-million-strong military with prospects of life-long tenure in power, made the remarks while attending a plenary meeting of the delegation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and People's Armed Police Force during the current parliament session being held here.

Xi ordered the military to think about worst-case scenarios, scale up training and battle

preparedness, promptly and effectively deal with all sorts of complex situations and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

His comments came in the backdrop of the nearly 20-day standoff between India and China at the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Several areas along the LAC in Ladakh and North Sikkim have witnessed major military build-up by both the Indian and Chinese armies recently, in a clear signal of escalating tension and hardening of respective positions by the two sides even two weeks after they were engaged in two separate face-offs.

The nearly 3,500-km-long LAC is the de-facto border between the two countries.



Top Army Commanders To Discuss Ladakh Situation

Top commanders of the Indian Army will carry out an in-depth review of the tense standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in several areas of eastern Ladakh at a three-day conference beginning Wednesday. The commanders will also deliberate on the overall situation in Jammu

Ladakh Face-off: PM Discusses Situation With Top Military Brass

NEW DELHI: In the midst of escalating border tension between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held a meeting with National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and the three service chiefs with a focus on bolstering India's military preparedness to deal with external security challenges,



government sources said.

The military brass is learnt to have appraised Modi about the evolving situation in east-

ern Ladakh, though officials maintained that the agenda of the pre-scheduled meeting was to discuss the ambitious military reforms and ways to boost India's combat prowess.

The meeting came hours after the top four generals briefed Defence Minister Rajnath Singh about the situation in Pangong Tso lake, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldi where the

'What's Happening At Border'

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday asked the government to come clear on what is happening at the border with China in Ladakh and be more transparent. Amid a standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in Ladakh, Gandhi refused to say anything more till he understood the facts. "I think, on the India-China issue, we would like to see some more transparency on what is going on. It becomes very difficult for us to have a position without understanding the facts," he told reporters when asked about the issue at a virtual press conference. "The government should make it clear to the people of India,

PEOPLE IN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT SAID THE prime minister was briefed about the situation in Ladakh. There was no official comment or details available about the meeting.

90-Year-Old Man Dies Of Covid-19, Toll Rises To 24

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR- A 90-year-old man, who had tested positive for COVID-19, died at Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Soura Tuesday morning taking the coronavirus death toll in Jammu and Kashmir to 24, officials said.

A resident of Khaloora in Kulgam district of south Kashmir, the nonagenarian was referred to SKIMS Soura from GMC Anantnag yesterday and breathed his last around 5:45 a.m. today, officials said.

"The patient was suffering from pneumonia with chief complaints of fever and breathlessness," said Professor Farooq Jan, Medical Superintendent of the tertiary care hospital.

He said that his sampling was done at around 6:30 p.m. on Monday and it came out to be positive at 9:08 p.m. same day.



"The patient was then shifted to Isolation facility where he died this morning," Professor Jan added.

With the fatality, the death toll due to the virus has gone up to 24 in J&K. So far Srinagar district has highest number of the fatalities—6 followed by Anantnag, Baramulla and Kulgam with four deaths each while Budgam and Jammu have two each and one death each has been reported from Bandipora and Udhampur. (With GNS inputs)

4 Expecting Mothers, 8 Of A Family Among 90 Positive

Coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir showed no sign of decline as 91 more people on Tuesday tested positive for Covid-19, including four expecting mothers

India, Pak Troops Exchange Fire Along LoC

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The troops of India and Pakistan on Tuesday exchanged heavy gunfire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district.

Pakistan Army on Tuesday resorted to firing and shelling on forward areas along the LoC in Rajouri district, drawing befitting retaliation from Indian soldiers, a defence spokesperson said.

"Pakistan army initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by small arm firing with mortar shelling along LoC in Balakote sector in Poonch district early Tuesday morning", he said.

He said the Indian Army retaliated befittingly. The cross-border shelling between the



Bukhari Led Advisory Council Mooted For J&K: Report

KO Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR- Newly formed Apni Party leader Syed Altaf Bukhari is all set to be named as head of an Advisory Council for J&K.

Advisory Council, which will act as a virtual Cabinet will be announced soon, if reports emanating from New Delhi are to be believed. Usman Majid, Vijay Bakaya, Sunil Sharma, Sunil Sethi and Chowdhary Zulfikar Ali being sworn in as early as late June, according to a report by IANS.

Quoting former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha, P.D.T. Acharya IANS report said: "The advisory council in an UT helps the LG in the day-to-day administration. The real power is vested in the LG. The head of the advisory council cannot get the power of the CM. The advisory council also cannot make laws. The Constitu-

tion allows the President to administer UT through LG, but only the Parliament has the power to make law."

While as many as 10 to 12 members will be part of the council, its role may well be that of a Cabinet. Many former politicians from PDP, Congress and NC came on board and new Apni Party came into being with the hope that statehood will be restored. This appears to be part of a larger deal with the Centre that once the advisory council takes over the functioning of the UT, at an appropriate time the UT will be granted statehood once again, the report further claimed. "In fact, this is part of a larger deal with the state's political class", it added.

Quoting sources report said that Bukhari has been parked in Delhi and is likely to return to Srinagar to start consultations with party colleagues on the form and shape of the new altered polity of the UT.

QUOTING SOURCES REPORT SAID that Bukhari has been parked in Delhi and is likely to return to Srinagar to start consultations with party colleagues on the form and shape of the new altered polity of the UT.

Panel Submits Report To End Seniority Dispute Of KAS Officers



Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: A high-level official panel has submitted its report to the Jammu and Kashmir administration for mitigating the seniority dispute of a large number of Kashmir Administrative Service (KAS) officers as there have been allega-

tions of favouritism, illegal promotions and backdoor appointments, official sources said on Tuesday.

The administration had on March 2 constituted a committee to examine the seniority issue of the members of the Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service in a time-bound manner.

THE REPORT ON THE ISSUE OF THE seniority of a large number of the KAS officers has been submitted to the government for resolution of the decades-long dispute as per rules,

Concern In Kashmir's COVID Combatants: 'They Can Beat Us, Arrest Us...'

Auqib Javeed

KARAN NAGAR: Srinagar — On a hot and humid day in Srinagar, Kashmir's healthcare specialists quietly walked out of the Government Super Speciality hospital, Shereen Bagh and assembled outside, with posters in hand.

Donning protective gears, with black bands tied around their arms, these COVID frontline warriors—leading the valley's pandemic fight back from the front at the moment—were sulking over the street hostility.

"It's getting too much to handle now," said a fresh-faced doctor, holding a poster: "Dear Patients, they may... Stop Us, Beat Us, Strip Us, Arrest Us... but we will always

be there for you'. "If doctors continue to face such hostile street treatment," he continued, "it'll risk the entire healthcare system of the society at a time, when're in the middle of the health emergency."

These doctors were registering their protest against the alleged harassment of a cardiologist by SHO Zaidal on Monday.

Among other things, the harried doctor, named Syed Maqbool—whose harassment case evoked widespread condemnations on social media—alleged that the officer threatened to "strip him naked".

"No such behaviour is mandated or permitted," DGP J&K Police Dilbagh Singh sharply reacted



over the incident, so did IGP Kashmir, Vijay Kumar. "My sympathies are with Dr Syed Maqbool," the top cop contin-

ued, "and not with the police officer who is reported to have caused alleged inconvenience and mental hurt to him, have ordered probe."

But barely 24 hours after this condemned case, cops once again drew flak over another incident, involving this time, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Bandipora, Dr. Tajamul Hussain.

Dr. Hussain was stopped at Bandipora's Nusoo area on Tuesday, when he was on his way to inspect a Quarantine and Sample Collection Centres.

In a viral video, the fuming CMO can be seen rebuking the on-duty cops, saying that the whole health system will collapse due to this street interference.

"Don't you know we're playing with our lives for you people, and you're stopping us from performing our duties," Dr. Tajamul

Youth Held Over Deadly Ganderbal Attack

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Police have arrested a youth over last month's deadly attack on the Border Security Force (BSF) in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district that left two paramilitary men dead, reports said Tuesday.

Police station Soura have arrested Waseem Ahmed Ganai of Pandach during the course of ongoing investigations in the militant attack, reports said today. Ganai, who has been arrested several times on alleged charges of stone pelting on

government forces, has been slapped with Arms Act (2/27 IA Act) and Attempt to Murder (307) charges.

"He is being questioned while a case FIR number 48/2020 under section 307, 2/27 IA Act has been registered against him," a police official told news agency KNT.

In an audacious attack on May 20, unidentified bike borne militants attacked BSF in Pandach area of Ganderbal district killing two personnel. The militants also managed to flee from the spot with the rifles of the slain personnel.

From Front page...

Over 42K Passengers Ferried On 2Nd Day Of Flights Resumption, 1 Traveller Tests Covid-19 Positive, Airasia Flight Makes Emergency Landing

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Airlines ferried nearly 42,000 passengers on 325 flights till 5 pm on Tuesday as a traveller tested positive for coronavirus in perhaps the first case during the resumption of domestic air services and an AirAsia flight carrying 74 people made an emergency landing in Hyderabad.

The air carriers also resorted to cancellation of several flights on the second day of resumption of services due to truncated schedules following requests from several states owing to the coronavirus crisis posing difficulties to hundreds of passengers at several airports.

The number of cancellations was not immediately available though Tuesday's passenger load indicated more travellers taking to flights compared to Monday.

Airlines also began operating from Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday while flights will resume in West Bengal from Thursday that is expected to increase the passenger traffic.

Officials said several of the flights operated on Monday were

half empty.

IndiGo airline said one of the passengers who travelled on its Chennai-Coimbatore flight on Monday evening has tested positive for COVID-19.

The low-cost carrier said the passenger was sitting with all precautionary measures like gloves, mask and face shield and he is currently quarantined at a Coimbatore medical facility.

The 24-year-old man has been since shifted to the ESI Hospital for further treatment, officials said.

Though the other passengers in the flight tested negative, they are likely to be home quarantined for 14 days, they said. The exact number of passengers was not known but sources said it could be around 100.

Swab test results on Tuesday revealed that the 24-year-old man tested positive for the deadly virus. He was working in the room service wing of a star hotel in Chennai.

"The operating crew has been grounded and home quarantined for 14 days and we are in the process of notifying other passengers as per the government

guidelines, to ensure safety of our passengers and staff," the IndiGo airline said.

Domestic flights resumed on Monday after a day of engine shut down, the airline said.

Handling the situation calmly in a professional manner the crew landed at Shamshabad, as scheduled," its spokesperson said in a state-

ment. The airline is carrying out a detailed inspection of the aircraft and has informed the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) about the incident, it said, adding that it is assisting in the investigation to establish the cause.

Asserting that its pilots and crew are experienced and well trained to manage these situations, AirAsia India further said it would like to reiterate that Safety First is a core value and the safety of its guests and crew is the single most important criterion in every aspect of operations.

Like on Monday, a section of passengers who reached their airports on Tuesday were informed that their flights have been cancelled. Many people also vented their ire on social media.

Aarti Chaddha, a member of Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) social media team, had booked a seat on Tuesday's Mumbai-Chandigarh flight of IndiGo for her mother who had been stranded in Mumbai for the last two months.

This flight was cancelled and when Chaddha asked IndiGo about it on Twitter, the airline responded that the flight has been "impacted" due to the restrictions imposed by the Maharashtra government.

She said on Twitter on Tuesday, "Can we get the list of 25 flights listed to take off from Mumbai? Airlines are booking tickets, not sending cancellation messages, cancelling last minute, deducting the money."

The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in Delhi, which is India's largest, was scheduled to handle around 277 flights on Tuesday, officials said, adding that around 25 flights were cancelled during the day.

On May 23, the government officials had said they expected Delhi airport to handle around 380 flights per day from May 25. Mumbai airport, India's second busiest airport, handled just 44 flights on Tuesday transporting over 44,000 passengers. On Monday, it had handled 47 flights.

On Sunday night, the central government had clarified that Mumbai will handle a maximum of 50 flights per day from Monday.

The officials said the first flight on Tuesday to Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh landed from Bengaluru at 6.55 am, carrying 79 passengers. The Spicejet flight returned to Bengaluru with 68 passengers, they added.

At Vizag airport, the first flight landed from Bengaluru at 7 am. "At Vijayawada, four flights are of IndiGo, two each are of SpiceJet and Air India," they added.

Visakhapatnam airport is scheduled to handle eight flights on Wednesday, they said.

Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday. "Final report for the day will be prepared after details come in at midnight."

The AirAsia India flight from Hyderabad with 70 passengers on board developed a

technical snag during the flight, forcing the pilot to shut an engine before making the landing under emergency conditions at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Shamshabad on the outskirts of Hyderabad, airline sources said.

The flight landed at 1.30 PM as per schedule and the passengers for the onward journey to Bengaluru were accommodated in another flight, they said.

VT-IXC, operating as i51543 from Jaipur to Hyderabad, encountered a technical issue and carried out a precautionary en-

in the District Development Boards, and Vice Chairperson positions in the semi-autonomous corporations and boards.

Panel Submits Report To End Seniority Dispute... "The report on the issue of the seniority of a large number of the KAS officers has been submitted to the government for resolution of the decades-long dispute as per rules," the sources said.

As per the sources, the report has suggested a workable mechanism based on rules to finalise the seniority list of the officers of the Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service. The senior list of the officers should be prepared on the basis of year-wise vacancy while "backdoor appointees" should be placed at the bottom of that particular year, the report, according to the sources, said.

Those who do not possess the minimum qualification of graduation should be placed completely at the bottom of the list irrespective of the year of "backdoor appointee's empanelment", it has suggested.

An officer, who joined the administration after qualifying the KAS examination, said the file is now with the general administrative department (GAD) and all eyes are on the "seriousness and swiftness" of the GAD and the Chief Secretary.

There are clear cut directions from Lieutenant Governor Girish Chander Murmu to resolve the dispute once for all strictly as per the rules without any favouritism and pressure, the sources said.

The decision about examining the seniority issue afresh was taken by the Union Territory administration after numerous representations were made by the delegations of the KAS officers to the Lieutenant Governor and the Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam, they said.

The four-member committee shall work out the possible options for finalising the seniority list of KAS officers, appointed to the time scale with effect from January 1, 2004, to December 1, 2008, on normative basis and submit its report by March 31, 2020, the sources said.

Commissioner Secretary School Education Department; Secretary, Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction; Secretary GD and Secretary, Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, are the members of the committee.

The committee is of the opinion that seniority issue would not have figured had the Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service Rules 1979 been implemented in totality and without any arbitrariness, the sources said.

It has also been observed by the committee that at the "behest of certain influential or blue-eyed and backdoor officers of J&K Administrative Services, who were not eligible for the immediate benefit of the Rules of 1979, the injustice was done with the eligible officers", they said.

"As per the records, there are a large number of backdoor officers and those without basic qualification who have been inducted into KAS over the years under the political patronage," the sources said.

"Some of these backdoor and under qualified KAS officers sitting on prime posts in the administration were forwarded for their induction into IAS by totally bypassing rules and depriving senior KAS officers of their right," they said.

4 Expecting Mothers, 8 Of A Family Among 90 Positive

and eight members of a family, besides three foreign returned persons, taking the overall tally of infected across the Union Territory to 1759.

"91 new COVID-19 cases were detected in J&K. While 54 of them are from Jammu, 37 are from Kashmir," the officials said. Among fresh cases, 29 cases were reported from Ramban, 12 from Budgam, 10 from Jammu, seven from Srinagar, six from Baramulla, four each Bandipora, Ganderbal, Kathua & Poonch, three from Reasi, two each from Pulwama, Samba & Udhampur and one each from Kulgam & Kupwara, they said.

They said that 24 patients recovered and were discharged from different hospitals.

The number of confirmed cases has now reached 1,759, out of which 1,411 are in Kashmir, while 348 are in Jammu, the officials said.

The microbiology laboratory at the Chest Diseases hospital here confirmed 25 Covid-19 cases. Among them, 14 are from Baramulla, including 3 pregnant women—20-year-old from Sopore, 27-year-old from Tenggpora besides 35-year-old from main Baramulla—and 8 members of a family from Hardu Chilu—8-year-old girl and 3 women aged 25, 27 and 50 years and four men aged 20, 22, 27 and 53 years—while among others include 45-year-old from Wankara, 26-year-old from Dangerpora and 29-year-old from Tangmarg. Five of the cases were reported from Bandipora and included among others 20-year-old and 24-year-old men from Sumbal and 30-year-old man from Tulail Gurez.

Four cases were reported from Ganderbal and includes a pregnant woman—25-year-old and 23-year-old youth from Kangan besides 28-year-old man from Shuhama and 32-year-

Ladakh Face-off: PM Discusses Situation With...

Indian and Chinese troops were engaged in aggressive posturing for the last 20 days.

People in the military establishment said the prime minister was briefed about the situation in Ladakh. There was no official comment or details available about the meeting.

Official sources said NSA Doval has been closely monitoring the evolving situation along the LAC in Ladakh as well as in north Sikkim and Uttarakhand.

"China's strategy to put military pressure on India will not work. We want restoration of the status quo along the LAC," said an official on the condition of anonymity.

In the meeting, the top military brass is learnt to have apprised Modi about the implementation of key infrastructure projects along the LAC, the de-facto border with China.

Official sources said India will not stop infrastructure development projects in strategic areas along the nearly 3,500-km Sino-India border, notwithstanding China's well-coordinated efforts to stall them by attempting to vitiate the situation in areas like eastern Ladakh.

It is learnt that the defence minister has already conveyed to top military brass that there was no need for reviewing the implementation of any of the key projects along the LAC in Ladakh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand or in Arunachal Pradesh.

In view of the nearly 20-day standoff between the two sides, the Indian Army has significantly ramped up its presence in sensitive border areas in North Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh besides Ladakh to send across a message that India will not be wilting under any aggressive military posturing by China, the sources said.

The Chinese side has been particularly peeved at India laying a key road in the finger area of Pangong Tso Lake region besides another road connecting the Darbuk-Shayok-Daulat Beg Oldie road in Galwan Valley.

The situation in eastern Ladakh deteriorated after around 250 Chinese and Indian soldiers were engaged in a violent face-off on the evening of May 5 which spilled over to the next day before the two sides agreed to "disengage" following a meeting at the level of local commanders.

Over 100 Indian and Chinese soldiers were injured in the violence. The trigger for the incident was China's strong objection to the road being laid by India in the Finger area in Pangong Tso lake.

The incident in Pangong Tso was followed by a similar incident in North Sikkim on May 9.

Since then, Chinese military has increased its strength in Pangong Tso lake, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldie, and resorting to "aggressive patrolling" in these areas. The India Army is also carrying out similar exercise in the region, sources said.

India last week said the Chinese military was hindering normal patrolling by its troops and asserted that India has always taken a very responsible approach towards border management.

At a media briefing, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava also strongly refuted China's contention that the tension was triggered due to trespassing by Indian forces on the Chinese side.

India's response came two days after China accused the Indian Army of trespassing into its territory, claiming that it was an "attempt to unilaterally change the status" of the LAC in Sikkim and Ladakh.

On May 5, the Indian and Chinese army personnel clashed with iron rods, sticks, and even resorted to stone-pelting in the Pangong Tso lake area 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.

The troops of India and China were engaged in a 73-day standoff in Doklam tri-junction in 2017 which even triggered fears of a war between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

In the meeting with the prime minister, sources said, Gen Rawat apprised him about the implementation of the recommendations by the Lt Gen (ret'd) Shekatkar committee for military modernisation.

The government has accepted almost all recommendations of the panel including ways to bolster border infrastructure.

Top Army Commanders To Discuss Ladakh Situation

and Kashmir besides delving into issues having national security implications, they said.

However, the main focus will be on the situation in eastern Ladakh where Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an eyeball-to-eyeball face-off in Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldie, the sources said.

Both India and China have significantly increased their presence in all sensitive areas in the region, signalling that the confrontation may not see a resolution anytime soon. There have

been efforts by both sides to resolve it through talks. The situation in eastern Ladakh deteriorated after around 250 Chinese and Indian soldiers were engaged in a violent face-off on the evening of May 5 which spilled over to the next day before the two sides agreed to "disengage" following a meeting at the level of local commanders.

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The incident in Pangong Tso was followed by a similar incident in north Sikkim on May 9.

"The apex level leadership of the Indian Army will brainstorm on the current emerging security and administrative challenges and chart the future course for Indian Army," Army Spokesperson Col Aman Anand said, without elaborating.

The commanders' conference was originally scheduled to be held from April 13-18, but it was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

It will now be held in two phases. The first phase will be from May 27 to 29 and the second one in the last week of June, Col Anand said.

"India has handled the situation in a mature way. The commanders are expected to have detailed deliberations including on the strategy to confront China's aggressive behaviour," an official said on the condition of anonymity.

India last week said that it has always taken a very responsible approach towards border management but the Chinese military was hindering normal patrolling by its troops.

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The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long LAC. 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 tranquility 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.

'What's Happening At Border'...

what exactly is happening on the border. We are hearing different stories so, I don't want to go into conjecture, but it is important that the government of India makes it clear, what is happening on the border so that people can understand and have a proper position," he said.

"I leave it to the wisdom of the government. But, transparency is needed. We should know what is happening, but the country does not know," he said.

He said till the time there is more transparency on the issue, it would not be proper on his part to comment.

"If there is more information, only then can I express my views," he said.

There has been a standoff between Indian and Chinese troops at the border in Ladakh, amid build-up of troops on both sides since early May.

The external affairs ministry has, however, rejected China's claims of Indian troops trespassing the Chinese border and have instead accused Beijing of doing so.

Bukhari Led Advisory Council Mooted For J&K:..

party colleagues on the form and shape of the new altered polity of the UT. Report added that many leaders of the party may get positions



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She said on Twitter on Tuesday, "Can we get the list of 25 flights listed to take off from Mumbai? Airlines are booking tickets, not sending cancellation messages, cancelling last minute, deducting the money."

The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in Delhi, which is India's largest, was scheduled to handle around 277 flights on Tuesday, officials said, adding that around 25 flights were cancelled during the day.

On May 23, the government officials had said they expected Delhi airport to handle around 380 flights per day from May 25. Mumbai airport, India's second busiest airport, handled just 44 flights on Tuesday transporting over 44,000 passengers. On Monday, it had handled 47 flights.

On Sunday night, the central government had clarified that Mumbai will handle a maximum of 50 flights per day from Monday.

The officials said the first flight on Tuesday to Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh landed from Bengaluru at 6.55 am, carrying 79 passengers. The Spicejet flight returned to Bengaluru with 68 passengers, they added.

At Vizag airport, the first flight landed from Bengaluru at 7 am. "At Vijayawada, four flights are of IndiGo, two each are of SpiceJet and Air India," they added.

Visakhapatnam airport is scheduled to handle eight flights on Wednesday, they said.

old from Saloora while two were from Pulwama—21-year-old youth from Armulla and 20-year-old from Telangam.

At SKIMS's, 19 samples out of 471 came out positive for virus. Those infected with the virus include 12 from Budgam—seven from Magam, four from Soibug and one Narbal—six from Srinagar and include three from Alamgiri Bazar and two from Hawal while one sample pertains to a resident from Kathua.

Three among the positive cases were passengers of flight from Dubai. They hail from Kathua, Narbal and Srinagar.

There are 902 active cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in J&K—647 in Kashmir and 255 in Jammu—and 833 (743 from Kashmir and 90 from Jammu) patients have recovered, according to officials.

The J&K has witnessed 24 COVID-19 (21 from Kashmir, 3 from Jammu) deaths so far, including the one that took place on Tuesday.

India, Pak Troops Exchange Fire Along LoC..

two sides was going on when last reports were received, the officials said.

However, there was no immediate report of any casualty during the shelling.

Concern In Kashmir's COVID Combatants:...

can be heard telling the cops in the video. "Can't you see the vehicle belongs to Health Department? How do you think you are?"

However, Rahul Malik, SSP Bandipora, said, "It was a routine check, but unfortunately, CMO got agitated. He was however pacified and matter was resolved amicably."

At Srinagar's silent protest site on Tuesday, the doctors expressed their anguish over the escalating situation. Some of them said they were putting up extra efforts to ensure the safety of the society up against the 'invisible enemy'.

To ensure their perpetual presence in hospitals during pandemic, many of them had even skipped the festival like Eid recently.

"The prevailing situation has become a tightrope walk for us," said a protesting doctor.

"While most of us are already distressed, as we stay away from our families due to fear of infection, it's equally troubling to see how we're being treated on streets now."

3 Injured In Tosa Maidan Blast...

has served as a firing for the army. Nearly 70 people have been killed and dozens injured due to the explosions of littered shells in the meadow, which was vacated by army in April 2014.

Meanwhile, Tosa Maidan Bachav Front (TBF) has demanded a probe into the blast at the Meadow declared safe zone by the government earlier.

In a statement issued here, TBF spokesperson Molvi Maqbool said that it was for the second time that a blast has occurred in the area declared as safe and sanitized zone.

"The affected area in which the blast took place was always seen safe, even when the army drills were stipulated in firing practice," he said.

TBF also demanded conclusion of the probe ordered into 2018 blast in the meadow.

3 'Stalkers' Arrested In Awantipora...

"They have been shifted to Police Station Khrew where they remain in custody," the police spokesperson said.

He said that a case FIR No. 23/2020 under relevant sections of law stands registered in the Police Station Khrew.

Horse Sent To Home Quarantine In Rajouri...

gears while dealing with the animal.

"A team of police on Tuesday late evening intercepted a man returning from Kashmir Valley via Mughal road who was also carrying his horse with him," official sources said, adding that the man was taken into medical screening center while the authorities were in a fix to decide about the horse.

They said that Thanamandi Tehsildar, Anjum Khatak roped in the veterinary experts to get their views on the horse. "Majority of the veterinary experts claimed horse doesn't pose any threat as it is not a potential carrier of Coronavirus, but, authorities decided to send the horse to home quarantine as precautionary measure," official sources told KNO.

DAK to hold "black band" protest against harassment of Today

Observer New Service

Srinagar:Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Tuesday announced black band protest across Jammu and Kashmir following back to back episodes in which doctors were manhandled, harassed and not allowed to reach their duties amid COVID-19 outbreak.

According to a statement, on Tuesday, Chief Medical Officer, Bandipora Dr Tajamul Hussain was stopped by police while he was on way to inspect a quarantine centre and sample collection centre in Bnadipora.President DAK, Dr Suhial Naik said. He said that in the past 48 hours, three doctors who were on their duty, were harassed and manhandled by police. "We are announcing a one day black band protest on Wednesday (27 May) against the access by government forces against the healthcare providers," he said.

Naik appealed doctors, paramedics, and other related staff of J&K to wear black bands on Wednesday to protest the injustice meted out with the health care professionals. "The families of doctors are already uncertain due to COVID-19 threat. Now the families of doctors are more concerned following the unfortunate incidents in the past four days," he said.



cerned following the unfortunate incidents in the past four days," he said. DAK also appealed the government especially the law enforcement agencies to implement t the ordinance recently

framed by President of India to safeguard the frontline workers. "Unfortunately the law enforcement agencies are violating the rules and regulations and are harassing the doctors which is

highly unfortunate," it said.General Secretary DAK, Dr Ovais H Dar said that the doctors body is in hand to hand with every doctor across Jammu and Kashmir.

"The three episodes in which doctors were harassed by the government forces need to be investigated thoroughly and action should be initiated against those involved in it," he said.

DAK has expressed serious concern saying that that are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and unfortunately their colleagues are being harassed and not allowed to perform their professional obligations.Earlier, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India asked States and Union Territories to provide security to healthcare professionals noting that incidents of violence were reported from different parts of India against healthcare workers.

"But in JK it is reverse. Rather than providing security they are harassing, beating, and not allowing doctors to perform their duties," it said adding that GoI guidelines need to be implemented.DAK said that at this time, any such incident of violence against healthcare professionals would create a sense of insecurity amongst the entire healthcare community.

CAR-CITH issues advisory to farmers

Agencies

Srinagar: ICAR-Central Institute of Temperate Horticulture has issued an advisory for farmers in Kashmir.

A CITH statement to news agency reads, "for management of scab and insects in apple crop following schedule is recommended".

Scab management: In case of apple, for management of scab, other diseases and pests, farmers are advised to adhere the plant protection schedule developed by Department of Horticulture of respective states at different fruit development stages.

Hail storm: In order to recover the fruits from hail damage, spray the hail affected orchards with urea(500g) and Mancozeb (300 gm) in 100 L of water.

Do's and Don'ts: Whosoever has sprayed any one of the fungicide earlier should not repeat the same because of systemicity of fungicides.

During spraying take proper protection measures like wear goggles, gloves, masks, apron etc.

If Use stickers/adjuvants for better efficacy of fungicides (except Dodine) especially during rainy days

In case of heavy rains within 12 hours of spray the spray is to be repeated immediately (if adjuvants/stickers are not used).

Anybody is feeling sick, cough, sneezing, fever etc. kindly consult doctor rather than work in orchards.

Mayor visits Airport, appreciates the arrangements put in place

Srinagar: Mayor Srinagar Junaid Azeem Mattu, along with Commissioner SMC Gazanfar Ali and other Officers on Tuesday Visited Srinagar Airport and appreciated the steps being taken to ensure impeccable screening and processing of inbound travellers as the first domestic flights were made operational after suspending all the flights due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Mayor appreciated the arrangements being made by the Government that has constituted team headed by Principal Secretary to Housing and Urban development department Mr Deeraj Gupta,Divisional Commissioner Srinagar ,P.K Pole, Secretary Tourism Zubair Ahmed at Sheikhul Alam (RA) international airport.

Various officers from District Budgam and District Srinagar were also present on the occasion.

Mattu interacted with the screening/Facilitation teams from different departments for different processes to take place and regarding testing of passengers with health department.

He has directed SMC to take every possible step and adopt all measures to ensure quality sanitisation and protocols at the Airport where flights shall start expecting now..

SMC in this regard have constituted four teams for sanitation, Sterilisation and smooth functioning of decontamination tunnels said Commissioner SMC.

Mr Ali said that Team A comprising of eight officials assigned with the task of sterilisation shall ensure sterilisation of each and every place and the baggage carried by the passengers on Airport, where as team B comprising of six officials have been assigned task of sanitation and for that purpose 20 waste bins have been

provided for collection of waste from Srinagar Airport which shall be disposed of as per the protocol of solid waste management rules.

Similarly task of smooth functioning of decontamination tunnel installed by SMC has been given to team C headed by five officials..

They shall make sure that each passenger while leaving from Srinagar shall pass through decontamination tunnel to ensure their hygiene and safety

Director Airport Authority in this regard has requested SMC for installation of one more decontamination tunnel that SMC shall shortly be installing said Commissioner SMC Mr Gazanfar Ali.

Lastly team D shall sterilise all SRTC vehicles at TRC and will report activities of sterilisation of the buses to Nodal officer Airport Shahid Asraar

Advocate General chairs meeting regarding expeditious disposal of pending litigations

Srinagar:Advocate General, D C Raina today chaired a meeting regarding expeditious disposal of pending litigations of the UT of J&K, here at the Civil Secretariat.

Besides, Secretary to Government Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Achal Sethi, the meeting was attended by the Special Secretaries, Additional Secretaries, Deputy Legal Remembrancer/Senior Law Officers/Public Law Officers and the Legal Assistants posted in different departments at Jammu.

All the Law Officers were directed to compile the information of Court cases within three days and forward the same to the office of the Advocate General and

Secretary to Government Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

The detail of the cases, which have become infructuous and the cases worth to be contested on its merits was also sought.

The Advocate General stressed upon the officers to file replies/statement of facts and Letter Patent Appeals with promptitude, so as to avoid frequent personal appearance of Administrative Secretaries.

The officers were directed to flag the important cases and ensure that they are attended to with priority and try to get them disposed of in a time bound manner.

The Advocate General made it clear

to the officers present in the meeting that there is a need to change the age old system and the performance of the law officers will be taken note of. "The working of the Law officers will be reviewed at different levels and those officers who will perform their duties promptly and in time bound manner will be rewarded/appreciated," the Advocate General said.

The Secretary Law, Justice and PA assured the Advocate General that all the law officers will come up to the expectations of the Government and will perform their duties more diligently and provide the information within three days positively as directed by him.

Essentials At Their Doorsteps

E commerce Portal brings ease for people

Agencies

Srinagar: Amid ongoing coronavirus and the extension of lockdown in UT of Jammu & Kashmir, one of the biggest issues among people is where and how to buy the grocery and other essential items? As due to the surge in demand the stores are either going empty or opening for a few hours only.

But there is good news for the people of Jammu And Kashmir as FZS Ecommerce private limited has launched an android application under the banner of Saharmall for the convenience of general public. It can be downloaded at https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.vibcart.vibcart&hl=en_US

The app was launched by Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr Shahid Iqbal Chaudhary on May 13, 2020.

The App is optimized for 2G Network and works smooth on 2G. Shoppers can purchase the routine household products online and get it delivered same day.

We are getting amazing feedback and encouragement from the shoppers. We are getting new as well as repeated orders and the demand is very promising, one of the owners said.

He further said we are adhering to the highest standards of safety to ensure our customers remains safe while having a delightful experience of getting essentials at the doorsteps within the shortest possible time.

When asked about the product range available, Currently we have around 500 products and we are adding new products every day. A dedicated team is analyzing shoppers demand and keeps on adding new products every day.

SAHARMALL has a full-fledged call center in place (which can handle multiple calls from shoppers simultaneously) where customer can place their orders in case of internet gag.

About Same day delivery he said "we have adequate manpower available and we make sure to deliver the order same day if placed in business working hours. We have delivered around 90% orders same day so far.

Srinagar district administration helped us a lot by providing Movement passes to our delivery boys / operational Staff and their NIC team was also helpful. We are very thankful to the administration especially DC Srinagar, Dr Shahid Iqbal Chaudhary, co-owner said.

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 notwithstanding 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-112040100002129 (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

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; PAMPURE: 01933-294132; PATTAN: 01954-293507; QAZIGUND: 01951-296153. HIGHWAY STATUS: Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open); Mughal Road - (Open); Srinagar- Leh- (Open). PRAYERS: FAJR 3: 43; ZUHR 12: 28; ASR 5:24; Magrib 7:36; ISHA 9:13. HIJRI CALENDAR: 04 Shawwal 1441.

This Day In History: 1940- World War II: In the Le Paradis massacre, 97 soldiers from a Royal Norfolk Regiment unit are shot after surrendering to German troops. 1941- Allied troops begin evacuating Crete. 1941- FDR declares state of emergency due to Germany's sinking of Robin Moor. 1942- Hitler orders 10,000 Czechs murdered. 1944- Allies land on Biak, Indonesia (operation Horlicks). 1944- Japanese advance in Hangzhou China. 1951- Chinese Communists force Dalai Lama to surrender his army to Beijing. 1958- Maiden flight of the F-4 Phantom II. 1977- 2 Boeing 747s by Pan Am & KLM collide in Canary Islands, killing 582. 1980 - South Korean police ends people's uprising; 2,000 killed. 1980 - The Gwangju Massacre: South Korean airborne and army troops retake city of Gwangju from civil militias, killing at least 207 possibly many more. Assassination Attempt. 1981 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalatinsk USSR. 1985 - Britain agrees to return Hong Kong to China in 1997. 1988 - Senate ratified a treaty eliminating medium-range nuclear missiles. 1991 - Austrian Boeing 767-300 explodes at Bangkok, 223 die. 1999- The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia indicts Slobodan Milosevic and four others for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Kosovo. 2006 - Earthquake strikes Java, Indonesia at 5:53:58 AM local time (22:53:58 UTC May 26) devastating Bantul and the city of Yogyakarta, killing over 6,600 people.

From KO Archives: Pak Tells Hurriyat 'Come and talk to us'. ISLAMABAD - Pakistan today extended an invitation to all Hurriyat leaders, including hard-line separatist leader Saeed Ali Geelani to visit the country and Pakistan Controlled Kashmir (PcK) on June 2 by the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus. "We have extended an invitation to Hurriyat leaders" to visit Pakistan on the bus on June 2. The people of Pakistan and government and the people of Pakistan Administered Jammu and Kashmir, have been anxiously awaiting the arrival of the Hurriyat leaders to Pakistan and we hope that they would be able to make it this time. "A very warm welcome awaits the Hurriyat leaders," Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani said at a media briefing here. To a question, he said the invitation to Hurriyat leaders included Geelani and discounted reports that Pakistan may not extend invitation to him due to his hardline stance on the peace process. Geelani is well regarded in Pakistan and he has been extended the invitation along with others, he said. Asked whether India was consulted about the invitation bang extended to Hurriyat leaders, Jilani said "there were indications from the Indian side that they" would not create any hurdles. Hope all of them (Hurriyat leaders) would be allowed to travel," he added. Pakistan sees "no problem" in their travel to Muzaffarabad, the capital of PcK as the aim of the Kashmir bus service is (o facilitate the travel of Kashmiris, he said. Jilani declined to give a direct answer to questions whet her a similar invitation has been extended to Peoples Democratic Party chief Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah, leader of the National Conference. "We consider Hurriyat leaders as the legitimate representatives of Kashmiris," he said in response to a question. asked how the Hurriyat leaders would be permitted to enter Pakistan given that the agreement on the bus service had stipulated that special permits would be issued only to visit PcK and parts of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state.. Jilani said those Kashmiris who have been travelling by bus to Muzaffarabad were also being permitted to visit parts of Pakistan like Rawalpindi and Islamabad to see relatives. Special permission was being issued for those travelling by the bus to PcK to visit Pakistan by local officials and a similar permission would be issued to Hurriyat leaders. There is no bar on the bus passengers to take special permission to visit parts of Pakistan. The Hurriyat leaders are welcome to visit any part of Pakistan they like," he said. Jilani, however, parried questions whether the invitation was pan of efforts to involve the Kashmiri leaders in a trilateral dialogue. (PTI) (Kashmir Observer, 27 May, 2005)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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Fight Covid-19, not people

On Monday, a senior cardiologist Dr Syed Maqbool was allegedly beaten by police and "detained illegally" for around eight hours when he was on way to work. The incident rightly stunned Dr Maqbool. He can't believe that he was humiliated and hauled away to police station at a time when all he was doing was going to his duty. The case of Wadoo is telling: here is a doctor who is putting his life at risk in the ongoing fight against coronavirus pandemic but instead of treating him as our hero as is done all over the world we are insulting them.

Earlier, a renowned sportsman Mehraj-u-din Wadoo was allegedly abused and detained in similar circumstances. He was going to meet his ailing mother when the incident happened. Wadoo said that that the police spoke rudely about his mother saying let her die.

There is nothing exceptional about the two incidents. They became news as the persons involved were a doctor and a well-known sportsman respectively. The cases related to common men don't generally become a news. But Dr Maqbool's and Wadoo's cases have helped spotlight the instances of excess in police handling of the ongoing crisis. This almost gives an impression that the government is grappling with the pandemic like a counter-insurgency operation.

True, J&K administration has been fighting separatist militancy and the street protests for the past thirty years. In the process, it has put together a vaunted counter-insurgency military machine, arguably the best in the country. It has an elaborate security apparatus at its command comprising police, military and paramilitaries, each armed with the latest intelligence gathering tech tools. This decades-long expertise in dealing with militancy has not only shaped the administration's worldview but also how it solves the problems at hand.

In the ongoing fight against the pandemic, the security efforts have thus become more prominent than the healthcare related measures. It is almost as if the government thrives in strengthening the curbs on people, no doubt for valid reasons, but a part of it comprising the extreme measures like harassing and humiliating the people is overshadowing the good effort too.

That said, the government doesn't need to micromanage the public life to ensure people do not contract COVID-19. The problem with this approach is that for all the all-encompassing powers of a modern government it can't be ubiquitous and omnipotent. It has no option but to trust the people to do the right thing. People need to be sufficiently informed about the disease and urged to follow the precautions and they will certainly obey the advice. Their powerful incentive to do so is that it is in their own interest.

OTHER OPINION

Ease Of Learning

The central Home Ministry is yet to issue a timeline for the reopening of schools and for almost two months now, the classroom has been virtual. School education has been jolted out of its conventional ways by an unprecedented disruption. Many other countries embraced massive open online courses (MOOCs) years ago, and it shouldn't have taken a global pandemic to force Indian education to go online. But on the digital superhighway, as a series in this newspaper showed, mileage varies in a country with a yawning digital divide and no social security architecture. The level of success, across classes and income levels, is determined by two axes – the ease of digital access and the ability of parents to support learning at home. Earlier, enterprising children could succeed despite the poverty and illiteracy of parents because the classroom provided an enabling environment. But now the poor are disconnected and irrespective of background, some children cannot relate to the online classroom, and many more are losing out on midday meals. If education remains online-only, millions could suffer a loss of opportunity, at the expense of future national productivity.

The physical classroom does not only impart the syllabus. Children are also socialised, and there is an element of sport and play. However, while Pythagoras' theorem and Eratosthenes' sieve may be readily transmitted in the digital classroom, the matrix for socialisation is not replicated on an LCD screen. Parents have felt pressed, too, having to support their children's classes while working from home themselves. Now that they are returning to the workplace, without reliable day-care facilities, both work and schooling could be compromised. Also, in the public interest, medical professionals in the UK and Europe argue that the role of children in transmission must be understood to arrive at a full epidemiological picture, and this can only happen when schools reopen.

The Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti has approached the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and other educational organisations await instructions from state governments. Schools may reopen in a staggered manner, with hygiene and distancing protocols in place, and induction should be contingent on testing. Perhaps residential institutions like the Navodayas should lead, since they can seal the perimeter and do not run the continuing risk of spreading presented by daily student traffic. The Centre should issue a timeline soon, because as in other spheres, despite the virus, life must go on in the classroom – with maximum caution.

The Indian Express

Decisions of Kashmir University and Student Sufferings

BASIT FAROOQ AND AABID MUSHTAQ

Education promotes individual freedom, empowerment and yields important developmental benefits. The academic life of a student starts from school and almost ends at the university level. A student's life is defined by the grades, performances in exams and finally by the degree he or she acquires. However, accomplishing these goals isn't easy for a student in this part of the world as it involves lot of challenges, stages and hurdles. A student has to face emotional imbalances in schools, college and universities and this is true about almost every student studying in the world but the case of students in Kashmir is unique due to the prevalent situations and disturbed environment. A student's emotional and real life experience in the educational institutions has an important impact on his grades and academic life and students in Kashmir go through trauma and distress every year. The educational institutions in Kashmir are most of the time closed due to frequent clampdowns and strikes for months together. As reported by Indiaspend, Kashmir lost 207 working days in the year 1991 and 112, 130 and more than 130 working days in the year 2010, 2016 and 2019 respectively (accounting for nearly 60% of total working days). Despite all this, the students in Kashmir have been trying to get back to their normal class work and academic life but, there is a limit to everything.

Due to Covid-19, educational institutions were shut across the world; and every country is trying to save the time of its students by promoting online education. India too has started this initiative and it has been adopted by the educational institutions in Kashmir as well. But, the infrastructural and technical barriers are always to be kept in mind while starting these initiatives. The internet facilities in Kashmir are always down and as reported by internet tracker website, there was an internet shutdown in Kashmir since August 2019 till March 4th for 213 days and even after that internet has been snapped in Kashmir districts more than 10 times and it's not certain whether the internet service in Kashmir will continue in future or not. The administration has restored low speed 2g internet facilities and but running online classes on this service is a futile exercise. Students who



Students aren't able to join online classes on the one hand and on the other the university is planning to hold examinations of present semesters on the basis of online classes, which majority of the students are either not able to attend due to low speed or in many cases due to absence of internet.

tried to attend such virtual classes haven't understood a single word due to low network connectivity and buffering of videos. The University of Kashmir is however mulling to hold online classes continuously and has provisionally promoted students to their next semesters even without completing their syllabus in previous semesters through regular modes and withholding the pending exams. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued recommendations to all universities in India directing them that if situation doesn't improve till June 15 then universities should promote their students on the basis of internal assessment and assignments, which was later also recommended by Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD). The students have been asking for the implementation of same guidelines from the university authorities in Kashmir. However the authorities seem to be acting arbitrary on the issue and do not pay any heed to the student pleas. The students are left in distress and a peculiar situation while the university is directing them to continue with classes when even most of the students find it difficult to have access to internet. The students in Kashmir have gone through trauma when clampdown was imposed for 4 months without break and now due to Covid-19 the institutions have been closed again, increasing the mental agony of the student community.

The Controller Examination KU, recently in an interview an-

nounced that there won't be any mass promotion of students. He was relying on the point that University of Kashmir is A+ University graded by NAAC and therefore its not in the interest of students to give them mass promotion. However, the authorities need to understand that there is a difference between promoting students on the basis of internal assessment and viva on assignments than simple mass promotion, and the present interests of the students demand same. The University officials have said, that they will hold exams in the month of June or July while practicing social distance norms as recommended by the WHO and UGC. This has created more confusion among the students as they don't know which semester they should focus on and prepare for. It's not practically possible to continue with two semesters simultaneously. The situation related to Covid-19 is deteriorating day by day and due to this uncertainty it is difficult that the university could hold pen and paper exams in the month of June or July. In such a situation the university would again want its students to continue with their two semesters simultaneously adding stress and much pressure about the academics and that only will devastate the students. The announcement made by the university has thrown students into quandary and they are expressing deep anguish about the decisions made by the university. Students aren't able to join on-

line classes on the one hand and on the other the university is planning to hold examinations of present semesters on the basis of online classes, which majority of the students are either not able to attend due to low speed or in many cases due to absence of internet. And those who attend aren't able to understand due to poor connectivity and unfamiliar experience to have classes online. The university might be thinking and acting on the line to save time of students and provide them degrees on time but a student is to be shaped and mentored while pursuing degree and not to be given a simple paper in hand which will have no value and will be of no use, if he or she hasn't learned core principles about the courses within the campus and colleges.

The basic point is, the mental health of students in Kashmir is deteriorating due to these situations and no one seems to be concerned about it. Students aren't machines who would respond to the inputs and demands of the university; the University is for the students and not vice-versa but sadly opposite seems to be true. It is a two way process and genuine concerns and demands of students need to be taken on board, which in the present case reflect in the guidelines of the UGC. A student's life is defined by what he experiences in his college and university and if students are exposed to emotional torture and psychological distress then how do we expect defined and well furnished products coming out of universities. An academic institution has to think from the point of view of students as well and give primacy to their interests, no doubt, the university has always thought about its students but these situations demand more responsibility from the authorities and demand reasonable decisions from the authorities.

The university must promote students in their present semesters on the basis of their internal assessments in order to give them a clear way ahead and hold offline classes for upcoming semesters when the situation will normalise, otherwise, the chaos and confusion created in the minds of students will continue and it will have bad repercussions at a larger level.

The Authors are students of Law at University of Kashmir and can be mailed at Basitfarooq418@gmail.com and aabiddar299@gmail.com

Citizens Of The World, Reunite!



NANCY BIRDSALL

The coronavirus pandemic has plunged the world into a dangerous state of disequilibrium, in which the siren call of populist nationalism and the clear, compelling necessity of global cooperation and collective action are locked in (literally) mortal combat. Sadly, nationalism is winning so far. But global-minded citizens everywhere can, and must, fight back – starting in the United States.

In the decades following World War II, America played the role of (mostly) benign global hegemon. Its economic and military supremacy gave it a clear interest in establishing and maintaining the rules of the game for international cooperation and collective action. For that reason, the US took the lead in establishing institutions such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (formerly the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade).

But with US power and influence now waning, at least relative to China, President Donald Trump's administration has reverted to isolationism. With minimal domestic political pushback, Trump has introduced aggressive anti-immigration measures, pursued a trade war with China, and refused to collaborate with G7 allies and the G20 to address

the pandemic's economic fallout.

With the US missing in action on global collective action, other governments have felt emboldened to adopt similar beggar-thy-neighbor responses to the virus, such as restricting exports of food and face masks, and rushing to capture the intellectual property and profits of an effective COVID-19 vaccine.

Meanwhile, Trump's decision to freeze US funding for the WHO in the midst of the pandemic is less important financially than as a symbolic expression of his "America First" doctrine. The irony for America is that Trump's spit-in-the-world's-face anti-globalism is mirrored in deepening polarization at home, where the pandemic is exposing and amplifying pre-existing inequalities.

Unfortunately, there is currently nowhere else to look for international leadership. The post-Brexit European Union is itself struggling with inward-looking nationalism among its member states, and has been unable to agree on even modest burden-sharing to accommodate refugees. And the bloc remains deadlocked on the question of issuing joint "coronabonds" to help rescue its own economies in the current crisis.

China under President Xi Jinping, meanwhile, lacks the instinct and international credibility needed to drive global cooperation. To be sure, China is grasping at a leadership role. It has joined other G20 creditors in suspending low-income countries' debt service to all official bilateral creditors – among whom China is one of the biggest and most expensive, owing to its Belt and Road Initiative – and has pledged \$2 billion to the WHO. But at the same time, China is exploiting the pandemic by flexing

its muscles in Hong Kong and the South China Sea. Its positive steps are more about competing with the US than about encouraging international collaboration.

The kneejerk nationalist response to the pandemic is not surprising. Although the coronavirus, like climate change, knows no borders, most people identify themselves as citizens of their own country. We are almost all nationalists at heart – or patriots, if you prefer.

Moreover, it is hard to imagine an alternative to the current international order based on sovereign states. Historians generally view the creation of the current state system as a key contributor to a less violent world in which more people lead better lives than ever before. Indeed, the economist Dani Rodrik has argued that the nation-state is a prerequisite for liberal democracy, and democracy could not possibly work at the global level.

At the same time, however, the pandemic has reminded us that we are heavily dependent on cooperation among states. Such cooperation can be explicit, as with trade agreements, or implicit, such as in managing global financial risk or meeting the goals of the Paris climate agreement. Today, a failure to collaborate in tackling COVID-19 will threaten all of us, because everyone is vulnerable to the virus until no one is.

Likewise, combating the destructive nationalism personified by Trump requires that good citizens of every country push their governments to cooperate and support multilateral institutions, and work to capture the benefits of adhering to agreed international rules and norms. In this century, as never before, such efforts would be in the interest of all countries and their citizens.

Fortunately, identifying primarily as a citizen of one's own country does not exclude identifying also as a global citizen. In the late 2000s, for example, more than 80% of survey respondents in 17 developed countries agreed that they had "a moral responsibility to work to reduce hunger and severe poverty in poor countries."

We all benefit from the work of the WHO, the IMF, the G7, and the G20, and when these organizations falter, it is not their weakness we should blame, but rather the failure of their most powerful member countries to keep them strong. And just as the pandemic is creating a sense of solidarity among US citizens, it can teach people everywhere to make the mental leap beyond their national borders and embrace the idea of global solidarity.

US citizens must take the lead in this effort. Americans are accustomed to seeing their government lead during global crises – as President George W. Bush's administration did in combating AIDS, and as Barack Obama's administration did in tackling the global financial crisis and the Ebola epidemic. They must now demand that the Trump administration combat the pandemic with a strategy that balances America's national interests with its indispensable international reach and capacity.

The US is no longer the global hegemon, but its leadership is still the world's best option in the current crisis. If ever there was a time to put that proposition to the test, it is now. -By arrangement with the Project Syndicate

Nancy Birdsall is President Emerita and a senior fellow at the Center for Global Development.

Filmmaker Vidhu Vinod Chopra Responds to Arbeen & Asif

Dear Arbeen and Asif,

Eid Mubarak to you and everyone else in Kashmir!

I read your open letter addressed to me about my film *Shikara* in the Kashmir Observer. I have read it multiple times. I liked the approach and the tone you have taken to present your views. You have already won the first battle of engaging someone in a conversation. This to me is the most important aspect of having a conducive dialogue.

Let me tell you why I made *Shikara*. I started work on this movie post my mother's demise in 2007. She came on my request from Srinagar to Mumbai to attend the premier of *Parinda* in 1989 with a single suitcase. She could never return. I have seen the sorrow in her eyes as she longed for her home. *Shikara* is a tribute to my mother. It is my mother's story, it is my story. It is deeply personal and it is perhaps my most important work in my 40 years in the film industry. I urge you to see a 3 minute YouTube Video titled "*Shikara: Tribute to a Mother*". You will see how despite all that she lost, she only had love and affection for all. That is the underlying spirit of this movie.

Shikara is a tribute to my mother. It is my mother's story, it is my story. It is deeply personal and it is perhaps my most important work in my 40 years in the film industry.

The Kashmiri Pandit exodus is a dark blot on our history. It is a very sensitive topic. What happened was wrong. People were thrown out of their homes and their city. Yes, there were circumstances and external forces which created this unfortunate divide but it was a horrific event and it is still unresolved. As young students of Media and Communication, you will appreciate the fact that if you don't know your history then you are condemned to repeat it.

You mentioned the Gaw Kadal massacre. I am aware of that incident and it was as horrific and very unfortunate. Since *Shikara* was primarily about Kashmiri Pandits and their exodus, it was not possible to integrate the Gaw Kadal incident within *Shikara* but it can be an independent film in itself. Perhaps someone like you can make it. It will help many others understand what happened.

When I started work on *Shikara* 11 years ago, I was cognisant of that fact that it will be the first attempt by any mainstream production house to make a movie on this subject. We took a long time to perfect the script as I had to sift through tons of documentation and video footage to bring reality to celluloid. The most challenging aspect was to remain dispassionate as a moviemaker to depict the truth and yet make a compelling argument that the only solution to such hatred is love and that is at the centre of my movie. You will see this reflect in several of the scenes in the movie, one particular example was



Shikara was released on 7th February 2020 across the country. I walked into a packed theatre for one of the first screenings. Three hundred people stood up and applauded. It felt magical, but just for a moment, suddenly one lady at the back screamed that the film wasn't representative of her pain. She wanted more. I was accused of commercialising the tragedy of a community. I spent many days

when Shiv Dhar's house is attacked on the night of 19th January sequence, the faces of the attackers are just shadows, this was a technically difficult scene to shoot and was also very time consuming but it was important because I believe that violence is faceless. In another scene Professor Masood and his son Zakir help Shiv and Shanti Dhar find a safe route and get out alive. That several Pandits were massacred across the valley is a truth and at the same time several Muslims helped Pandits escape death and live is an equal truth. I chose to tell this story in a way that it could unite people. This was a conscious decision because I wanted this movie to initiate a dialogue which could lead to creating a conducive environment which is bereft of any hatred and allows people to have a conversation.

Benazir Bhutto like other politicians on both sides did only one thing, divide people. The very ter-

rorist factions that she calls out to during this crisis and instigates to kill are the ones who later on executed her. The lesson to learn for us and our politicians is that violence will only beget violence.

Shikara was ready in mid-2019. We had initially thought of releasing it in October 2019 but due to the decision to abrogate Article 370 by Government of India we delayed its release. This was not easy because I was under immense pressure by various other stakeholders to not postpone. We waited for a few months and then set a date of February 7th 2020 for the release. We had thought this was safe enough as the situation would have been stabilised but CAA/NRC followed soon and this time we could not further delay since the trailer was already out with the announcement of the movie release date.

Shikara was released on 7th February 2020 across the country. I was excited to get viewer feed-

back. I walked into a packed theatre for one of the first screenings. Three hundred people stood up and applauded. It felt magical, but just for a moment, suddenly one lady at the back screamed that the film wasn't representative of her pain. She wanted more. I was accused of commercialising the tragedy of a community, which was exiled 30 years ago.

I spent many days thinking about what she said. And I realise that what she wanted was more hate. She wanted a film that demonised Muslims, and that sowed even more animosity and bloodshed. I also came in the firing line of certain groups who also felt the same and trolled me and the movie for days. This caused me immense pain and also affected the film. I introspected over several weeks about what I could have done differently. I have come to the conclusion that I am not that storyteller. I will never peddle hate for profit.

Shikara was released on 7th February 2020 across the country. I walked into a packed theatre for one of the first screenings. Three hundred people stood up and applauded. It felt magical, but just for a moment, suddenly one lady at the back screamed that the film wasn't representative of her pain. She wanted more. I was accused of commercialising the tragedy of a community. I spent many days thinking about what she said. And I realise that what she wanted was more hate.

As the rural folklore goes, it is tough to break a bunch of sticks bound together but once they are separated and are individual they are more vulnerable. Shiv Dhar gives out a similar message while taking his class in the refugee camp of Pandit kids, notice that sequence closely. Two lines drawn very close to each other, almost seems like one and then unknowingly lines start to drift apart. He reiterates the same messages when he goes back to Kashmir to teach the Muslim kids there, watch the last scene carefully and you will see it written on the Black board behind him in Urdu.

I also urge you to see my film PK of which I am particularly proud for its messaging. Notice the dialogue which became a huge hit "*Sarfaraz, Dhokha Nahi Dega*". I had a friend while studying in DAV school, Amira Kadal, Srinagar named Sarfaraz; "*Aur usne mujhe kabhi dhokha nahi diya*".

Arbeen and Asif, you are the future and the way you shape your thinking will go a long way in having a strong, progressive and peaceful Kashmir. I have seen my home destroyed by hate. Do not let it consume you.

I want the future of Kashmir to be different from its past.

Insha Allah! I am sure that will happen someday, I am a stubborn optimist.

Yours,
Vidhu Vinod Chopra

COVID-19 Vaccine: Here's What Science Tells Us

Quick rollouts will run into unexpected issues and coronavirus vaccine will have its share

If there is a silver lining to the flawed US response to the coronavirus pandemic, it is this: The relatively high number of new cases being diagnosed daily — upward of 20,000 — will make it easier to test new vaccines.

ARTHUR ALLEN

Vaccinating 20,000 people in a trial can reveal whether a vaccine is clearly dangerous to a general population. But when 200 million receive the same vaccine, less common side effects could still affect thousands.

To determine whether a vaccine prevents disease, the study's subjects need to be exposed to the pathogen as it circulates in the population. Reopening the economy will likely result in faster spread of the coronavirus and therefore more opportunities to test a vaccine's efficacy in trial subjects.

Under a proposal under discussion by a committee set up by the National Institutes of Health, each of four or five experimental vaccines would be tested on about 20,000 trial participants with a placebo group of 10,000 for each vaccine. Some 50 US medical centres — and perhaps an equal number overseas — would participate in these trials.

There is an irresolvable tension of speed versus safety.
- Gregory Poland, leader of Mayo Clinic's vaccine research

On May 18, Moderna, the biotech company, reported promising results in the first eight of 45 people enrolled in an initial test of the safety and immune responses to its vaccine. Analysts attributed a 900-point jump in the Dow that day at least partly to this very preliminary data, so eager are investors for any signs of progress in efforts to control the pandemic.

Moderna is running animal and human studies simultaneously, and plans to invest hundreds of millions of dollars to build laboratories where the vaccine will be produced even before it's approved. The Food and Drug Administration on May 12 promised an accelerated review of Moderna's vaccine, which works by injecting pieces of synthetic viral RNA into the body to stimulate an immune response to the virus.

The speed in developing vaccines for widespread testing this summer is impressive, certainly compared with America's inadequate, delayed response to providing coronavirus testing and PPE to health care providers.

Breakneck timetable

Still, many scientists have expressed scepticism at the breakneck timetable put forward by some Trump administration officials, who say that 100 million doses of a vaccine could be available by November. Even the normally sober Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told a Senate committee on May 12 that a vaccine could have proven safety and efficacy by then.

Running a trial of the size and speed contemplated by the NIH will be an immense undertaking. Just setting up trial locations and getting common consent and data-entry forms into shape usually takes months. Enrolling



30,000 people for a single vaccine trial is a big challenge.

In addition, defining success in a vaccine against COVID-19 will be no simple matter. As scientists design vaccine trials, they first have to set the "end-points" that determine success or failure. Death? Length of illness? Hospitalisation? Number of days in which a subject is infectious?

If there is little virus circulating where a trial is being run, even a vast study won't prove anything. On the other hand, if a vaccine trial had started in early April in New York City, where roughly 10,000 cases a day were reported for weeks, 30,000 participants would have been plenty to show whether the vaccine protected against disease.

In all likelihood, the big NIH trials will focus on rates of infection as well as clinical symptoms such as fever and cough. To discover whether the vaccine prevents severe disease, which is relatively rare, is harder. COVID-19, according to one account, kills about 0.6 per cent of those it infects, while perhaps six times that many require hospitalisation. People who take part in a trial will be given clear instructions to protect themselves against infection through social distancing, face masks, frequent handwashing and so on. That will lower the numbers of people infected during the study.

"You'd have to ask all the people enrolled in a trial to practise good hygiene," says Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Centre at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. "You don't want them to get infected — but you do."

When Jonas Salk announced the successful trial of

his polio vaccine in 1955, the nation celebrated a vaccine that could virtually eliminate a deadly infectious disease overnight. A new coronavirus vaccine may not provide that kind of overnight success. Instead, it may be more akin to the flu vaccine, which reduces the risk or severity of the illness but requires a new shot each year.

Vaccinating 20,000 people in a trial can reveal whether a vaccine is clearly dangerous to a general population. But when 200 million receive the same vaccine, less common side effects could still affect thousands. Botched batches of polio vaccines released after Salk's trial permanently paralysed 200 people and killed 10. Early vaccines against measles caused tens of thousands of cases of grave illness in the 1960s.

Maurice Hilleman, the vaccine pioneer who developed successful vaccines against measles, mumps, hepatitis A and B and other diseases, once said he never breathed a sigh of relief "until the first 3 million doses" had been delivered.

Unexpected problems naturally bedevil quick rollouts, as this one will almost certainly be as the US searches for a way to check a pandemic that is killing tens of thousands of Americans and paralysing the economy. But as Gregory Poland, the leader of Mayo Clinic's vaccine research, told me, "There is an irresolvable tension of speed versus safety."

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Los Angeles Times



Kids May Not Always Grow Out Of Being Picky Eaters, Says Study

Agencies

NEW YORK- Parents and caregivers, read this carefully. Researchers have found that not all children grow out of being "picky eaters" and parents' efforts to change the habit may make it worse.

By age four, children can be-

come established picky eaters, according to findings published in the journal Pediatrics.

"Picky eating is common during childhood and parents often hear that their children will eventually "grow out of it."

But there's a silver lining for worried parents -- while fussy eaters have a lower body

mass index, most are still in the healthy range and not underweight, researchers said.

They may also be less likely to be overweight or experience obesity than peers. "We still want parents to encourage varied diets at young ages, but our study suggests that they can take a less

controlling approach," Pesch said.

The study followed 317 mother-child pairs from low-income homes over a four-year period.

Families reported on children's eating habits and mothers' behaviours and attitudes about feeding when the children were four, five, six, eight and nine.

Picky eating was stable from preschool to school-age, indicating that any attempts to expand

food preferences may need to occur in the toddler or preschool years to be most effective.

The findings showed that high picky eating was associated with lower BMIs and low picky eating was associated with higher BMIs.

The pickiest eaters also were

often associated with increased pressure to eat and restriction on certain types of foods.

Certain child characteristics, including sex, birth order, and socioeconomic status, also have been associated with persistence of picky eating.

"We found that children who were pickier had moth-

ers who reported more restriction of unhealthy foods and sweets," Pesch said.

"These mothers of picky eaters may be trying to shape their children's preferences for more palatable and selective diets to be more healthful. But it may not always have the desired effect," Pesch added.

Gene Linked To Dementia Also Associated With Severe Covid-19 Risk: Study

Press Trust Of India

People with a faulty gene linked to a greater risk of dementia, may also have increased chances of developing severe Covid-19, according to a large-scale study which may lead to new ideas for treatments against the deadly infectious disease.

The study, published in the Journal of Gerontology, Medical Sciences, found high risk of severe Covid-19 infection among those who carried two faulty copies of the APOE gene termed e4e4.

Researchers, including those from the University of Exeter Medical School in the UK, assessed data from the UK Biobank -- a large long-term study investigating the respective contributions of genetic predisposition and environmental exposure to the development of disease in over 5,00,000 people.

The scientists found that one in 36 people of European



ancestry have two faulty copies of the APOE gene, which they said can increase risks of Alzheimer's disease up to 14-fold, and also increase risks of heart disease.

In the current study, the scientists found that carrying these gene mutations doubles the risks of Covid-19 -- even in people who had not developed these diseases.

Previously, they had found that people with dementia are three times more likely to get severe Covid-19.

However, the researchers said dementia patients are not one of the groups advised to shield -- or shelter in place -- on health grounds.

The scientists speculated that part of the increased risk effect may have been exposure to the high prevalence of the virus in care homes.

But based on the current study's findings, they said a genetic component may also be at play.

According to the researchers, people with the APOE

e4e4 genotype were at double the risk of developing severe Covid-19, compared to those with the common e3e3 form of the gene.

They said a majority of people in the population, and in the sample size, have not yet been exposed to the virus.

From the analysis, the scientists said 2.36 per cent of participants with European ancestries had the ApoE e4e4 faulty gene.

But 5.13 per cent of those who tested positive for Covid-19 had this gene variant, indicating that the risk is doubled compared to e3e3.

"This is an exciting result because we might now be able to pinpoint how this faulty gene causes vulnerability to Covid-19. This could lead to new ideas for treatments," said Chia-Ling Kuo, study co-author from the University of Connecticut School of Medicine in the US.

The researchers believe that increasing disease risks that

appear inevitable with ageing might actually be due to specific biological differences.

They said this could help scientists understand why some people stay active to age 100 and beyond, while others become disabled and die in their sixties.

While several studies have shown that people with dementia are at high risk of developing severe Covid-19, the authors of the current research believe that this may not simply be due to the effects of dementia, advancing age or frailty, or exposure to the virus in care homes.

The effect, according to study co-author David Melzer, could be partly due to this underlying genetic change, which puts people at risk for both Covid-19 and dementia.

"Further investigation is needed to understand the biological mechanisms linking ApoE genotypes to Covid-19 severity," the scientists concluded in the study.

New Replaceable, More Efficient Filter For N95 Masks Developed

Press Trust Of India

Researchers have developed a more efficient membrane filter that can be attached to a regular N95 mask and replaced when needed.

The filter has a smaller pore size than normal N95 masks, potentially blocking more virus particles, according to the researchers from King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in Saudi Arabia.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there's been a worldwide shortage of face masks -- particularly the N95 ones worn by health care workers, they said.

Although these coverings provide the highest level of protection currently available, they have limitations, the researchers noted in the journal ACS Nano.

N95 masks filter about 85 per cent of particles smaller than 300 nm, they said.

The researchers noted that SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is in the size range of 65-125 nanometres (nm), so some virus particles could slip through these coverings.

Due to shortages, many health care workers have had to wear the same N95 mask repeatedly, even though they are intended for a single use.

To help overcome these problems, Muhammad Mustafa Husain and colleagues wanted to develop a membrane that more efficiently filters particles the size



of SARS-CoV-2 and could be replaced on an N95 mask after every use.

The researchers first developed a silicon-based, porous template using lithography and chemical etching.

They placed the template over a polyimide film and used a process called reactive ion etching to make pores in the membrane, with sizes ranging from 5-55 nm.

The researchers then peeled off the membrane, which could be attached to an N95 mask.

To ensure that the nanoporous membrane was breathable, the researchers measured the airflow rate through the pores.

They found that for pores tinier than 60 nm, the pores needed to be placed a maximum of 330 nm from each other to achieve good breathability.

The hydrophobic membrane also cleans itself because droplets slide off it, preventing the pores from getting clogged with viruses and other particles, according to the researchers.

'Placentas from Covid-19-positive pregnant women show injury'

Press Trust Of India

Researchers have found evidence of injury in the placentas from 16 women who tested positive for COVID-19 while pregnant, pointing to a new complication associated with the deadly disease.

The type of injury seen in the placentas shows abnormal blood flow between the

mothers and their babies in the womb, according to the study published in the American Journal of Clinical Pathology. The researchers from Northwestern University in the US said the findings, though early, could help inform how pregnant women should be clinically monitored during the pandemic.

"Most of these babies were delivered full-term after

otherwise normal pregnancies, so you wouldn't expect to find anything wrong with the placentas, but this virus appears to be inducing some injury in the placenta," said Jeffrey Goldstein, assistant professor of pathology at Northwestern University.

"It doesn't appear to be inducing negative outcomes in live-born infants, based on our limited data, but it does

validate the idea that women with COVID should be monitored more closely," Goldstein said. This increased monitoring might come in the form of non-stress tests, which examine how well the placenta is delivering oxygen, or growth ultrasounds, which measure if the baby is growing at a healthy rate, said study co-author Emily Miller, assistant professor at North-

western University. "Not to paint a scary picture, but these findings worry me," Miller said.

Previous research has found that children who were in utero during the 1918-19 flu pandemic, which is often compared to the current COVID-19 pandemic, have lifelong lower incomes and higher rates of cardiovascular disease, the researchers said.

Venezuela Celebrates Docking Of Tanker With Iran Gasoline

Agencies

Venezuelan authorities celebrated on Monday as the first of five Iranian tankers loaded with gasoline docked in the South American country, delivering badly needed fuel to the crisis-stricken nation that sits atop the world's largest oil reserves.

The gasoline shipments are arriving in defiance of stiff sanctions by the Trump administration against both nations, and they mark a new era in the burgeoning relationship between Venezuela and Iran, which is expanding its footprint in the Western Hemisphere.

"We keep moving forward and winning," Venezuela's Minister of Energy Tarek El Aissami tweeted.

State TV played images of the ship pulling through Caribbean waters as Venezuelan fighter jets flew overhead. Mr. El Aissami posted photographs on his Twitter account of the sun rising over the tanker docked at El Palito refinery.

Washington says both Iran and Venezuela are ruled by repressive regimes. It had recently announced a \$15 million reward for Mr. Maduro's arrest on drug smuggling charges in a "maximum pressure" campaign against the socialist leader.

Washington recognizes opposition politician Juan Guaid as Venezuela's legitimate lead-

er in a coalition of nearly 60 nations, which consider Mr. Maduro's election a fraud because his most popular rivals were banned from running.

In a sign of rising tension inside Venezuela, the chief prosecutor on Monday asked the pro-Maduro Supreme Court to decide whether Mr. Guaid's political party Popular Will should be designated a terrorist organization.

"Confronted with the impossibility of obtaining power through votes, Popular Will has turned to violence," Prosecutor General Tarek William Saab said, accusing the party of hiring "mercenaries" who carried out a recent failed incursion, among other alleged acts. Guaid advisers had dealt with the man leading the attempt, though Mr. Guaid himself denied any involvement.

The first Iranian ship to arrive, the Fortune, is trailed by four other tankers expected to arrive in the next few days. The shipments, however, only carry enough fuel for two or three weeks, analysts say.

Russ Dallen, head of the Miami-based investment firm Caracas Capital Markets, said the Iranian shipments were anything but a victory for Venezuelans. The first tanker carries an estimated 11 million gallons of gasoline to a nation with roughly 5 million cars, he said.



Worldwide coronavirus cases cross 5.5 million, death toll tops 345,400

Agencies

Washington: - More than 5.5 million people have been reported infected with the novel coronavirus globally and 345,433 have died, a Reuters tally shows. Infections have been reported in more than 210 countries and territories since the first cases were identified in China in December 2019.

Here are countries that reported deaths and/or at least 100 confirmed cases by 0538 GMT on Tuesday. Countries and Total Cases Total Deaths

Territories	United States	Brazil	France	Spain	Italy	Germany	Turkey	Iran	China	South Korea	Spain	Italy	France	Iran	Spain	Italy	Germany	Turkey	Iran	China	South Korea	Spain	Italy	France	Iran	Spain	Italy	Germany	Turkey	Iran	China	South Korea	Spain	Italy	Germany	Turkey	Iran	China
1668257	98068	23473	261184	26837	182942	8294	138845	4021	7451	123979	3629	53254	26837	230158	32877	182942	8294	138845	4021	7451	123979	3629	53254	26837	230158	32877	182942	8294	138845	4021	7451	123979	3629	53254	26837	230158	32877	

764	Israel	16720	280	Austria	16458	641	Dominican Republic	15073	460	11883	310	Afghanistan	11173	219	11387	563	South Korea	11206	267	Serbia	11194	239	Panama	11183	310	Afghanistan	11173	219	11387	563	South Korea	11206	267	Serbia	11194	239	Panama
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Costa Rica	951	10	Niger	945	61	Cyprus	923	17	Zambia	920	7	Paraguay	865	11	Burkina Faso	832	52	Uruguay	787	22	Andorra	763	51	Georgia	730	12	Sierra Leone	721	40	Jordan	708	9	Nepal	682	4	Chad	675	60	San Marino	666	42	Ethiopia	655	5	South Sudan	655	8	Malta	611	6	Central African Republic	604	1	Palestine	602	5	Territories	558	42	Islands	527	2	Tanzania	509	21	Republic of the Congo	487	16	Taiwan	441	7	Réunion	434	1	Benin	401	3	Cape Verde	380	3	Togo	354	12	French Guiana	353	1	Isle of Man	336	24	Mauritius	334	10	Rwanda	327	0	Vietnam	326	0	Montenegro	324	9	Uganda	304	0	Sao Tome and Principe	299	9	Nicaragua	279	17	Liberia	265	35	Mauritania	237	6	Yemen	222	42	Eswatini	220	2	Myanmar	201	6	Martinique	197	14	Mozambique	194	0	Faroe Islands	187	0	Guadeloupe	161	14	Gibraltar	151	0	Brunei	141	1	Guyana	137	11	Bermuda	133	9	Cayman Islands	129	1	Cambodia	124	0	Trinidad and Tobago	116	8	N. Cyprus	108	4	Syria	106	4	Malawi	101	5	Aruba	101	3	Bahamas	100	11	Monaco	98	4	Barbados	92	7	Comoros	87	1	Liechtenstein	82	1	Sint Maarten	77	15	Libya	75	3	Angola	69	4	Zimbabwe	56	4	Burundi	42	1	Saint Martin	39	3	Botswana	35	1	Antigua and Barbuda	25	3	Barbados	25	1	Belize	18	2	Curacao	17	1	Turks and Caicos	11	1	Suriname	11	1	Montserrat	11	1	British Virgin	8	1
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Pakistan's Covid-19 tally soars to 57,705

Press Trust Of India

Islamabad: Pakistan's coronavirus cases on Tuesday soared to 57,705 after 1,356 new infections were reported, while 1,197 people have died so far of the disease in the country, the health ministry said.

Of the total number of 57,705 cases, 22,934 have so far been detected in Sindh, 20,654 in Punjab, 8,080 in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, 3,468 in Balochistan, 1,728 in Islamabad, 630 in Gilgit-Baltistan, and 211 in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday called Prime Minister Imran Khan and the two leaders agreed to enhance the bilateral cooperation to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan also called Prime Minister Khan and the two agreed to work closely to control the coronavirus outbreak.

He also offered condolences at the Friday's plane crash that claimed 97 lives in Pakistan. — PTI



Officials have so far conducted 490,908 tests, including 7,252 done on Monday.

According to the Ministry of National Health Service, 18,314 patients have till now recovered from the virus, while 1,197 have died so far, including 30 during the last 24 hours.

Meanwhile, Japan offered cooperation to Pakistan in its fight against the pandemic as the number of cases continued to rise.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi made the offer through a letter to Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

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No urinals? Toilets could evolve post-virus



Agencies

London: Toilet experts say urinals may be consigned to history as part of measures to make public conveniences safe for the post-coronavirus world.

Raymond Martin, managing director of the British Toilet Association, says business and governments need to adapt public toilets to make them infection-resistant, adding technology such as foot-operated flushes and sensor-activated taps.

groups in Britain have also proposed replacing rows of urinals with cubicle-only washrooms for both men and women.

Martin told the Sunday Times that transforming toilets would be expensive, but "we want to bring back life to this country, and toilets are a vital part of that".

He said "tourist offices all over the country should be telling visitors: 'Come see our castle, come see our beaches, come see our state-of-the-art toilets.'" AP

Hospitality industry

Iran reopens major Shia shrines after 2-month closure



Agencies

Tehran: Iran has reopened major Shia shrines across the Islamic republic, more than two months after they were closed, as it reported its lowest deaths from coronavirus since March.

At Tehran's Shah Abdol-Azim shrine, worshippers had to wear a mask, walk through a disinfection tunnel and have their temperature checked as they began returning early morning on Monday, according to AFP reporters.

"I am happy that we can again come here. It is a place where people can seek shelter, express their wishes and voice their concerns," said Karim, a 49-year-old government employee.

Shah Abdol-Azim is a descendant of Imam Hassan, a grandson of Prophet Muhammad. Devotees frequently visit the shrine to seek blessings and healing and call on God to hear their prayers and realise their wishes.

Another visitor, 45-year-old engineer Hassan, said he was wearing a mask and keeps disinfectant in his bag "so that my pilgrimage would not lead to infection for myself, my family or other worshippers".

Elah, a 39-year-old teacher donning a mask and gloves, said she was "so happy" to visit the shrine after months and thanked the health workers "who made it possible for us to be here".

The Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad in northeast Iran and the Fatima Masumeh shrine and Jamkaran mosque in the holy city of Qom also reopened while observing health protocols, state news agency IRNA reported.

They are allowed to open starting from an hour after dawn until an hour before dusk.

State TV showed worshippers crying and running towards Imam Reza's shrine as they were guided by attendants.

Trump A "Sociopathic Megalomaniac": Chomsky

Agencies

Washington: Activist scholar Noam Chomsky attacks the administration of US President Donald Trump over its "chaotic" response to the coronavirus pandemic, arguing the government is unable to stem the virus outbreak.

Speaking in an interview with AFP, the 91-year-old intellectual called Trump "a sociopathic megalomaniac" who thinks about nothing but himself and his power.

"There's no coherent leadership. It's chaotic. The presidency, the White House, is in the hands of a sociopathic megalomaniac who's interested in

nothing but his own power, electoral prospects -- doesn't care what happens to the country, the world."

"The president himself has said that it's none of his business. He's said that the federal government can't do anything," he added.

The US is currently the worst-hit country with more than 1,686,400 recorded cases of infection and 99,300 deaths.

Chomsky predicted that "there will be a lot more" deaths in the United States as "there's no coordinated plan."

He also criticized the Republican president for "defunding the Center for Disease Control" and "canceling pro-

grams that were working with Chinese scientists to identify potential viruses." Trump budget chief holds firm on CDC cuts amid virus outbreak

Russ Vought, the acting director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, on Tuesday doubled down on proposed cuts to health services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The US has repeatedly blamed China for the COVID-19 pandemic, with Trump recently lashing out on Twitter, claiming that the "incompetence of China" led to "mass Worldwide killing."

US crowds flock to beaches; toll nears 1 lakh

The Memorial Day weekend, marking the unofficial start of summer in the US, meant big crowds at beaches and warnings from the authorities about people disregarding the social distancing rules and risking a resurgence of the scourge that has killed nearly 100,000 Americans.

On the Navajo Nation, which sprawls across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, the number of Covid cases rose by 56 on Sunday to 4,689, according to the local health department.

Japan moved further towards reopening Monday, with Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura saying experts on a government-commissioned panel approved a plan to end the state of emer-



gency in Tokyo and surrounding areas.

Millions of Australian children returned to school as the number of Covid patients across the country continues to fall. The states of New South Wales and Queensland joined less populous Western Australia

and South Australia states and the Northern Territory in resuming face-to-face learning, instead of studying from home online. Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said Monday that students and teachers had to observe one key message: Stay

home if sick. "Each week, we keep our fingers crossed that Queenslanders will continue to flatten that curve," Palaszczuk said. — AP

Revelers pay no heed to authorities' warnings

The US authorities warned beach-goers to heed social-distancing rules to avoid a resurgence of the virus that has infected 5.4 million people worldwide and killed over 345,000, including nearly 100,000 Americans, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Japan lifts emergency in all remaining areas

Japan lifts Covid emergency in all remaining areas. The country, with about 16,600 confirmed coronavirus cases and about 850 deaths, has so far avoided a large outbreak like

Jacinda Ardern 'stays cool' as earthquake hits amid live telecast

Wellington: A moderate 5.6-magnitude earthquake rattled New Zealand's North Island early Monday but failed to crack prime minister Jacinda Ardern's trademark composure as she conducted a live television interview.

The quake struck just off the coast before 8:00 am local time (2000 Sunday GMT) at a depth of about 52 kilometres (32 miles) near Levin, about 90 kilometres north of Wellington, the US Geological Survey said.

St John Ambulance and New Zealand Police both said there were no initial reports of injuries or damage. There was no tsunami warning.



here, Ryan," Ardern told Auckland-based AM Show presenter Ryan Bridge, briefly looking concerned as she scanned the room around her.

"Quite a decent shake here, if you see things moving behind me," she said, smiling, as she quickly regained her poise and continued the interview.

"It's just stopped," she said. "We're fine, I'm not under any hanging lights, I look like I'm in a structurally sound place."

New Zealand lies on the Pacific Basin "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide generating more than 15,000 earthquakes a year, although only 100-150 are strong enough to be felt.

Caringly yours



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