



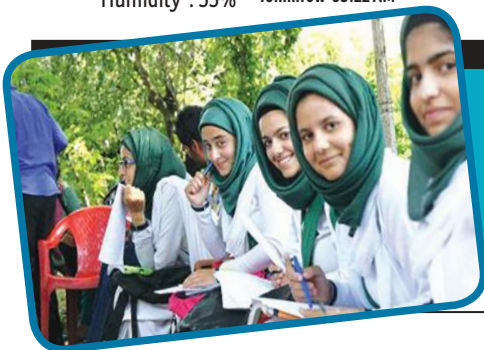
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OBSERVER

05 Shawwal-ul-Mukarram | 1441 Hijri | Vol: 23 | Issue: 112 | Pages: 08 | Price: ₹3

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DO GOOD GRADES AND MARKS MATTER?

THERE'S hardly a field, domain or discipline that has not been affected by the Covid 19 pandemic. One such field is that of education which has been hit at all levels- primary, secondary and tertiary. While attempts have been and are being made to deliver education non-conventionally- online through zoom and other channels- but it is not the same thing as the 'bricks and mortar' stuff- that, actual and real class room learning. What may accrue from this is that in the future there might be a synthesis of online and real, classroom learning. But, all this obscures one important aspect of learning and teaching- grades, marks and the grading system(s).....

.....OPINION
P4

News Digest

Covid-19 Cases In Ladakh Rise To 54

Leh- Another person tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Leh district, taking the number of cases in Ladakh to 54 on Wednesday, the Health Department said. The active cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) rose to 11 — nine in Kargil and two in Leh districts. Forty-three patients have been discharged from hospitals after recovery, officials said. The department has received 297 sample reports on Tuesday. A total of 588 samples were sent to the National Centre ● P-02

2 Held For Assaulting Health Workers

Srinagar: Police on Wednesday arrested two people for allegedly misbehaving and assaulting health workers at a hospital in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. Arif Dilawar Khan and Ghulam Nabi Tantray, both residents of Pattan were arrested after they entered Trauma Hospital and started capturing video there, reports said. When employees objected and asked them not to disturb them, they allegedly misbehaved with them and one of them even assaulted a health professional. Following the incident, ● P-02

SUV Crushes

Woman To Death

Srinagar: A woman was killed and another injured on Wednesday after being hit by an SUV in Chattergam area of central Kashmir's Budgam district. A Hyundai Creta vehicle hit two women near Suthsoo area of Chattergam this morning leaving both of them injured, reports said. The injured women were removed to Srinagar's Bone and Joint Hospital for treatment. However, one of the women succumbed to her injuries at the hospital. The condition of another is said to be stable. ● P-02

3 Gamblers Held From Habbak: Police

Srinagar: Police on Wednesday claimed to have arrested three alleged gamblers in a raid in Habbak area of the city. Following an input, a police team raided a gambling site in Habbak and apprehended three gamblers from the spot, a police spokesperson said. He said an amount of Rs 4,180 and playing cards were recovered from the spot. The police spokesperson said that a case FIR No. 93/2020 under relevant sections of ● P-02

Sopore Youth Dies Of Electric Shock

Srinagar: A youth on Wednesday died of electrocution at his house in Sopore town of Baramulla district. 21 year-old Sajjad Ahmad Kanwal of Sher Colony got electrocuted when he was trying to repair electricity wire on the rooftop of a building in Sopore this morning, reports said. The injured youth was rushed to the Sub-District hospital Sopore for treatment. However, the ● P-02

Top Army Brass Discusses Ladakh Face-Off

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Top commanders of the Indian Army on Wednesday began deliberations on key security challenges facing India, including the tense standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in Ladakh.

The three-day conference is being presided over by Chief of Army Staff Gen M M Naravane.

The commanders are also expected to delve into the overall situation in Jammu and Kashmir. 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 sensitive areas like Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldie, government sources said.

"All aspects of India's security challenges, including along borders with Pakistan and China, will be discussed at length by the commanders," said a senior military official on condition of anonymity.

Both India and China have significantly increased their



Image for representation

Trump Offers Help To Diffuse 'Raging' India, China Tension

In a surprise move, US President Donald Trump on Wednesday offered to "mediate or arbitrate" the raging border dispute between India and China, saying he was "ready, willing and able" to ease the tensions, amid the continuing standoff between the militaries of ● P-02

'Overall Stable, Controllable': China On LAC Situation

China on Wednesday said the situation at the border with India is "overall stable and controllable", and both the countries have proper mechanisms and communication channels to resolve the issues through a dialogue and consultation. ● P-02

presence in all sensitive areas in the region, in an indication that neither side is ready to back off.

The situation in eastern Ladakh deteriorated after around 250 Chinese and Indian ● PAGE 02

After Joke, Altaf Bukhari Says, His Political Promotion An 'Imagination'

Jyotsna Bharti

NEW DELHI: Cooling his heels in the blistering capital where the political mercury is soaring at the moment, Altaf Bukhari is playing it cool and calm, despite his name as the chief of the so-called advisory council—seen as a political local face replacing bureaucratic non-local advisory group in J&K—doing rounds and creating new whispers and flutters in the valley.

Bukhari's name as a chief advisor—if not minister—of the council, a virtual cabinet, surfaced after BJP leader Ram Madhav spoke about "allowing" full-fledged political process in J&K.

"The advisory council in UT helps the Lieutenant Governor (LG) in the day-



File Pic

to-day administration," a report quoting former Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha, P.D.T. Acharya, said.

However, the real power is vested in the LG, the report said. "The head of the advisory council cannot get the power of the CM. The advisory council also cannot make laws. The Constitution allows the President to administer UT through LG, but only the Parliament has the power to make law."

Once this new political arrangement starts administering J&K, the report said, Statehood—one of the two political pitches raised by the new political force in the valley—will be restored. "In fact," the report said, "this [advisory council] is part of a larger deal with the state's political class."

Notably, a group of defectors that Bukhari leads as the Apni Party chief had based its politics around

Domicile Law and Statehood demand. This new political pack had apparently followed the footsteps of Muzaffar Baig, the senior unionist, who had said that 'it's time to move on from Article 370'.

Barring slight intervention that it sought from home minister Amit Shah, Bukhari-led outfit largely stood silent on the new controversial law that triggered the fears of demographic changes in J&K recently.

Reportedly, around 12 members will be part of the Bukhari-led council, with the likes of Usman Majid, Vijay Bakaya, Sunil Sharma, Sunil Sethi and Chowdhary Zulfikar Ali being sworn in as early as late June.

If it shapes up, many say, advisory council ● PAGE 02

NOTABLY, A GROUP OF DEFECTORS THAT BUKHARI LEADS as the Apni Party chief had based its politics around Domicile Law and Statehood demand. This new political pack had apparently followed the footsteps of Muzaffar Baig, the senior unionist, who had said that 'it's time to move on from Article 370'.

KCCI Urges Govt To Evacuate Kashmiris Stranded Abroad

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Wednesday urged government to evacuate hundreds of Kashmiris stranded in various foreign countries due to coronavirus lockdown.

In a statement issued here, a spokesperson said that KCCI has been receiving distress messages from stranded members of the business community and even students from various places especially Dubai, Mascat and Kyrgyzstan. ● P-02

Govt Rejigs Admin, 3 DCs Among 10 Officers Shifted

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Wednesday ordered reshuffle in the bureaucracy by transferring ten officers, including three deputy commissioners in the Valley.

As per an order issued here by the government, Ravinder Kumar (IAS), Managing Director, SIDCO, holding additional charge of Managing Director, JK Trade Promotion Organization, has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Bandipore.

Advisor Bhatnagar's Duties Assigned To Sharma

The Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday assigned charge of departments held by advisor Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar to advisor KK Sharma till the former remains ● P-02

G.A. Sofi, Director General, Libraries, J&K, has been transferred and posted as Commissioner of Enquiries, J&K. ● PAGE 02

2 More Covid-19 Deaths In Valley, J&K Toll At 26

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR- Two more people have died due to novel coronavirus in Kashmir Valley, officials said on Wednesday. These fatalities take the death toll due to the disease in the Jammu and Kashmir to 26—23 in Valley and 3 in Jammu.

One among the victims includes a 70-year-old man from Sarnal Anantnag who died yesterday at GMC Anantnag and report came out positive posthumously, sources said.

The other is a 55-year-old resident of Fateh Kadal Srinagar who had tested positive earlier this month and ultimately died of cardiac arrest, they said.

Principal GMC Anantnag, Dr Showkat Jeelani, said that septuagenarian man from Sarnal with underlying ailments like pneumonia was admitted to the hospital on May 25. "He died yesterday and his sample was taken while in hospital which came out to be positive today," he added, he said that body

162 More Test Covid-19 Positive

Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday recorded biggest ever daily spike coronavirus cases as 162 more people tested Covid-19 positive, taking the total number of cases across the Union Territory to 1921, officials said. ● P-02

was detained at mortuary and would be handed over as per the Covid-19 protocol.

Meanwhile, a 55-year-old man from Fateh Kadal ● PAGE 02

Pak Army Says Indian Spy Drone Shot Down

Press Trust Of India

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Army claimed on Wednesday that it shot down an Indian "spying quadcopter" for allegedly violating the airspace along the Line of Control.

The incident happened in Rakhchikri Sector of the LoC, according to military spokesman Major General Babar Iftikhar.

He said that the "Indian spying quadcopter" had intruded 650 ● P-02

Rs 223 Crore Bank Fraud: HC Rejects Plea Of Ex-Chairman

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Wednesday rejected plea of former chairman J&K State Cooperative Bank, seeking quashing of FIR against him filed by the Anti-Corruption Bureau in the whopping 230 crore fraud case.

The 223 crore scam was unearthed by the Bureau in March this year, involving many bank officials, including the ex-chairman Mohammad Shafi Dar and Hilal Ahmad Mir, the chairman of non-existent Cooperative Society named River Jhelum Cooperative house Colony at



Shivpora Srinagar, who was arrested on May 18. The ACB has already filed a case against Dar, Mir and other accused. Dar had moved court seeking quashing of the FIR registered against him by the ACB. He had also sought direction to the ACB to restrain from interfering with the management of J&K Cooperative Bank or "harass" him. ● PAGE 02

J&K Govt Extends Ban On High Speed Internet Till June 17

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Ignoring the calls for resumption of 4G internet services in the Union Territory over coronavirus pandemic, the Jammu and Kashmir Government on Wednesday extended ban on high speed internet till June 17, claiming that reports suggest spurt in cross-LoC infiltration by militants.

"The reports suggest rise in the infiltration of (militant) during the coming weeks due to the onset

of summer and melting of snow, which gets facilitated through use of Voice on Internet Protocol (VOIP) and encrypted mobile communication, being used by the operatives/anti-national elements to communicate with their handlers from across the border," Shaheen Kabra, Principal Secretary

Home Department said and ordered the continuation of ban on high-speed internet till June 17. He said that the order has been passed by him on consideration of the overall security scenario and the reports of the law enforcement agencies inter-alia bringing out the necessity of speed-related restrictions ● PAGE 02



Restrictions Eased In City's 13 Containment Zones

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The district administration on Wednesday eased restrictions in city's 13 areas declared containment zones earlier to combat the spread of coronavirus.

In a handout issued today, an official spokesperson said that after a detailed review of Red Zones and comprehensive analysis of COVID containment efforts, the District Disaster Management Authority, Srinagar approved removal of perimeter restrictions from 13 Containment Zones qualifying under the

lad down guidelines.

The areas where perimeter restrictions has been removed include erstwhile Red Zones Khayam, Natipora, Chhatrabal, Jawahar Nagar, Hakah Bazar Hawal, Alamdard Colony, Boatman Colony Bemina, Ahmed Nagar, Tenggpora bypass, WatalKadal, Takanwari, BreinNishat and Goripora. The district continues with 23 Containment (Red) Zones.

"District Magistrate, Srinagar, Shahidilqbal Choudhary said that perimeter restrictions involving blockade of roads and lanes ● PAGE 02

Dal Lake's 'Wonder Women' Playing Crisis-Managers In Lockdown

Swati Joshi

SHE first picked up her daily routine at the age of 5, when she followed her mother's footsteps. That was half a century ago. And now, at fifty-five, Haleema continues to carry her 'labour of love', with an untiring spirit. Her religious devotion has helped the conflict-battered community to survive some tough times, especially when Srinagar, as poet Agha Shahid Ali described it, would hunch "like a wild cat: lonely sentries, wretched in bunkers at the city's bridges, far from their homes in the plains, licensed to..."

Haleema sets off at daybreak, rowing her boat on backwaters of Dal Lake, to reach her floating garden. Her early morning shift coincides with the start of the iconic lake show.

Over 50 Shikaras, laden with fruits and vegetables, throng the famous floating vegetable market every day. A major tourist attraction, this dawn bazaar of Dal Lake has reportedly an annual turnover of about Rs. 35 crores.

This "vegetable bowl" of Srinagar shot to fame in 1960s, when a Japanese photographer featured it in a tourist guide.

Shortly after their shift at the

all-weather floating market, these boatmen return home, only to take vegetables to the street market. This tradition, over the period of the time, has sustained Srinagar's food chain.

And to maintain this routine, Kashmiri women play a significant role.

"For many inhabitants of Dal Lake, cultivating fruits and vegetables is the major source of income," Haleema says. "While mostly men take them to market, women spend most of their time in nurturing the crops."

Amid pandemic lockdown, these vegetable gardens are ensuring 'uninterrupted' supplies to Srinagar.

And the women workforce behind this crisis-mitigating activity has al-



PTI Pic

ready become heroes for the society held hostage by the fair-weather

Srinagar-Jammu Highway. "These lake gardens produce

enough for all seasons for the consumption of the city," says Hajira, a 43-year-old vegetable grower in Dal Lake. "Especially, during winters, when the highway mostly remains closed due to bad weather, these gardens come to the rescue of the entire community."

But for the strife-ridden society, which often finds itself in the clutches of curbs and curfews, these women often play the role of crisis managers.

Be it 2008 land agitation, 2010 street protests, 2014 floods, 2016 unrest, or 2019 abrogation clampdown, they kept the food supplies active in the city.

Even today, when the world is dealing with the COVID curbs, these women are maintaining the 100-year floating market as well as ensuring the uninterrupted vegetable supply in Srinagar.

According to a study by Srinagar's historic SP College, total 31 vegetables, including cucumber, tomatoes, spinach, radish, carrots, onion, brinjal, cauliflower, cabbage and pumpkin, are grown in Dal Lake by Hanji community, Dal dwellers.

With time, Hajira continues, women farmers have also started coming out with their own vegetable-laden Shikaras. The growing dominance of these women ● PAGE 02

Top Army Brass Discusses Ladakh Face-Off

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

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

The second phase of the conference will take place in the last week of June.

On the face-off in eastern Ladakh, 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.

It is learnt that both India and China are looking at a solution to the issue through talks.

On May 5, the Indian and the 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 stand-off in Doklam tri-junction in 2017 which even triggered fears of a war between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

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.

Trump Offers Help To Diffuse ‘Raging’ India,...

the two neighbours.

Trump previously offered to mediate between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, a proposal rejected by New Delhi which maintains that there is no role for any third party in bilateral issues.

“We have informed both India and China that the United States is ready, willing and able to mediate or arbitrate their now raging border dispute. Thank you!” Trump said in an early morning tweet.

The nearly 3,500-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) is the de-facto border between India and China.

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.

But on Wednesday, China took an apparently conciliatory tone by saying that the situation at the border with India is “overall stable and controllable,” and both the countries have proper mechanisms and communication channels to resolve the issues through a dialogue and consultation.

India has said the Chinese military was hindering normal patrolling by its troops along the LAC in Ladakh and Sikkim and strongly refuted Beijing’s contention that the escalating tension between the two armies was triggered by trespassing of Indian forces across the Chinese side.

The Ministry of External Affairs said all Indian activities were carried out on its side of the border, asserting that India has always taken a very responsible approach towards border management. At the same time, it said, India was deeply committed to protect its sovereignty and security.

“Any suggestion that Indian troops had undertaken activity across the LAC in the Western sector or the Sikkim sector is not accurate. Indian troops are fully familiar with the alignment of the Line of Actual Control in the India-China border areas and abide by it scrupulously,” MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said at an online media briefing

'Overall Stable, Controllable': China...

The comments by the Foreign Ministry spokesman came in the backdrop of the continuing standoff between the militaries of India and China at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian, during a media briefing here, said that China’s position on the border-related issues is clear and consistent.

“We have been following the important consensus reached by the two leaders and strictly observing the agreements between the two countries,” he said, apparently referring to the directions of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi after their two informal summits, asking the militaries of the two countries to take more confidence-building measures to maintain peace and tranquillity along the borders.

The foreign ministry’s remarks came a day after President Xi ordered the military to scale up the battle preparedness, visualising the worst-case scenarios and asked it to resolutely defend the country’s sovereignty.

Zhao said: “We are committed to safeguarding our territorial sovereignty and security, and safeguarding peace and stability in the border areas. Now the China-India border area situation is overall stable and controllable.”

“Between the two countries, we have good border-related mechanism and communication channels. We are capable of resolving the issues properly though dialogue and consultation,” he said, confirming reports that the diplomatic efforts were on to ease the border tensions.

Asked where the talks are taking place, Zhao said the two countries had established border-related mechanisms and diplomatic channels.

“This includes the communication between border troops and between our diplomatic missions,” he added.

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After Joke, Altaf Bukhari Says, His Political ...

will be the major political development in J&K, after the abrogation of Article 370.

But Bukhari, who’s likely to fly home to hold consultations over the new arrangement, plays a naysayer during an exclusive chat with Kashmir Observer.

Kashmir Observer: Tell us something about this new advisory council? What will be it like? Will you be heading it? Altaf Bukhari: [Laughs] It’s a figment of the imagination that media is creating amid COVID-19 lockdown. There’s literally nothing like this. As I’ve already said, it’s a good joke.

KO: But media reports suggest that you’re in Delhi for some serious political business these days.

AB: Listen, I stay in Delhi with my entire family. My father is here, my brother is here. My sons are here. I’ve a home here. Do I need a reason to come here?

Besides, had there been any political development, I would’ve already made it public.

KO: But how will you respond to certain reports—terming you as Omar Abdullah’s ally in the new political plan conceived by New Delhi for J&K?

AB: I know, where it’s coming from. The other day, sadly, some media reports speculated that Omar Sahab was flown in a private flight to Delhi, when he just took an Air Asia flight.

We need to understand that Omar Abdullah is a young man. He was under detention for 10 months. He didn’t even step out all these months.

KO: But you didn’t answer my question. Is Omar Abdullah your ally in this new political arrangement?

AB: The reason Kashmiris question politicians is because we do help them out, and resolve their problems.

And that’s why even media people ask us, and take an interest in us. That said, let me reiterate, nothing is happening.

KO: If nothing is happening, as you’re suggesting, then what role do you see the mainstream parties playing in Jammu and Kashmir now?

AB: Since 2018, there’s this growing yearning in people to see political process getting revived in Jammu and Kashmir. Even as the last governor [Satya Pal Malik] had opened his doors for people, there was a glaring political void in the region.

KO: Let’s talk about now. What role do you see mainstream politicians playing in J&K now?

AB: See, politicians are better than bureaucrats. They understand their constituencies much better. They engage with people and address their problems. This is not to say that bureaucrats aren’t good. It’s just that people can relate with politicians more.

This process of engagement would’ve started, had not COVID bringing everything to a standstill.

KO: So, let’s say, in case this advisory council shapes up, will it be just a political local face replacing bureaucratic non-local advisory group in J&K?

AB: Since, nothing is happening as of now, so I won’t comment on this.

KCCI Urges Govt To Evacuate Kashmiris...

The students from Kyrgyzstan have also forwarded a list of 381 persons along with all details who are waiting to be shifted to Srinagar.

In view of the difficult financial conditions of the stranded persons in foreign lands, the spokesperson urged the government to consider these sectors as priority sectors on humanitarian grounds.

The KCCI also appreciated the organized and efficient arrangements made by the administration at Srinagar Airport after the resumption of flights.

Govt Rejigs Admin, 3 DCs Among 10 Officers Shifted

Bashir Ahmad Dar (KAS), Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag, has been transferred and posted as Managing Director, SIDCO. Sheikh Arshad Aryub (KAS), Managing Director, J&K State Road Transport Corporation, has been transferred and posted as Director, Libraries, J&K.

Ms. Leena Padha (KAS), Director, Rural Sanitation, J&K, has been transferred and posted as Special Secretary to the Government, General Administration Department.

Shahbaz Ahmad Mirza (KAS), Deputy Commissioner, Bandipora, has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Budgam

Tariq Hussain Ganai (KAS), Deputy Commissioner, Budgam, has been transferred and posted as Director, Rural Sanitation, J&K.

Angrez Singh Rana (KAS), Member, J&K Services Selection Board, has been transferred and posted as Managing Director, J&K State Road Transport Corporation.

Nazir Ahmad Khwaja (KAS) Additional District Development Commissioner, Anantnag, has been transferred and shall await further orders of adjustment in the office of Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir.

Kuldeep Krishan Sidha (KAS) Officer on Special Duty with Advisor (BK) to the Lieutenant Governor, has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag.

Advisor Bhatnagar’s Duties Assigned To Sharma

under quarantine.

“The duties and functions of departments assigned to Advisor (B) shall be discharged by Advisor (S) till Advisor (B) resumes the office after expiration of the mandatory period of quarantine prescribed by the health department,” reads an order issued by government.

Bhatnagar holds portfolios of Health and Medical Education,

Public Works(R&B), PHE/I&FC, Transport and Animal/Sheep Husbandry.

Bhatnagar has been under quarantine after his wife and son tested positive for the novel coronavirus upon their return from New Delhi to Jammu on Sunday.

2 More Covid-19 Deaths In Valley, J&K Toll At 26

area of Srinagar, who had tested positive for coronavirus died at Chest Diseases (CD) hospital, officials said.

The officials said the patient was shifted to the CD hospital from SICU SMHS on May 18 as an operated case of exploratory laparotomy with appendicectomy after testing positive for coronavirus.

Exploratory laparotomy is surgery to open up the abdomen to find the cause of problems such as belly pain or bleeding that testing could not diagnose. Appendicectomy is a surgical procedure to remove the appendix from the abdomen. The patient’s health was improving and was hemodynamically stable and maintaining saturation without oxygen, the officials said.

However, he developed sudden cardiac arrest around 4 pm on Wednesday, they added.

The man was immediately intubated, coupled to a ventilator and resuscitated but he developed another cardiac arrest after which he could not be revived, the officials said.

With these fatalities, the death toll due to the virus upto 26 in J&K. So far Srinagar district has highest number of the fatalities—7 followed by Anantnag (5), Baramulla and Kulgam with four deaths while Budgam and Jammu have two each and one death each has been reported from Bandipora and Udhampur. (With GNS Inputs)

162 More Test Covid-19 Positive

“162 new COVID-19 cases were detected in J&K. While 124 of them are from Kashmir, 38 are from Jammu,” the officials said. Among fresh cases, 27 cases were reported from Kulgam, 26 from Kupwara, 21 from Pulwama, 20 from Srinagar, 12 from Shopian,11 each from Udhampur & Poonch,10 from Baramulla, four each from Anantnag & Jammu, three each from Reasi, Samba & Kathua, two each from Bandipora, Budgam & Rajouri and one from Ramban, they said.

They said that 21 patients recovered and were discharged from different hospitals.

The number of confirmed cases has now reached 1,921, out of which 1,535 are in Kashmir, while 386 are in Jammu, the officials said.

There are 1041 active cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in J&K – 753 in Kashmir and 288 in Jammu – and 854 (759 from Kashmir and 95 from Jammu) patients have recovered, according to officials.

The J&K has witnessed 26 COVID-19 (23 from Kashmir, 3 from Jammu) deaths so far, including the two that took place on Wednesday.

Pak Army Says Indian Spy Drone Shot Down...

metres on Pakistan’s side of the LoC when it was brought down.

In April, the Pakistan Army claimed to have shot down an Indian drone.

The ties between the two nations strained following the Bala-kot strike when the Indian Air Force jets bombed a Jaish-e-Mohammed training camp in Pakistan on February 26 last year to avenge the killing of 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel in the Pulwama terror attack on February 14. Pakistan retaliated on February 27 by attempting to target Indian military installations.

The ties further nose-dived after New Delhi abrogated Article 370 that granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir in August last. Pakistan downgraded diplomatic relations with India and expelled Indian High Commissioner.

Rs 223 Crore Bank Fraud: Hc Rejects Plea ...

In his plea, Dar had submitted that the society had approached the Bank for grant of loan for converting land measuring 257 Kanals 18 Marlas, situated at Shivpora, Srinagar, into a Satellite Township for Kashmiri Pandits.

“Society was asked to execute required documents and accordingly it was being monitored by the Committee constituted and Kashmiri Pandits executed a Power of Attorney in favour of Hilal Ahmad Mir – Chairman of the Society, authorising him to transfer the land and raise finances in lieu of thereof and execute any document for creating lien in favour of Bank over the landed property,” he said.

He said some locals, who had an eye on the land, made complaints under “false” pretexts before all authorities and also filed two suits against land owners and the Society, who tried their best to restrain the Society from converting the land into Satellite Township while the Society as well as the Bank was doing their best to help protect interests of Kashmiri Pandits. He claimed that the whole process was conducted as per law and rules and that he has not committed any wrong whatsoever.

“The report of Enquiry Officer (Deputy Registrar (Counsel) Cooperative Societies J&K) dated 5th February 2020 is self-explanatory and speaks of voluminous, and if discussed here would open a Pandora box for discourse, discussion and threadbare examination and trial, which is the exclusive domain of Investigating Agency and Trial Court, and not that of this Court in exercise of inherent powers under Section 482 Cr.P.C.,” a bench of Justice Vinod ChatterjiKoul in a judgment on Dar’s plea, five days after reserving it for orders.

After hearing both the sides and in view of the Supreme Court’s judgment calling for use of power of quashing a crimi-

nal proceeding sparingly and with circumspection and that too in the rarest of rare cases, the High Court dismissed Dar’s plea as bereft of any merit.

“The petitioner (Dar) fails to make out a case for exercise of inherent powers under Section 482 Cr. P.C. to quash the FIR. The case is still under investigation and concerned agency is in the process of collecting evidence,” the court said, adding, “The investigation is necessary and the same cannot be stopped, at his stage, in the proceedings under Section 482 Cr.P.C. As a sequel thereof, instant petition is dismissed.”

J&K Govt Extends Ban On High Speed Internet ...

on mobile data services to prevent misuse of the internet.

“I, Principal Secretary to the Government, Home Department, being satisfied that, it is absolutely necessary to do so in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the Security of the State and for maintaining public order, hereby order that the directions/restrictions shall continue to remain in force till 17th June, 2020, unless modified earlier,” he said in the order.

“The (IGsP), Kashmir/Jammu shall ensure communication of these directions to the service providers with immediate effect and ensure their implementation in letter and spirit,” he added.

He said from May 12 till date, the mobile internet services and even mobile cellular services (voice and SMS) had to be suspended, although for limited periods of time and in specific areas, in view of a number of encounters and militant incidents including Nawakadal, a highly populated residential area of downtown Srinagar, where restrictions had to be imposed for three days due to likelihood of “misuse of the data services by the anti-national elements for mobilizing the crowds and creating law and order situation.”

“There have also been multiple instances of (militant) acts including attacks on security forces -leading to even death of the SF personnel, and attempts to encourage (militancy) through uploading and circulation of provocative videos and false propaganda -largely relying on internet connectivity, to disturb the public order,” he added.

Restrictions Eased In City’s 13 Containment Zones...

in periphery of such containment zones have been removed for public convenience pursuant to containment efforts yielding desired results,” the official spokesperson said.

He said that any area can be declared as a Red Zone if the cases are detected from there.

“More than 13,000 tests have been conducted in District Srinagar and door-to-door health survey has covered nearly 87% population,” he added.

Dal Lake’s ‘Wonder Women’ Playing ...

farmers has also made them “empowered” in their own right. But before growing vegetables, these women toil hard to prepare the turf.

Using weeds like Pech (Typhaaugustata), Nargasa (Phragmitescommunis), and hydrophytes like Trapasp and Eura-leferox, they make floating gardens.

These gardens are of two types, Radh and Semb. Radh is a mobile floating garden, made of long strips of lake reeds having a breadth of about 2 meters. A static garden, Demb is formed along the sides or on shallow waters in the middle of the lake.

Women like Haleema and Hajira mostly use organic manure like hydrilla muck to cultivate vegetables and fruits on these floating gardens.

“These organic vegetables are quite popular among elites,” says Haleema. “They prefer them for their health benefits, and good taste value.”

Legend has it, that watermelons of Dal Lake’s floating gardens were once so popular that Mughal emperors used to import them from Kashmir.

However, with time, as the lake got choked politically to an extent of amassing mess and muck, thousands of lake farmers were relocated and sent to city suburbs “to fend for themselves”.

“We’re being portrayed as the lake villains and encroachers,” Haleema rues.

“But the fact is, ever since they relocated our community members, the lake is only witnessing rising pollution and slow death. What machines worth crores of rupees couldn’t achieve, we used to do that with our bare hands and paddles.” However, as pollution and politics continue to drive and dominate the Dal discourse, the future of more than 6,000 families dependent on the floating garden hangs in the balance.

“It’s not only our demise,” Haleema says, “but the demise of the buffer system which would help sustain Srinagar during its trying times.”

Covid-19 Cases In Ladakh Rise To 54...

for Disease Control in New Delhi for testing on Wednesday, the officials said.

2 Held For Assaulting Health Workers...

Block Medical Officer (BMO)Dr Tasavur Khan lodged a complaint and accordingly a police party led by SHO Pattan arrived on the spot and detained the duo.

A police official said that a case has been filed against the duo for misbehaving and assaulting health professionals. (KNT)

SUV Crushes Woman To Death...

Meanwhile, police have arrested the driver, seized the SUV and filed a case at the police station Nowgam.

3 Gamblers Held From Habbak: Police...

law has been registered in Police Station Nigeen.

Sopore Youth Dies Of Electric Shock...

doctors there referred him to District hospital Baramulla for advanced treatment.

The injured youth succumbed to his injuries while he was being taken to the District hospital.

Meanwhile, police have registered a case and started further investigations in this regard, CNS news agency reported.

Kashmir University Not To Conduct End-Term Examinations

Srinagar- The Kashmir University will not conduct the end-term examinations for the current and previous semesters this year and would promote the students based on continuous internal assessment in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

"In a significant decision, the University of Kashmir, in view of COVID-19 pandemic, has decided that there will be no end-term exams for the current semester and the previous semesters where exams were due during the lockdown period," a spokesman of the varsity said.

He said the students will be promoted to the next semester based on internal assessment in tune with the University Grants Commission guidelines.

"The Heads of Departments in consultation with their respective Departmental Committees will decide the mode of internal assessment with a transparent and well-defined



scale," he said.

The spokesman said the decision was taken in a special meeting of the advisory-cum-monitoring committee, constituted by the vice chancellor under the chairmanship of the Dean Academic Affairs.

The university had constituted the committee to assess and monitor the conduct of online classes, devise a strategy or a road map for the conduct of the examinations, devise the academic calendar under the prevalent conditions and for-

mulate a plan for admission to various courses for the academic session 2020.

The varsity has decided to continue the online classes of the current semesters till August 15, 2020, and the teachers have been asked to take online classes on regular basis and also carry the internal assessment during the semester in tune with the strategy devised by their respective departments, the spokesman said.

Addressing the meeting, Vice Chancellor Prof Talat Ahmad advised all the teachers to make best use of available communication technology for teaching and learning process.

"This is the time to turn the pandemic situation to our advantage by developing capacity for online teaching learning and assessment for the better future of our university and the students.

"We need not to lag behind

when everyone is going online. Our motto should be to meet the deadlines and ensure degrees are awarded in time. We need to follow the examples of the best institutions of the country like IIT-Kanpur," he said.

The spokesman said for the examination of undergraduate courses like BA, BSc, BCOM, being taught at various government colleges, the Dean College Development Council in consultation with the Higher Education Department, college principals and the controller of exams would make the recommendations.

In another major decision, the spokesman said, the vice chancellor advised the departments to procure smartphones and notepads and make them available to the needy students who cannot afford these devices.

The devices can be issued to the needy students and collected back after use, he added.

Multi-Crore Scam Unearthed In Municipal Committee Shopian

Anantnag: A multi-crore scam has been unearthed in Municipal Committee (MC) Shopian where officials resorted to swindling millions of rupees in the name of fuel expenses shown in record, reliable sources said. They added that higher authorities have miserably failed to take fraudulent officials into task who in a well-designed plan set ablaze the evidential record of the Committee in 2018.

Sources told news agency, that like other Municipal Committee's across J&K, gross misappropriation of funds has been reported in MC Shopian where millions of rupees have been embezzled against the bills shown as fuel expenses in official record.

Sources disclosed that from last three years, there has been gross misuse of official funds reported in MC Shopian where some blue-eyed officials having 'no accountability' withdrew millions of rupees in the name fuel charges to official vehicles. "Twenty-thousand liters of diesel have been shown in official record during two-three years by officials of MC Shopian and swindled millions of rupees", they said.

Govt constitutes Committee for expediting disposal of pending litigations

JAMMU : The Government has constituted a three member committee under the Chairmanship of Learned Advocate General for expediting disposal of litigations pending before the High Court and other Tribunals/Benches.

The other members of the committee are Secretary, General Administration Department and Secretary, Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Pursuant to the government order issued in this regard, D. C. Raina, Advocate General held a meeting today through video conference from Jammu with the officers of Kashmir Division belonging to Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Manoj Kumar Pandit, Special Secretary, Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs attended the meeting here while Special Secretaries, Additional Secretaries, Deputy Legal Remembrancer /Senior Law Officers/Public Law Officers and the Legal Assistants posted in different departments

presently at Srinagar participated through video conference.

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, Department of Law, justice and Parliamentary Affairs. The details of the cases which have become in fruitful and the cases worth to be contested on its merits have also been sought from the concerned officers.

Besides, two nodal officers one from Jammu Division and other from Kashmir Division will be assigned the job of consolidation of the requisite information. These nodal officers will remain in touch with the Government as well as the Law Officers.

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.

Kansal discusses modalities for installation of smart meters

Seeks strengthening of Data Recovery Centre, Call Centres

JAMMU, MAY 27: Principal Secretary, Power Development Department, Rohit Kansal today discussed the modalities for implementation of smart metre installation project and execution of Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for IT infrastructure created under R-APDRP Part-A, here at a meeting in Civil Secretariat, Jammu.

Kansal, who is also Chairman of Jammu/Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited also reviewed the overall functioning of JPDCL and KPDCCL.

The meeting, among others, was attended by Managing Director, JPDCL, Yasha Mudgal; Special Secretary, PDD, Ravinder Sadhu; Chief Engineer, JPDCL, Gurmeet Singh; Chief Engineer Projects, JPDCL, Manhar Gupta; Chief Manager, PGCIL, Syed Alamdar; State Coordi-

nator REC PDCL, Sanjeev Kailnoo; Executive Director, Power GRID, Rakesh Kumar, XEN, IT&C JPDCL, Neel Kanwal Singh and other concerned senior officers.

Managing Director KPDCCL, Mohammad Aijaz Asad; Director Finance PDD, Chief Engineer KPDCCL, Secretary Technical PDD, Executive Engineer IT Audit & Vigilance, Division Kashmir attended the meeting through video conferencing.

Threadbare discussions were held on the preliminary work being done for Smart Metering and other issues.

The meeting decided that the implementation of smart metering (installation of 1.15 Lakh smart meters) would be started from July, 2020 and the hardware along with software solution for it would be provided by REC PDCL.

The meeting also informed that the AMC of the existing Data and Data Recovery Centre has expired and re-tendering of same will be done by the Chief Engineer Distribution KPDCCL.

The Principal Secretary informed that out of 1.15 Lakh meters, 80 thousand would be installed in Jammu Division and 35 thousand in Kashmir Division, while the installation would be carried out in a phased manners. It was also informed that 10 thousand meters have already been procured and these would be installed in the rural areas of the Union Territory.

Rohit Kansal directed the concerned officers to accelerate the ground work for installation of meters in Jammu as well as Kashmir Division for the time bound completion of the project.

DIAL-EMMA



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS



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

HIGHWAY STATUS



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



**HIJRI
CALENDAR**
05 Shawwal
1441

PRAYERS

FAJR	3: 41
ZUHR	12: 28
ASR	5:26
Magrib	7:37
ISHA	9:15

This Day In History

- 585 BC - Solar eclipse, as predicted by Greek philosopher Thales, while Lydians at war with the Medes leads to a truce. One of the cardinal dates from which other dates calculated.
- 640 - Severinus begins his reign as Catholic Pope (elected in 638)
- 1037 - Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II removes "Constitutio the Feudis"
- 1156 - Battle at Brindisi: Norman-Sicilian King William beats Byzantine fleet under John Doukas and Alexios Bryennios
- 1349 - 60 Jews murdered in Breslau, Silesia
- 1358 - Daint-Leu at Olse begins French boer uprising
- 1431 - Joan of Arc is accused of relapsing into heresy by donning male clothing again, providing justification for her execution
- 1521 - Pope Leo X signs treaty with Holy Roman Emperor Charles V
- Charles V
- 1588 - Spanish Armada under the Duke of Medina-Sidonia departs Lisbon to invade England
- 1741 - Spain and Bavaria sign treaty
- 1863 - 1st black regiment (54 Mass) leaves Boston to fight in US Civil War
- 1871 - Paris communards revolt put down
- 1900 - Total solar eclipse occurs
- 1918 - Azerbaijan gains independence and declares itself a Democratic Republic
- 1926 - Military coup by General Manuel Gomes da Costa in Portugal
- 1948 - Israeli Air Force is officially founded shortly after the start of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War
- 1948 - Iraq captures Ge'ulim settlement
- 1964 - Jawaharlal Nehru cremated in New Dehli
- 1964 - Palestine National Congress forms the PLO in Jerusalem
- 1964 - Unmanned Apollo 2 Saturn test launched into Earth orbit
- 1965 - Fire & explosion at Dhorl mine in Dhanbad India kills 400
- 1970 - The formerly united Free University of Brussels officially splits into two separate entities, the French-speaking Université Libre de Bruxelles and the Dutch-speaking Vrije Universiteit Brussel.
- 1970 - Arms Trial Begins: several men are charged in a Dublin court with conspiracy to illegally import arms for use by the Irish Republican Army (IRA)
- 1971 - USSR Mars 3 launched, 1st spacecraft to soft land on Mars
- 1975 - Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is established by the Treaty of Lagos
- 1987 - Monitor, Civil War warship, is discovered by a deep sea robot
- 1995 - Earthquake hits Russian town of Khabarovsk, killing 2,000 people
- 1998 - Nuclear testing: Pakistan responds to a series of Indian nuclear tests with five of its own, prompting the United States, Japan, and other nations to impose economic sanctions.
- 2002 - NATO declares Russia a limited partner in the Western alliance.
- 2004 - The Iraqi Governing Council chooses Ayad Allawi, a longtime anti-Saddam Hussein exile, to become Prime Minister of Iraq's interim government.
- 2008 - The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly of Nepal formally declares Nepal a republic, ending the 240-year reign of the Shah dynasty.
- 2014 - Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is elected President of Egypt.

From KO Archives

Forms For Hurriyat Today

SRINAGAR - The Centre today agreed to issue travel forms to Hurriyat Conference leaders belonging to the moderate faction to go to Pakistan controlled Kashmir by the Srinagar -Muzaffarabad bus on June two. "We will be issuing forms to them (Hurriyat leaders) Friday." Regional Passport Officer S L Sreeramulu said here.

Asked if the Centre had given clearance to issue of forms to the separatist leaders, Sreeramulu said "yes that is why we are issuing the forms to them." He had earlier said his office had run out of forms.

Sreeramulu said one form would be given to each applicant but the number of persons to be allowed to travel on the said date had not been decided yet. He said the list of passengers to travel on the bus on June two was almost complete.

However, the passport officer said if the Centre issues Man order to specifically accommodate the Hurriyat leaders, he would oblige.

The special buses plying on Srinagar -Muzaffarabad route have 19 seats and sources in the separatist camps indicated that the total number of leaders travelling to Pakistan would not exceed 15.

(Kashmir Observer, 28 May, 2005)

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Office of the Executive Engineer PHE Division Baramulla							
E - Tender Notice No. Dated		06 of 05/2020 23.05.2020					
For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir (UT), e-tenders [in single cover system] are invited from the Registered SHG Contractors for the works mentioned hereunder:							
Position of AAA		= Accorded		Position of Funds			
Total No. of works		= (02 only)		= Available			
S. No.	Name of work	Estt. Cost (Rs in lacs)	Earnest Money (In Rs)	Class of Contractor	Time	Tender Receiving Auth.	Cost of T. doc. (in Rs)
	Chain Link Fencing around Structures and Const of approach road from main road to Hilltop Filtration Plant site Venkara under WSS Venkara JKIDFC	15.92 lacs	15920/-	SHG	45 days	-do-	1000/-
	Laying Fitting Successful testing and commissioning of 200mm dia D.I Raw water main from Source at Chanpora upto Ratnipora from RD 0 to 4000 Mtrs WSS Wanigam Tilgam under JKIDFC	11.79 lacs	11790/-	SHG	45 days	-do-	700/-
Contractors are requested to inspect the site of work before submitting the tender for the work. The estimated rate left blank in the uploaded BOQ shall be treated as RTQ (Rate to be quoted)							
1. The deplete bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, technical specifications, bill of quantities [B.O.Q.] set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the website jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given hereunder:							
1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	23.05.2020					
2.	Date of Publishing	23.05.2020					
3.	Period of downloading of bidding documents	23.05.2020 (14.00 Hrs) to 05.06.2020 upto 16.00 Hrs)					
4.	Bid Submission Start date	23.05.2020 from (14.00Hrs)					
5.	Bid Submission End date	05.06.2020 upto (16.00 Hrs)					
6.	Date and time of opening of bids [online]	06.06.2020 from 10.00Hrs					
Sd/-Executive Engineer P.H.E Division Baramulla							
No. PHE/Adm/BlA/ 537-61 Dated: 23/05/2020							
DIPK-1011/20							

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Office of the Executive Engineer PHE Division Baramulla						
e-NIT No 07 of 05/2020 Issued under No. 562-86 dated 23. 05.2020						
For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir (UT), e-tender [in single cover system] is invited from the Registered PWD Contractors for the work mentioned hereunder:						
Position of AAA = Available		Position of Funds = Submitted				
S. No	Name of Work	Cost of work (in Rs)	Cost of Tender Doc. (in Rs)	Earnest Money (in Rs)	Time of Completion	Class
1	a. Soil Testing, Design Provision, Construction, Successful testing & commissioning of 0.10 MGD Rapid Sand Filtration Plant comprising of Clarifloculator, Flash Mixer, Filter House with steel roof truss and coloured CGI sheet roofing of specified gauge, Separate OHT type Back Wash Tank and clear water Sump, sludge disposal chamber including all relevant Electro/ Mechanical Components with Trial run and maintenance for a period of 06 months after completion of the work. b. Soil testing design provision construction successful testing and commissioning of 0.50 lac Gallons Capacity RCC Circular Dome type Service Reservoir two third under ground (Subject to flow Diagram) c. Soil Testing Design provision Construction successful testing and commissioning of 0.50 lac Gallons Rectangular RCC Pre Settling Tank with steel grill work around structure for safe guard . On TURNKEY BASIS at Buran WSS Ganjipora Buran Under NABARD	103.00	3000.00	2.06 Lacs	365 days	AAY
2	Construction, Successful testing commissioning of 0.10 MGD Rapid Sand Filtration Plant comprising of Clarifloculator, Flash Mixer, Filter House with steel roof truss and coloured CGI sheet roofing of specified gauge, separate OHT type Back Wash Tank, including all relevant Electro/ Mechanical Components with Trial run and maintenance for a period of 06 months after completion of the work , on TURNKEY BASIS at Dandmoh (as indicated on the site plan) for Water Supply Scheme Cherawari Dandmoh under Distt. Sector NABARD	65.00	3000.00	0.65 lacs	180 days	SHG
1. Date of publishing from 23.05.2020 (10:00am) 2. The Bidding documents can be downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in from 23.05.2020 to 08.06.2020 (upto 04:00pm) 3. The Bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the website www.jktenders.gov.in from 23.05.2020 (10:00am) to 08.06.2020 up to 04:00pm. The bids received will be opened on 09.06.2020 at 02 pm. 4. The complete bidding process will be online. 5. Bid documents can be seen at and downloaded from the website http://jktenders.gov.in . Bid documents contain qualifying criteria for bidder, specifications.						
DIPK-1006/20						
Sd/- Executive Engineer PHE Division Baramulla						

KASHMIR OBSERVER

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of the
Kashmir Observer LLP
Published from: # 5- Boulevard, Srinagar-190001
Printed at: KT Press Pvt. Ltd, Rangreth Ind Area, Srinagar.
RNI Registration No: 69503/98
Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16
Editor-in-Chief : Sajjad Haider
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Reopen The Economy

J&K government seems in no mood to ease the COVID-19 lockdown in Kashmir which has now been over two months old. In this period, the number of COVID-19 positive cases has gone up from one to around 1800 cases. There are thousands others who are under quarantine. This has naturally led to perpetuation of the lockdown which, in turn, has wrought havoc with the economy. The problem with the lockdown in Kashmir is that it didn't start on March 25 but on August 5 when New Delhi revoked Article 370 that granted J&K its autonomous status under India's constitution. So, Kashmir has effectively been shut for over nine months. This is too long a lockdown for any economy to sustain. Almost all businesses have suffered disproportionate losses. Many smaller businesses have been wiped out.

An estimate by Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) says the Valley's economy has been set back by more than Rs 18000 crore during post Article 370 lockdown. Similarly, according to Kashmir Trade Alliance, the Valley has lost Rs 8416.2 crore over the two months of the Covid19 lockdown. The general trade has suffered the highest loss of Rs 1620 crore followed by that of the industrial sector at Rs 1248. Similarly horticulture sector, tourism, IT industry, handicrafts sector have suffered massive losses. There are an estimated 80,000 metric tonnes of apples lying in Kashmir, one lakh tonnes of apples which are in cold storage and may rot during the coronavirus lockdown.

Education has been the worst hit. The children haven't also gone to school for nine months. And it looks unlikely they will be able to do so this year. At the same, the children can't even study online as the government has refused to restore high-speed mobile internet.

There is thus a strong case for the government to review the restrictions and eases them considerably to let the people return to businesses. Going by its economic cost, the lockdown has become unsustainable. As things stand, lockdown is wrecking the businesses, leaving thousands of people unemployed. It has hit the marginalized sections very hard. The fallout of the lockdown will be thus worse than that of the Coronavirus pandemic and on a much bigger scale. What the government should focus on instead is to strictly enforce the social distancing norms in public. It can also devote more resources towards creating a better awareness about the contagion. This will help in making people more responsible in their daily activities. And this is eminently doable for the government, considering the smaller population of Kashmir makes the pandemic more manageable than the densely populated states across India.

OTHER OPINION

Tackling The Surge

With less than a week for Lockdown 4 to end, India's COVID-19 caseload has surged past 1,40,000. The relaxation of restrictions from the third phase of the lockdown onwards has added to the challenges faced by the country's already overburdened healthcare system. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, the positivity rate (share of tests that yield positive results) has gone up to 7 per cent in the three weeks of Lockdown 3 and 4 — it was around 3 per cent at the end of Lockdown 2. The mortality rate, reassuringly, has remained static at about 3 per cent. Moreover, more than 80 per cent of the infected do not require hospitalisation. Even then, the sheer scale of the pandemic seems to be taxing the resources of hospitals in most parts of the country and taking a toll on the health of medical professionals. The death, on Sunday, of a COVID-positive nurse employed at a private hospital in Delhi, who was allegedly made to wear used PPEs, frames the difficulties of those at the frontlines of the battle against the virus.

In the past two months, states have tried to mobilise public resources, ramp up medical centres, and shore up quarantine facilities. In most parts of the country, such efforts have, at best, produced mixed results. In Delhi, more than 75 per cent of the beds earmarked for COVID-positive patients in private hospitals are already occupied. Though the Delhi government claims that the situation is under control, it needs to be on high alert because the city has been adding more than 400 COVID cases daily for more than a week now. In Mumbai, as a report in this paper showed last week, the situation is much more critical: There is an acute shortage of Dedicated Covid Hospitals, which admit critically ill patients like those who require ICU or ventilator support. With the return of migrants from hotspots, districts and small towns in the country will have their task cut out. Khagaria district in Bihar, for instance, expects about 50,000 migrants to return in the coming weeks, but has only two ventilators, both in private hospitals. Only 37 of the 135 posts of government doctors in the district have been filled.

Overwhelmed by the pandemic, some medical facilities have turned up the pressure on medical professionals, particularly junior doctors and nurses. Last week, the Gujarat High Court pulled up the state's health minister and chief secretary for neglecting the problems faced by patients and staff at the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital. Responding to an anonymous letter detailing the problems of the government hospital's junior staff, the court described the healthcare facility as a "dungeon". As the country's COVID-19 caseload increases, policymakers and hospital authorities need to work at creative solutions to deal with the patient influx. As a first step, they must treat healthcare workers in a humane manner, ensure their safety.

The Indian Express

WAJAHAT QAZI

In Kashmir the delivery and nature of education is not a picture of excellence: it is, in fact shoddy. Government schools are the worst where many times, the teacher student ratio is skewed, delivery is extremely poor, curricula are outdated and rote learning is incentivised, to name just a few negative aspects of learning and teaching.

Do Good Grades and Marks Matter?



In South Asia there is an obsession with grades or more accurately, getting good grades. Such is the fanatical obsession with good grades, that these are almost held to be a measure of self-worth. But, grades are grades - a subjective evaluation and assessment of a student.

THERE'S hardly a field, domain or discipline that has not been affected by the Covid 19 pandemic. One such field is that of education which has been hit at all levels- primary, secondary and tertiary. While attempts have been and are being made to deliver education non-conventionally- online through zoom and other channels- but it is not the same thing as the 'bricks and mortar' stuff that, actual and real class room learning. What may accrue from this is that in the future there might be a synthesis of online and real, classroom learning. But, all this obscures one important aspect of learning and teaching- grades, marks and the grading system(s).

By way of a bit of a digression, in South Asia, there is an obsession with grades or more accurately, getting good grades. Such is the fanatical obsession with good grades, that these are almost held to be a measure of self-worth. But, grades are grades- a subjective evaluation and assessment of a student of his or her exams or assignments. So why this monofocal emphasis on grades?

The answer is multi-pronged but in the main it pertains to society and the importance attached to high grades by some or even most employers. Consider society first. In , say, the context of Kashmir, my birthplace, society holds good grades to be the epitome of a student's worth, emblematising the 'goodness' or 'badness' of a given student. By default, then it is assumed that a student who has obtained good grades is 'naturally' good and the one who has not is 'bad'. Employers use grades as a yardstick and a proxy for the ability and intelligence of a potential employee. But, then, to repeat, grades are grades that may have some correlation to intelligence and ability of a student but are not and should not be the end all or be all.

High grades can be obtained by hard work and diligence or by rote learning and memorising that while

are reflective of one aspect of learning but do not constitute real learning. The bane of memorisation and rote learning is very real in Kashmir. Real learning, among other things, is the ability to understand and put into perspective concepts, gain conceptual clarity and understand, all overlain by critical thinking. There's more that goes into education, learning and pedagogy but these aspects or attributes might be the core of these.

In Kashmir the delivery and nature of education is not a picture of excellence: it is, in fact shoddy. Government schools are the worst where many times, the teacher student ratio is skewed, delivery is extremely poor, curricula are outdated and rote learning is incentivised, to name just a few negative aspects of learning and teaching.

Moreover, grades can be merely suggestive of a student's ability and intelligence. In Kashmir, for example. The delivery and nature of education is not a picture of excellence: it is, in fact shoddy. Government schools are the worst where many times, the teacher student ratio is skewed, delivery is extremely poor, curricula are outdated and rote learning is incentivised, to name just a few negative aspects of learning and teaching. The situation is to bad that it is only the extremely intelligent who manage to educate themselves through and in the cracks of our bloated, ineffective and inefficient educational eco system. Yet, again then good grades cannot be indicative of a student's real ability and intelligence. There is also the effect of poverty. Education is an eco-system where the family and the student, to use the jargon of social innovation, co-create value. But students from poorer backgrounds suffer, on this account, for no fault of theirs.

At best, then grades are a partial surrogate and proxy of a subjective and contingent assessment of a student. Does this mean grades are no good? No. All it means is that grades

must be viewed as a form and kind of feedback used for determining where the real interest of a student lies and as feedback for improvement. Grades- whether poor or good- must not leave an imprimatur on the direction and thrust of a student's life. But this assertion might hold more in developed contexts where student choice is more, universities and institutions of learning do not generally discriminate on ageism and so on. In lesser development contexts, grades can be or ever are determinative. How can this problem be obviated? The answer lies in the supply side of education which must be improved drastically so that students, especially disadvantaged ones, are not had done by and their life chances thrown down the drain just because of grades.

In the final analysis, grades do matter but these should not be seen as a matter of harsh judgment and cast gloom and doom on a person. It has been, in developed contexts been observed that individuals who have done stupendously well have been school dropouts. This is not to suggest that students should leave school but to put into perspective the nature of intelligence which can be, at times, totally divorced from grades. So, students who read this essay: chill, understand yourselves and focus on what you are really into and find for yourselves niches where you can excel. Good grades and great careers will follow!

Tailpiece: The Covid 19 pandemic whose duration remains unknown has thrown into tizzy academics schedules. In many parts of the west, what has been done is give predictive grades. That is, grades based and extrapolated from past performance. Perhaps this can be replicated in Kashmir instead of giving mass promotions.

Author is a columnist and has formerly served as Associate Editor at Kashmir Observer.



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Maternity Deaths at MCH Anantnag

With broken heart and tears rolling down from eyes I am once again writing about the lone maternity care hospital of my home district which always hits the headlines of newspapers and news channels, but not for good reasons. Every other day a tragic story comes from this so called maternity care hospital and no one bothers. It has become the death trap for pregnant women and the genocide centre for the new born. The arrogant behaviour of the medical staff at MCH is known to all who so ever visits the hospital. It is the hospital where paramedical staff take hefty amount in the name of "Chai" it is the hospital where an entry pass of Rs. 10 is cut by gatekeeper into two or three pieces and this way three persons can make an entry in the wards so on and so forth. This all was done behind the curtains but thanks to social media which give voice to voice less people and exposed the health institution to a large extent. Another tragedy is that the hospital is situated in the congested Sherbagh

locality with no traffic management except a narrow and busy lane where an ambulance can hardly pass. Not only this but the building of the hospital is small and unsafe. Building is without proper ventilation and heating system.

From last many years administration failed to shift the hospital from Sherbagh because of nexus between the hospital administration and the shopkeepers outside who are dependent on this hospital for their bread and butter.

The recent tragedy of a death of pregnant lady along with her twins shook the very foundations of the humanity and exposed the rot in the system in a big way. But unfortunately this death was wrapped in the coffin of Coronavirus and no action was taken against the medical staff of the institution. Since then they deny the treatment to the expectant mothers and treat them as untouchables under the tag of Covid -19 and red zone which a big tragedy. From last few days every day videos are shared on social media by the people

about the denial of treatment and irresponsibility, arrogance and hard attitude of the doctors and paramedical staff but all goes unheard and administration is silent over the issue.

Today another pregnant lady lost her life in the same hospital after being referred from SDH Seer Hamdan. Adding salt to their wounds they were denied ambulance amid lockdown and video of dead body of this woman on hospital trolley got viral on social media. Soon after this the Deputy Commissioner Anantnag tweeted and blamed the relatives that they took away body without legal formalities. But how is it possible that amid the covid-19 surveillance relatives came out from the hospital with a dead body? Isn't it a question mark on Covid-19 management in the hospital? It's pretty clear that the women was not from red zone and died due to medical negligence.

Another tragedy is that every time the hospital administration blames the lack of infrastructure and equipments and drops curtain on mismanagement in hospital administration.

One wonders that every year crores of rupees are kept for development of health care especially maternity health but why this hospital is still lacking facilities is a big question. Why MCH Anantnag mostly refer patients to L.D Hospital Srinagar? Why Deputy Commissioner Anantnag does not spare funds for this hospital during district board meetings? Why action was not taken against those who were involved in previous deaths at MCH? These are some questions answer for which people of district seek.

Now if the district administration is really concerned about the health care system of district then they should take concrete steps to overhaul the health sector of Anantnag and priority should be given to the maternity and child care and secondly steps should be taken to shift the hospital from congested Sherbagh area as soon as possible. This way we will save precious lives.

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More We Remain Silent, More Criminal It Is: Aga Ruhullah

AUQIB JAVEED

“If the objective is not only elections, we are only in a political process,” he said. “Many of my colleagues are detained under the PSA. Others including me are put under house detention. My heart goes out to them and I wish & pray for their immediate release. But, believe me their and our (house) detention is a political message and process itself

SRINAGAR: Rumbblings in Kashmir’s grand old party arose on May 24, the first day of Eid, when its Budgam face questioned the party’s silent stand on the swiftly taken steps in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

In a series of tweets, Aga Ruhullah Mehdi, National Conference’s Chief spokesperson, said while the government was doing a job, the hands and thoughts of local leaders were not tied.

“If the objective is not only elections, we are only in a political process,” he said. “Many of my colleagues are detained under the PSA. Others including me are put under house detention. My heart goes out to them and I wish & pray for their immediate release. But, believe me their and our (house) detention is a political message and process itself.”

The articulate leader who plunged into politics following his father’s assassination in 2000 said the political leaders of Kashmir should not be seeking permission from the government for various things as it would mean doing only what the government wants them to do.

His tweets came as a sharp retort and response to his party colleague, Tanvir Sadiq’s article in a local daily.

While calling for the release of all political leaders, Sadiq in his write-up exhorted the government to allow resumption of the political process.

“What is a political process for you? Only an election?” Mehdi quizzed Sadiq. “If we go with a reason and stand our course, even being detained is a part of political process.”

Mehdi said he was ready to be taken from his home to a prison but would not ask permission of the government to do what he wants.

As his tweets triggered a new political row in the valley, the former cabinet minister, and a three-time legislator—who has pinned a telling tweet on his handle: “The axe forgets, but the tree remembers”—in an exclusive interview with Kashmir Observer talks about his party’s growing political posturing in J&K.

INTERVIEWER

What made you question your party colleague’s article? Aren’t you happy with NC’s response to post-Article 370 situation in J&K?

RUHULLAH MEHDI

I can’t say, if I’m happy or not. Let my party respond. We’ll have some clarity after that. But yes, as of now, I



may, or mayn’t, agree with my party colleagues’ opinions.

However, as National Conference is yet to respond to the J&K situation, it becomes a different thing, if we’re taking or losing time.

In this backdrop, my response to my party colleague, Tanvir Sadiq, was to his individual opinion. I hope, his opinion doesn’t reflect the party stand.

INTERVIEWER

But what if the party agrees with Tanvir Sadiq’s opinion?

MEHDI

Well, I don’t think I might be okay with that.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think is the dominant opinion of your other party colleagues?

MEHDI

Honestly speaking, I don’t know their opinion, as I haven’t met them personally yet.

INTERVIEWER

But don’t you think it’s too late, too little to know that now, given how BJP is already implementing its policies in J&K?

MEHDI

See, the party has its own justifications regarding their response, and I may not, personally, like those justifications. Because, I believe, we’re losing our precious time.

The other day, BJP’s Ram Madhav said it quite openly that they’ve done their job in Kashmir. According to him, there’s hardly anything for us to do in

Jammu and Kashmir now. And mind you, this is coming from the general secretary of the ruling party!

So, yes, they’re doing their job. Whatever their objectives had, they’re done with it. And in the process, we’re losing it.

And therefore, it’s my personal opinion, that more we remain silent, more criminal it is.

INTERVIEWER

But why is there a silence in your camp?

MEHDI

See, the party leadership is waiting for the release of other colleagues. People like [Ali Mohammad] Sagar Sb [NC General Secretary], and others are still under detention.

The other justification is that the Working Committee, the decision making body, is yet to meet. Technically, the body can’t meet, till the detained leaders aren’t released.

And this is where the hitch lies. Until and unless the committee meets, the party can’t take a final decision.

But while I agree that the decision-making body has a role, individual opinions and NC’s age-old political stand equally matter. We can immediately take a decision based on the NC’s near century-old principles.

As the oldest political force of J&K, we know our principles, our stand — Autonomy, Article 370, individuality of the state, the rights and respects that constitution has guaranteed us.

So, yes, let me tell you, in case people are wondering, we can have an opinion on what happened on August

5. Our party doesn’t need to wait for the Working Committee to get together, and take a final decision.

INTERVIEWER

What according to you should be the party line right now?

MEHDI

I believe, we can have our opinions, and should convey them to New Delhi.

Thing is, NC hasn’t forgotten what we, as a party, always stood for. Both individually, and collectively, we can make it known to everyone, that whatever happened on August 5 is unacceptable, and that, we haven’t surrendered to it, and we don’t agree to it. This is how I think and feel.

I believe that’s the course the Working Committee can sit, and decide.

INTERVIEWER

But then, your party leader, Omar Abdullah is repeatedly saying that he’ll talk about the issue when the right time comes. Any idea, when will that right time come?

MEHDI

You should ask this question to him, as he’s the right person to answer: why he and others are silent—and, when’ll be the right time for them to speak up on the issue.

For me, as an individual, the right time was post-August or any time after that. Unfortunately, since then, we’ve already lost a lot of time. I don’t say we should pick-up the gun against New Delhi’s moves, but we should be seriously doing some talking now.

Since August 5 is not acceptable to the party, who’s stopping us to tell people that NC hasn’t surrendered.

INTERVIEWER

But then, your detractors say, NC’s party line stands compromised today, given how the 4G politics has taken a center-stage in your party ranks now? Is this your stand as well?

MEHDI

Listen, the day the party clears its stand on the situation, I will announce my decision.

As of now, my stand is clear. I’m not going to compromise on my principles.

I also agree that NC is taking too much time to clear its stand, and that too, when New Delhi is doing its job and people of the Jammu and Kashmir are made to suffer.

We shouldn’t remain silent, and lose more time now. It’s the time to do some talking.

Lockdown Diary of a Kashmiri Stranded in Pakistan

AASHIQ HUSSAIN ANDRABI



MARRIED to a Pakistani national, I’m currently on a visit to my in-laws. We live in a rented house on a street in suburban Islamabad. It’s the 45th day of lockdown here. Administration has announced easing of curbs initiated on April 1 and extended twice.

My wife and I are out to a local utility store to shop essential food supplies.

The store has drawn circles, squares on the floor outside store, to maintain social distancing, curb contagion, and protect its staff.

“That’s nice,” I said to my wife, gesturing to the safety precaution.

The salesman guarding and checking us out was not satisfied, however.

“Stand over there, where everyone stands while they wait to be called in,” he said.

I did. Almost three feet separated us, half the recommended social-distancing protocol.

Shoppers are standing at the cash counter for four or five minutes settling their bills; probably, since they’re hoarding food.

Also, when an epidemic spreads, so do rumours and misinformation.

While standing in the queue, I hear two men talking to each other. “This disease is nothing but a bio-weapon,” one of them says.

The other is sure the whole thing is a hoax—a story spread, so the public would accept “restrictive curbs upon their personal freedoms”.

It’s our turn now to get inside and shop. We get inside, the racks have been picked over, but at least the aisles aren’t crowded. I still found a bag of my brand of rice, a crate of eggs and a nice spaghetti packet, our new comfort food.

Aside from such weekly trips to the grocery, we’ve hardly left our house in forty-five days, and there’s a sense not only of being shut away from the world but of being out of it altogether—or adjacent to it, somewhere terribly familiar yet not quite the same.

As we step out of the shop, we meet a driver, who used to earn his livelihood driving a passenger vehicle from Rawalpindi to Lahore.

I greet him with *Salam and smile*. “*Wa’aliakum Assalam*,” he responds. I followed up with how he was doing during lockdown.

“I’m suddenly uprooted by the lockdown placing me in very precarious situation,” he laments. “I fear hunger more than the virus.”

Seeing the driver under severe stress and feeling the pain of the human tragedy that has unfolded to him, my wife takes out her wallet and provides some financial assistance to the distressed driver.

Though the public transport, offices, parks and

public spots continue to be closed, on our way back I see boys and young men down the street riding their motorcycles, and the market swarmed by ladies and window shoppers busy with Eid shopping.

“I do not feel comfortable while shopping in a congested environment,” my wife comments, as we see some of the shoppers wearing the surgery room masks.

“Sometimes,” she continues, “you find what you’re looking for, though you’re also forced to make unnecessary compromises quite frequently. It’s better to buy stuff in a hassle-free environment.”

As we move, I see a huge crowd has gathered outside one of the shops. There’s no space for our vehicle to pass by. I lower the glass of my vehicle door and enquire from a bystander.

“Some women had come out here for shopping, carrying along with them little kids,” he replies. “Women police personal came to arrest them for failing to comply with the administration’s coronavirus lockdown directions barring bringing along kids below 10.”

I see the shopkeepers yelling in the faces of women police personal. It’s so weird. But finally, we man-

age to make space and move on.

We reach home, and within a few minutes, my wife, assistant professor, gets a call from her colleague.

“*I had to terminate the services of my house help, I can hear the caller, “as I didn’t want myself and my child get exposed. My main issue was she might bring the virus. I just wanted to make sure that my home stays healthy and safe.*”

We feel so bad for the poor domestic help. “I’m hearing person after person losing their job,” my wife tells me. “I’ve a job, and I’m grateful for that, but at the same time, there’s so much of pain unfolding around me.”

With a heavy heart, as we start making preparations for iftari, she gets another call, this time, from a student class representative.

“*Mam, I overhear the student say, “many of the students are complaining about connectivity problems. The students have also reservations about the quality and effectiveness of online teaching as they cannot ask questions in case they fail to comprehend a lecture.*”

It makes me feel that the pandemic is giving birth

to an epidemic of lost learning.

Over text, my cousins are sharing their experiences about the pandemic in Srinagar. They spend the time in the doldrums of lockdown. It’s boring, they tell me. Everything is closed, and they miss being at schools.

“I want to hug my friends. Google classroom and Zoom are just not going ever bridge that gap,” one of them says.

“Yes, we do a lot of connecting via social media, and that’s still happening, but that face-to-face and being with friends... we’re missing that,” he adds.

Closed schools are seriously creating more trauma for students, and I could feel that in the texts sent by my cousins. We’re joined by my father-in-law. He retired as Assistant Professor and post-retirement, he runs a college.

As we get into a discussion, on how the colleges across are scrambling to close deep budget holes and some have been pushed to the brink of collapse after the coronavirus outbreak triggered financial losses, he says, “This crisis is causing massive disruption to institutional operations and institutional finances. There’re multiple hits on the revenue side and new hits on the cost side.”

According to him, the hurt is deeper this time, and the recovery period will be longer.

The coronavirus pandemic is turning daily life upside-down around the world. Domestic helpers, drivers, students and college owners are among those who suffer the most.

Even as life begins again with the easing of the lockdown, the multifaceted aftershocks of the coronavirus pandemic will be felt for years.

To my mind, the unpredictability surrounding our future is bound to cause a sense of alienation.

For a society like Pakistan many, particularly the poor, labourers and least but not the last, the students will keep suffering for no fault of theirs. They’ve a little understanding of why this happened.

Like everyone else here, I’m having trouble thinking about anything other than coronavirus pandemic, and the shockwaves it has sent, and will continue to send.

As I’m stranded here, due to the lockdown, I find myself thinking and talking about it constantly. It’s absorbing me and it’s with the burden of these unprecedented circumstances and the uncertainties that I’m writing this diary.

Aashiq Hussain Andrabi is a Journalism Student, Freelance Writer, Digital Media Marketer, Educator and a Scout Leader. He previously worked with the Directorate of Information and PR as Reporter.



CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN Anxieties Take Toll On Sleep Cycle

Press Trust Of India

BINGE-watching till dawn, playing endless online games, video chats until the sun rises or simply staring into darkness while everyone around is in deep slumber... wakeful nights are no longer about once in a while but too often for comfort. As India navigates the ninth week of the nationwide lockdown that pushed millions of people into the confines of their homes, distress and anxiety are on the rise, manifesting primarily in the form of sleep disorders.

Medical experts said the number of consultation calls over erratic sleep cycles have shot up since the country went into lockdown on March 25 to stem the spread of COVID-19. "People are living with many uncertainties and insecurities. Worrying about health, job and financial security and managing household chores alongside

office deadlines, all the while working from home are among the factors influencing our sleep quality," said Gulshan Kumar, a neurophysiologist at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS).

The Bangalore-based medical institution has also seen an increase in the number of queries related to sleep issues like insomnia since the lockdown started, he said. Quantifying the stress over jobs, working from home, a pandemic that shows no signs of ebbing and an uncertain future, a pan-India survey by wakefit.co revealed that 44 per cent of 1,500 respondents were getting less than six hours of sleep during the lockdown. The number of people facing a sleep crisis before March 25 was significantly lower at 26 per cent, the survey by the Bangalore-based sleep solutions company added. While many complain of insomnia

and sleep deprivation, there are some who are seeking treatment for oversleeping or hypersomnia. And there are those like Gaganjot Kaur who have both insomnia and hypersomnia.

The 33-year-old said she cannot remember even one night of restful sleep in the last two months. Most nights she can get barely get three hours of sleep, but there have also been days when she's slept for 10 hours at a stretch and still wakes up feeling unrested. "It's not like I am consciously trying to stay awake. I find myself up at three in the morning for no reason. It's almost like there is a disconnect between my body and its need for sleep," the Delhi University philosophy professor said. She said she had been diagnosed with General Anxiety Disorder (GAD) a few years ago and was seeing a therapist. But her condition aggravated in the last two months. Gaganjot, who

enrolled in a Phd course recently, said she was initially thankful for the lockdown, assuming it would give her a lot of time to focus on her research work. But as it kept getting extended, she found her mind inundated with panic-inducing thoughts.

"I think about hundreds of things when I lie awake in bed, but I immediately start spiralling when I think of my career. I constantly feel I am not being productive enough. Another thing I cannot stop worrying about is my parents, who are extremely vulnerable to the coronavirus infection," Gaganjot, who lives with husband and sister-in-law, said. The "new anxieties" combined with the lack of enough sleep have started affecting not just her professional productivity, but also her relationships.

"Work wise I am not able to achieve even half of what I aim for. Besides, I find myself snap-

ping and feeling irritated at my family members," she said. Priyanka Dass, who once had a "nearly perfect" 11 pm to 5 am sleep cycle, found herself struggling to stay awake as soon as the clock struck 7 in the evening, particularly the first few weeks of the lockdown.

"I would fall asleep in the evening, for not more than a couple of hours around 7-9 pm, and then would barely sleep through the night," the Delhi-based publicist said. During most of these sleepless nights, the 25-year-old ended up "overthinking everything", and once also had a panic attack. She then started watching Netflix and reading books to keep her mind occupied. "Sometimes, I simply hop out of bed to whip up something in the kitchen," she said. According to mental health expert Prakriti Poddar, carefully cultivated routines over the years have gone for a

toss and the stress is natural. "In times like these when everybody is at home, and routines have changed, people might feel low, and even depressed, creating a sleep crisis. "Stress and worry have an intense impact on the sleep cycle," she said. Both Kumar and Poddar advise against ignoring irregular sleeping patterns, which can affect cognitive abilities, including learning and memory retention, over a long period.

"Research confirms that there is a strong link between learning, memory and sleep. During sleep, nerve cell connections in the brain are strengthened and this enhances the brain's abilities to stabilise and retain memories. "With a disrupted sleep cycle or not enough sleep, it is very difficult for the brain to stabilise neural connections and consolidate memory effectively," Kumar explained. Sound sleep of seven-nine hours is an

important aspect of recovery, added Poddar.

Doctors recommend physical activity, yoga and maybe some music to calm the mind and body. The list of don'ts includes using electronic devices like mobile phones and laptops before sleeping and caffeinated drinks such as colas, alcohol, coffee, and tea, particularly in the evening. "The bedtime and wake time should be consistent from day to day, including on weekends. Regular vigorous exercise for 20-30 minutes during the day promotes a good night's sleep.

"If despite all this, an individual is not able to sleep within 20 minutes, they should move out of the bed and perform some light, non-stimulating activity like reading a book and wait until the feeling of drowsiness sets in," said Vivek Nangia, director, pulmonology, Medical Critical Care & Sleep Disorders, Fortis Hospital, New Delhi.

Masks Too Dangerous For Children Under Two, Says Japan Medical Group

Agencies

TOKYO- Children under the age of two shouldn't wear masks because they can make breathing difficult and increase the risk of choking, a Japan medical group said, launching an urgent appeal to parents as the country reopens from the coronavirus crisis.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe lifted a state of emergency for Tokyo and four remaining areas on Monday after the number of infections fell across Japan, but warned that it could be reimposed if the virus started spreading again.

To prevent the virus spread, health experts worldwide are recommending people wear masks when it is difficult to maintain social distancing as countries loosen restrictions following coronavirus shut-downs.

But the Japan Pediatric As-



sociation has warned parents that masks are too risky for infants.

"Masks can make breathing difficult because infants have narrow air passages," which increases the burden on their hearts, the association said, adding that masks also raise the risk of heat stroke for them.

"Let's stop the use of masks for children under 2-years-old," the association said in a

notice on its website.

It said that so far there were very few serious coronavirus cases among children and that most kids became infected from family members, with almost no outbreaks at schools or day care facilities.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics also say children under the age of two should not wear cloth face coverings.

WHO Suspends Testing Hydroxychloroquine On Virus Patients

Agencies

GENEVA: The World Health Organization has suspended testing the malaria drug hydroxychloroquine in COVID-19 patients due to safety concerns, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Monday.

Hydroxychloroquine has been touted by Donald Trump and many others as a possible treatment for the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. The U.S. President has said he was taking the drug to help prevent infection. "The executive group has implemented a temporary pause of the hydroxychloroquine arm within the Solidarity trial while the safety data is reviewed by the data safety monitoring board,"



Tedros told an online briefing. He said the other arms of the trial - a major international initiative to hold clinical tests of potential treatments for the virus - were continuing. The WHO has previously recommended against using hydroxychloroquine to treat or prevent coronavirus infections, except as part of clinical trials. Dr Mike Ryan, head of the WHO emergencies programme, said the decision to suspend trials of hydroxychloroquine had been taken out of "an abundance of caution".

'Age, Male Sex, Underlying Illness Validated As Risk Factors For Death Due To Covid-19'

Press Trust Of India

Age, male sex, and underlying illnesses like diabetes have emerged as risk factors for death due to novel coronavirus infection, according to a large cohort study which can help health professionals learn more about how the COVID-19 illness progresses.

According to the study, published in the BMJ, the risk of death increases in people above the age of 50, as does being being male, obese, or having underlying heart, lung, liver and kidney disease.

In this largest prospective observational study reported to date, the scientists, including those from the University of Liverpool in the UK, noted the characteristics of patients hospitalised in the UK with COVID-19, and their outcomes.

At the time of publishing the study, the scientists said the study had recruited over 43,000 patients. While earlier studies had reported the risk factors associated with severe COVID-19 based on reports from China, the researchers said an understanding of features of patients in other parts of the world are lacking. To address this knowl-

edge gap, the scientists said they analysed data from 20,133 patients with COVID-19 admitted to 208 acute care hospitals in England, Wales, and Scotland between 6 February and 19 April 2020. This data, they said, represents around a third of all patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19 in the UK at the time of publishing the study. The patients, according to the researchers, had an average age of 73 years, with more men admitted to hospitals than women.

Besides age, and underlying heart, lung, liver and kidney disease, the study noted that

factors already known to cause poor outcomes like obesity and gender were key factors associated with higher risk of death in hospital. The scientists said the outcomes were poorer for those requiring mechanical ventilation. In this category, they said 37 per cent of the patients had died, and 17 per cent had been discharged alive, while 46 per cent remained in hospital. According to the scientists, reduced lung function or inflammation associated with obesity may play a role in morbidity due to COVID-19. But since the study was only observational, they cautioned that a cause

cannot be established. "Our study identifies sectors of the population that are at greatest risk of a poor outcome, and shows the importance of forward planning and investment in preparedness studies," the scientists wrote in the study.

They said the results have been shared with the World Health Organisation, and are being compared with data from other countries around the world. If countries are going to be managing COVID-19 for the next several years, the researchers said "we need to understand and optimise care before, during, and beyond the hospital."

Why Health Literacy Is Important For Heart Failure Patients

Agencies

Patients with heart failure who experience low health literacy are at an increased risk of hospitalisation and mortality, according to a new study.

Heart failure is a chronic condition that requires patients to engage in complex self-management skills to monitor weight and blood pressure, control glycaemia, stick to drug and diet guidelines and occasionally lose weight and exercise.

Therefore, greater attention has recently been given to health literacy, which is defined by the authors of the study as "the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions."

"Our findings showed that an inadequate level of health literacy is associated with increased risks in mortality and hospitalisation among patients with heart failure," said study author Lila J. Finney Rutten from the Mayo Clinic in the US.

Previous studies have suggested that low health literacy among patients with heart failure could be associated with higher risk of mortality, hospitalisations and emergency department visits, but the results have been inconsistent. For the current findings, published in the journal 'JACC Heart Failure', the research team conducted a systematic review across EMBASE, MEDLINE, PsycInfo and EBSCO CINAHL databases from inception to January 1, 2019.



Both observational and interventional studies evaluated the impact of health literacy among patients 18 years or older with heart failure on mortality, hospitalisations and emergency department visits for all causes.

Interventional studies evaluated interventions among patients with heart failure who had low health literacy. Among the observational studies, 9,171 heart failure patients were included, of which 2,207 (24 per cent) had inadequate or marginal health literacy.

The researchers found that low health literacy was associated with higher unadjusted risk for mortality, hospitalisation and emergency department visits. In adjusted analyses, low health literacy remained statistically associated with mortality and hospitalisation, but no correlation was found for emergency department visits.

Among the four interventional studies, two effectively improved outcomes for heart failure patients with low health literacy. "Identifying health literacy as a factor that affects health outcomes and measuring its effect on patients with heart failure is essential to allocate more resources for, and research on, interventions to improve health literacy," Rutten said.

Saudi to end curfew on June 21, except in Mecca

Agencies

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia will start relaxing coronavirus restrictions on movement this week and lift the restrictions across the country, with the exception of the holy city of Mecca, from June 21, the state news agency reported in a statement early on Tuesday.

In the first phase, which starts on Thursday, the 24-hour curfew will be revised to 3pm-6am (12:00-03:00 GMT) with bans on domestic travel, holding prayers in mosques, and workplace attendance in both the government and private sector lifted from May 31, the statement said.

The round-the-clock curfew will remain in force in Mecca and is only expected to be reduced from June 21, when curfew time will be changed to 3pm-6am (12:00-03:00 GMT), and prayers will be allowed in mosques.

The Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages, which usually attract millions from around the world, will remain suspended.

According to the government, physical distancing guidelines are still required, while gatherings of more than 50 people will remain banned.

Some economic and commercial activities will also be allowed, including those at whole-

sale and retail shops, as well as shopping centres and cafes.

But other businesses such as beauty salons, barbershops, sports and health clubs, recreational centres and cinemas will remain closed because of the difficulty in imposing physical distancing rules.

Saudi Arabia first imposed a temporary lockdown in early March on its eastern Qatif area, home to a large Shia Muslim population, to prevent the spread of coronavirus, also known as COVID-19.

The unprecedented lockdown was later expanded to other parts of the country including the two holiest sites of Islam. Saudi Arabia announced in April that the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina would remain closed throughout Ramadan, which ended on Saturday.

Ramadan is the holiest month for Muslims, in which they fast during daylight hours, congregate for prayers and share meals as a community.

But because of coronavirus, almost all Muslim-majority countries have closed mosques and asked people to pray at home, in addition to imposing curfews to limit the spread of the deadly virus.

A full lockdown was also imposed from May 23 to 27 during Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the fasting month.



Trump Threatens To 'Close Down' Social Media Platforms

AGENCIES

Washington: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday threatened to close down social media platforms after Twitter labelled two of his tweets "unsubstantiated" and accused him of making false claims.

Twitter targeted tweets in which the president said that mail-in voting would lead to fraud and a "Rigged Election" in November.

Under the tweets, Twitter posted a link which read "Get the facts about mail-in ballots" - a first for the social network which has long resisted calls to censure the president.

In response, Trump fought back, tweeting that "Republicans feel that Social Media Platforms totally silence conservatives voices. We will strongly regulate, or close them down, before we can ever allow this to happen."

Trump repeated his allegations, saying "we can't let large scale Mail-In Ballots take root in our Country. It would be a free for all on cheating, forgery and the theft of Ballots."

"Whoever cheated the

most would win. Likewise, Social Media. Clean up your act, NOW!!!!" he added.

The president also accused social media platforms of interfering in the last election, saying "we saw what they attempted to do, and failed, in 2016."

80 million followers

The president has long used Twitter as a platform to spread abuse, conspiracy theories, false information and insults to his 80 million followers.

Before being elected in 2016, he built his political brand by supporting the "birther" lie that Barack Obama, America's first black president, was not born in the United States and therefore was not eligible to be president.

The notice tagged to Trump's tweets read "Trump falsely claimed that mail-in ballots would lead to 'Rigged Election'".

"However, fact-checkers say there is no evidence that mail-in ballots are linked to voter fraud."

Trump aimed the misleading tweets at California, contending wrongly that anyone

living in the state would be sent ballots when in fact they will only go to registered voters, according to the notice.

The tweets in question violated a recently expanded Twitter policy, said the San Francisco-based company.

"In serving the public conversation, our goal is to make it easy to find credible information on Twitter and to limit the spread of potentially harmful and misleading content," the company vowed when the change was announced.

Twitter's move came as Trump, already facing US economic calamity and 100,000 deaths from coronavirus as well as sinking reelection polls, continued to push a conspiracy theory about TV host Joe Scarborough.

In an attempted character assassination of Scarborough, Trump has spread the baseless rumor that Scarborough murdered an aide.

The entirely evidence-free story claims that Scarborough killed a woman he was having an affair with in 2001, when he was a Republican congressman and she was one of his staffers.

Trump offers to 'mediate or arbitrate' between India and China

Press Trust Of India

Washington: In a surprise move, US President Donald Trump on Wednesday offered to "mediate or arbitrate" the raging border dispute between India and China, saying he was "ready, willing and able" to ease the tensions, amid the continuing standoff between the militaries of the two neighbours.

Trump previously offered to mediate between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, a proposal rejected by New Delhi which maintains that there is no role for any third party in bilateral issues.

"We have informed both India and China that the United States is ready, willing and able to mediate or arbitrate their now raging border dispute. Thank you!" Trump said in an early morning tweet.

The nearly 3,500-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) is

the de-facto border between India and China.

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.

But on Wednesday, China took an apparently conciliatory tone by saying that the situation at the border with India is "overall stable and controllable," and both the countries have proper mechanisms and communication channels to resolve the issues through a dialogue and consultation.

India has said the Chinese military was hindering normal patrolling by its troops along the LAC in Ladakh and Sikkim and strongly refuted

Beijing's contention that the escalating tension between the two armies was triggered by trespassing of Indian forces across the Chinese side.

The Ministry of External Affairs said all Indian activities were carried out on its side of the border, asserting that India has always taken a very responsible approach towards border management. At the same time, it said, India was deeply committed to protect its sovereignty and security.

"Any suggestion that Indian troops had undertaken activity across the LAC in the Western sector or the Sikkim sector is not accurate. Indian troops are fully familiar with the alignment of the Line of Actual Control in the India-China border areas and abide by it scrupulously," MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said at an online media briefing last week.

Third Iranian Tanker Enters Venezuela's Territorial Waters

Agencies

Tehran: The third of the five Iranian oil tankers carrying fuel for Venezuela has sailed into the Latin American country's territorial waters.

Venezuela's Telesur television network said the Iran-flagged tanker, Petunia, crossed the Caribbean Sea earlier on Tuesday and reached the country's exclusive economic zone after being escorted by the Venezuelan navy.

The vessel carries near to 50,000 tons of gasoline and related products, destined to restart the oil production in the South-America country.

Petunia followed the route taken in recent days by two other vessels, Fortune and Forest, which are reportedly discharging at Venezuela's state-run ports. Fortune, the first of five Iranian tankers carrying 1.53 million barrels of gasoline and alkylate reached Venezuelan waters late Saturday to ease the Latin American nation's fuel crunch.

Forest, the second tanker in the flotilla docked on Tuesday at a port serving the Venezuelan National Oil Company

(PDVSA)'s second largest refinery, Cardon, on the country's western coast.

The remaining ships in the fleet — Faxon and Clavel — are scheduled to arrive in the gasoline-starved Latin American country in the next few days.

The shipments have incurred the wrath of the US administration in Washington as both Iran and Venezuela are under illegal sanctions imposed by the White House.

The administration of President Donald Trump, which has returned US sanctions against Iran after leaving a historic nuclear accord between the Islamic Republic and world powers, said earlier this month that it was considering "measures" to take in response to the shipments.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani warned on Saturday of retaliatory measures against the United States if it caused problems for tankers.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has also dismissed threats of harassment for the shipments, insisting that Tehran and Caracas "both want peace, and we have the right to trade freely."

China's Survey Team Summits Mt Everest To Remeasure Its Height



Press Trust Of India

Beijing: A Chinese survey team on Wednesday reached Mount Everest through Tibet to remeasure the exact height of the world's tallest mountain.

According to China's measurement the height of Mount Everest is 8844.43 metres which is four meters less than Nepal's calculations, the state media reported.

On May 1, China, which differs with Nepal over the height of Mount Everest, began a new survey to measure the altitude of the world's highest peak.

The event marked a crucial step in China's mission to remeasure the height of the world's highest peak, which scientists believe will enhance human knowledge of nature and help boost scientific development, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

After summiting, team members began erecting a survey marker on the snow-covered peak, which mea-

sures less than 20 square metres, the report said.

Chinese surveyors have conducted six rounds of scaled measurement and scientific research on Mt Everest and released the height of the peak twice in 1975 and 2005, which was 8,848.13 metres and 8,844.43 metres, respectively, the report said.

In Tibetan language, Mount Everest is known as Mount Qomolangma.

China and Nepal settled their border dispute in 1961 with the boundary line passing through the summit of Mount Everest.

More and more international climbers are reportedly using the Tibetan side of Mount Everest as China has improved infrastructure facilities compared to that of Nepal.

China which closed Qomolangma National Park in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region as a precaution following the coronavirus outbreak reopened it on May 1 coinciding with May Day holidays.

NEWS MAKERS

Dutch PM Didn't See Dying Mother Due To Virus Rules

The Hague, Netherlands: Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte was unable to visit his dying mother in her final weeks because he obeyed coronavirus restrictions against visiting care homes, his office said Monday.

The news about Rutte emerged as Britain was gripped by a political row over allegations that the top aide to premier Boris Johnson broke COVID-19 rules to travel cross-country to stay on his parents' estate.

UK PM's aide Cummings says behaved "reasonably and legally" during lockdown.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's trusted lieutenant Dominic Cummings



says in a statement he behaved "reasonably and legally" after being accused of breaking lockdown rules.

Rutte on Monday announced the death of 96-year-old Mieke Rutte-Dilling in a home in The Hague on May 13, nearly two months after the government shut all such

institutions to the public on March 20.

"The prime minister has complied with all directives", Rutte's spokesman told AFP when asked about reports that the premier had stuck to the rules and so not seen his mother before she died.

His mother did not die of coronavirus although there had earlier been an outbreak of the disease in the home where she was living, Dutch media reported.

Rutte earlier announced his mother's death, saying that "in addition to the great sadness and all fond memories, my family and I also have a feeling of gratitude that we were allowed to have her with us for so long."

German choirs silenced as singing branded virus risk

When the Berlin Cathedral Choir gathered for a rehearsal on March 9, the new coronavirus was still a distant concern, with fewer than 50 confirmed cases in the German capital.

But five days later, one of the ensemble's 80 singers contacted choir director Tobias Brommann to say she had tested positive for Covid-19.

Within two weeks, around 30 members had tested positive and a further 30 were showing symptoms — including Brommann himself, who was struck down with a headache, cough and fever.

"We also can't be sure if those without symptoms were not infected too, as we have not done antibody tests," Brommann told AFP. Hardly considered an extreme activity up to now, singing — especially choral singing — is quickly earning a reputation in the pandemic as about the most dangerous thing you can do.

Similar horror stories have emerged

from choirs around the world, including one in Amsterdam where 102 singers are reported to have fallen sick with COVID-19.

High-risk activity

Though much is not yet understood about how the new coronavirus spreads, anecdotal evidence has been enough to convince German authorities that singing is a particularly high-risk activity.

Under new freedoms being gradually introduced across the country's states, Germans can meet friends in the park, dine in a restaurant, play sports, go to church, browse the shops, watch football and even go swimming.

But singing remains broadly off limits, and it looks likely to stay that way for the foreseeable future.

In recommendations for the resumption of church services published in April, the federal government stated that singing should be avoided "because of the increased production of poten-

6 killed in Saudi shootout dispute between families: police

A shootout in a southwestern province in Saudi Arabia that local reports say was sparked by a dispute between two families has killed six people, a police spokesman said on Wednesday.

According to the spokesman, Lt Col Zayed Al Dabbash, three others were wounded in the violence in Asir province on Tuesday.

The spokesman was quoted by the state-run Saudi Press Agency as saying that the fatalities were all Saudi citizens.

He said police seized weapons used in the crime and that prosecutors were investigating.

Mass shootings are rare in the kingdom, and the police official gave no indication the shooting was terror-related.

Local media said the shooting involved two dueling families, though the cause of their dispute was unclear. It took place in Al Amuwa, a landlocked region of Asir.

Congress Asks Government To "Take Nation Into Confidence" On Situation In Ladakh

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Wednesday said the standoff between the armies of India and China is a matter of serious national concern and urged the government to take the country into confidence and address the concerns of people.

Senior spokesperson of the party Anand Sharma said the situation in Ladakh following the incursion by Chinese forces in the Langtang Tso lake and Galwan valley regions and the standoff between the armies of India and China are matters of "serious national concern".



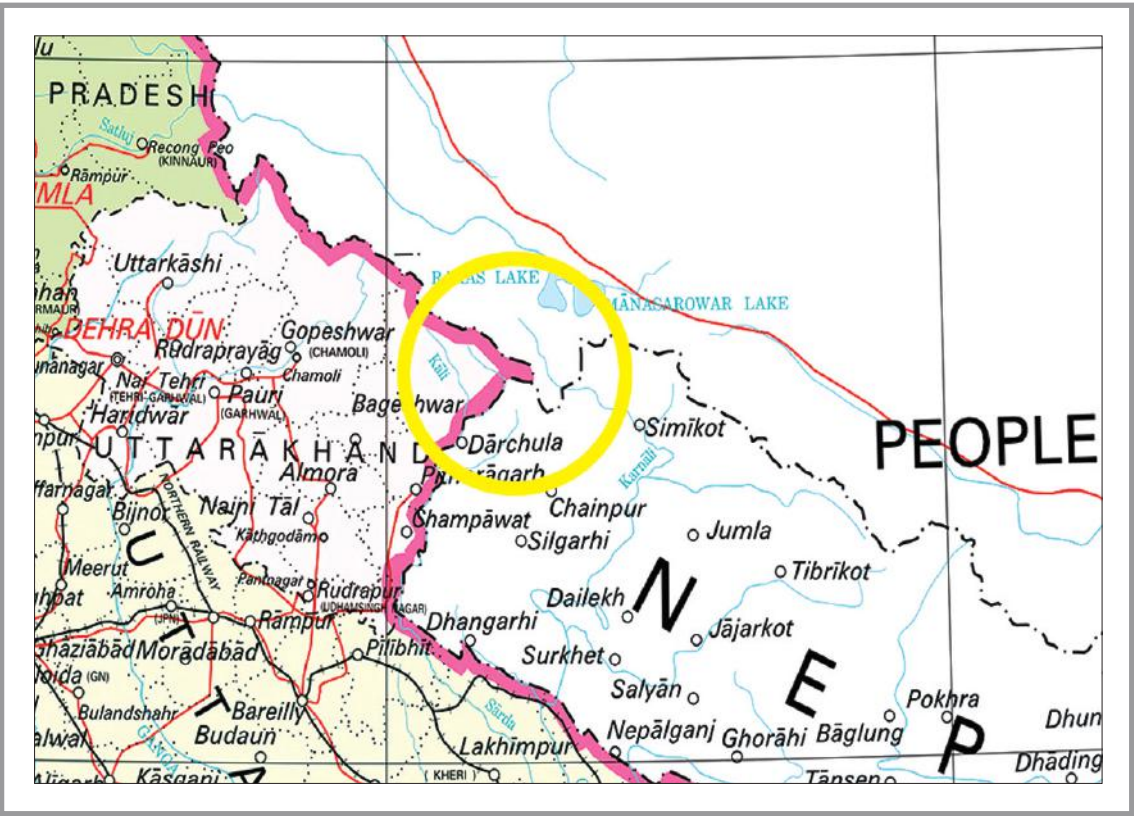
In a statement, he said the differing accounts in the national and international media of escalation of tension

and a continuing stalemate have caused anxiety among people.

"The Congress party urges the Government of India to take the nation into confidence to address the concerns of the people," the former union minister said.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi had on Tuesday urged the government to be more transparent on the China issue and be transparent on what is happening at the boundary in Ladakh.

There has been a standoff between Indian and Chinese



Nepal's New Map Showing A Part Of India Has Been Put On Hold

NEW DELHI: Nepal has for now iced a brand new map that was cleared by its parliament and locations inside its personal borders a stretch of land excessive within the mountains that India claims as its personal. A dialogue in its parliament today to clear a constitutional modification that might formalize the brand new map has been deferred, reported information company ANI.

The map was cleared final week, scary a fierce response from India, which described the transfer as "unilateral" and never based mostly on historic details. "Such artificial enlargement of territorial claims will not be accepted by India," Anurag Srivastava, spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry, mentioned final week.

Nepal claims the territory, which in 1816 treaty with the East India Company. That settlement, in accordance with Kathmandu, units the River Kali as its western boundary with India and says the land mendacity east of the river is its territory.

The new map that exhibits a sliver of land – together with areas like Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani – jutting out from the northwestern tip of Nepal was made public per week in the past.

Nepal's aggressive new transfer was mixed with its prime minister KP Sharma Oli blaming India for infecting his nation with coronavirus.

The map and a constitutional modification adopted India opening an 80-km-long highway linking Uttarakhand with Lipulekh on the border with Tibet. The highway stretches throughout the disputed

piece of land and makes simpler and shorter the journey for Hindu pilgrims who journey to Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet.

Nepali officers had mentioned the brand new map might be printed at school and faculty textual content books and official paperwork and might be used for all administrative functions.

Yesterday, Nepal's Defence Minister Ishwor Pokhrel reacted angrily to the Indian military chief saying not too long ago that Kathmandu's response to India's new highway is "at the behest of someone else." The allusion by military chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane was apparent. "How professional is it for the head of the Army to make a political statement?" the Nepali minister requested.

particularly in May and June. Last year, dozens of people died.

Met officials said Churu in the northwestern state of Rajasthan was the hottest place on record on Tuesday, at 50C, while parts of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh sweltered in the high 40s.

Parts of the capital, New Delhi, recorded the hottest May day in 18 years with the mercury hitting 47.6C.

No deaths have been reported so far this year, but last year the government said the heat had killed 3,500 people since 2015. There have been fewer deaths in recent years.

The country of 13 billion

North India Sizzles As Temperature Touches 50C

India is wilting under a heat-wave, with the temperature in places reaching 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) and the capital enduring its hottest May day in nearly 20 years.

The hot spell is projected to scorch northern India for several more days, the Meteorological Department said on Tuesday, "with severe heatwave conditions in isolated pockets".

As global temperatures rise, heatwaves are a regular menace in the country, par-



people suffers from severe water shortages with tens of millions lacking running water.

Parts of New Delhi and elsewhere regularly see scuffles when tankers arrive to deliver water. Last year, Chennai made international headlines when the southern city ran out of water entirely.

The heatwave adds to problems the country has already been dealing with the spread of coronavirus.

India now has the 10th highest number of coronavirus cases globally, climbing

176 Pakistanis Return Home From India Via Wagah Border Amidst Travel Ban

LAHORE: A group of 176 Pakistani nationals, including women and children, stranded in India due to the coronavirus-induced global travel restrictions returned home via the Wagah Border on Wednesday, officials said.

With the arrival of 176 people, a total of 400 Pakistanis have so far been repatriated from India via the Attari-Wagah border since March 20, 2020.

The Pakistani Rangers received them from the Border Security Force (BSF).

They were stranded in different parts of India for about three months due to the lockdowns and travel restrictions put in place by the government to contain the raging coronavirus disease.

"Upon their arrival, the Pakistani citizens including women and children were screened and transferred to quarantine centres in Lahore where they will stay for 72 hours," Mohammad Younis of Edhi Foundation told PTI.

"If their corona test comes in negative, they will be allowed to go home after 72 hours otherwise they will be quarantined for 14 days," he said.

The relatives of those repatriated from India were not allowed to enter the Wagah Border to meet them.

They were stuck in Chhatisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar

Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi due to the extended lockdown and the closure of the Attari-Wagah border following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mahesh Kumar, a stranded Pakistani national, said that had gone to India early in March on a religious pilgrimage.

"Owing to the coronavirus lockdown, I was stuck there. I am happy to return to my country," said Kumar, a resident of Sindh.

Those who returned were reportedly quarantined in India as well.

They were screened at Attari, the Indian side of the border, before crossing over to Pakistan.

The purpose of their trip to India pertained to visiting family, seeking medical treatment and attending religious ceremonies.

On Tuesday, Pakistan's Foreign Office said in a statement that for the safe and smooth repatriation of stranded Pakistanis, the High Commission of Pakistan in New Delhi remained in close contact with the Indian authorities.

The Pakistani mission also facilitated and coordinated their transfer to Attari from more than 20 Indian cities.

Over 200 Indian nationals are reportedly stranded in Pakistan. They are awaiting their repatriation. PTI

India's 'Arrogant Expansionist Policies' Becoming 'Threat' To Its Neighbours: Pak PM Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday alleged that the Indian government's "arrogant expansionist policies" is becoming "a threat" to its neighbours as he tried to curry favour with Islamabad's all-weather ally, China.

The Indian government "with its arrogant expansionist policies, akin to Nazi's Lebensraum (Living Space), is becoming a threat to India's neighbours. Bangladesh through Citizenship Act, border disputes with Nepal & China, & Pak threatened with false flag operation," Khan said in a series of tweets.

Several areas along the 3,500-km-long Line of Actual Control (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 LAC is the de-facto border between India and China.



Pakistan and China consider their relations as all-weather friends and

their leaders often express support to each other on matters of core interests.

Khan further alleged that India had "illegally annexed" Kashmir and dubbed it as "a war crime".

Pakistan has been unsuccessfully trying to drum up international support against India for withdrawing Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5 and bifurcating it into two Union territories.

India has categorically told the international community that the scrapping of Article 370 was its internal matter. It also advised Pakistan to accept reality and stop all anti-India propaganda.

Khan in his tweet said that the Indian government is "not only a threat to the country's minorities but also a threat to regional peace."

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi also alleged that India's "aggressive policy towards its neighbours is putting at stake the regional peace and security." PTI

Lockdown: Students Who Moved To Different State, District Can Appear For Pending Board Exams There



NEW DELHI: Class 10 and 12 students who have moved to a different state or district when schools were closed during the COVID-19-induced lockdown can appear for pending board exams there only, Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' announced on Wednesday.

The minister said these students will not be required to travel back to the previous board exam centre. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will announce modalities of registrations for such requests, he said.

"Class 10 and 12 students who have to appear in pending board exams but have moved to different state or district during the lockdown when schools were closed, will be able to appear for exams at their present place only. They will not be required to travel back. The CBSE will issue a notification in this regard and modalities for registration of such requests," Nishank said.

The exams, which were postponed due to a nationwide lockdown imposed on March 25 to contain the spread of COVID-19, will now be held from July 1 to 15. PTI

NEWS MAKER

SC Refuses Pilot's Plea Against Allowing Ai To Fly Non-Schedule Flights With Middle Seats Occupied

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a pilot's plea seeking modification of its order which allowed Air India to fill the middle seats while operating its non-scheduled flights to bring back Indians stranded abroad up to June 6.

An intervention application was filed by Deven Kanani seeking modification of May 25 order on the ground that there has been spike in number of COVID-19 cases and even if a single flight (international /domestic) operates with full occupancy then many other passengers and crew are likely to get infected.

The top court said it does not want to add to the confusion after having passed order earlier this week.

A Bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and Hrishkesh Roy, while



refusing to modify its order said that whatever they (Centre and Air India) have done, howsoever bad it might be, let that interim arrangement continue for ten days.

Advocate Abhilash Panicker, appearing for the pilot, said that DGCA guidelines on social distancing should be followed and middle seats in the aircraft should be kept vacant.

The Bench asked Panicker to approach the Bombay High Court if he wanted to raise any other issue related to the matter.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the

Centre and Air India, said that an expert committee has been appointed to look into the matter.

He said that health of citizens is paramount and government would take every possible step to protect them.

The Bench said that it trusts the expert committee and hope that it would take into all relevant considerations.

It told the petitioner that the court has asked the Centre and Air India to bring back the stranded Indians and they are doing it.

Now, let the High Court de-

cide the issue finally, the top court said and gave the liberty to the pilot to withdraw the application.

The counsel for the petitioner then agreed to withdraw the application.

The pilot, on whose plea the high court has sought replies from the Centre and Air India, said in his application before the top court that he is seeking modification of May 25 order as it was an ex-parte order obtained by suppression and misrepresentation.

On May 25, the top court had allowed Air India to keep the middle seats occupied while operating its non-scheduled flights to bring back Indians stranded abroad up to June 6 while observing that the government should be more worried about the health of citizens rather than the health of commercial airlines.

Lockdown: Toddler's Failed Attempt To Wake Up Dead Mother Leaves Internet, Conscience Shaken

MUZAFFARPUR: A toddler's vain attempt to wake up his dead mother from eternal sleep on a railway platform in Bihar's Muzaffarpur on Wednesday presented the most poignant picture of the massive migrant tragedy unfolding across several states.

A video tweeted by Sanjay Yadav, an aide to RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, shows the child walking unsteadily up to his mother's body, tugging at the blanket placed over her, and when failing to wake her up, covering his own head with it.

As the mother lay still, he wobbles away from her, announcements continuing in the background about the arrival and departure of trains that would bring in tens of thousands of people in a rush to get away from hunger and hardship they face in large



cities that could sustain them no more.

"This small child doesn't know that the bedsheet with which he is playing is the shroud of his mother who has gone into eternal sleep. This mother died of hunger and thirst after being on a train for four days. Who is responsible

for these deaths on trains? Shouldn't the opposition ask uncomfortable questions?" tweeted Yadav.

However, the police had a different story to tell.

Ramakant Upadhyay, the Dy SP of the Government Railway Police in Muzaffarpur, said the incident oc-

curred on May 25 when the migrant woman was on the way to Muzaffarpur from Ahmedabad by a Shramik Special train.

He told reporters the woman, who was accompanied by her sister and brother-in-law, had died on the Madhubani bound train.

"My sister-in-law died suddenly on the train. We did not face any problem getting food or water," the officer said, quoting the deceased's brother-in-law who he did not name.

He said on getting information, police brought down the body and sent it for post-mortem.

Citing the brother-in-law of the deceased, Upadhyay said she was aged 35 years and was undergoing treatment for "some disease" for the last one year in Ahmedabad.