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THE CURE WORSE THAN THE DISEASE

WE have flattened the wrong curve i.e. GDP - these words were uttered by one of the most important business voices in India the other day. Covid-19 one of the greatest pandemics of our times, which has caught world leaders off-guard, has demonstrated that some of the powerful governments and their economies are ill-prepared to deal with an aggressive outbreak.

.....OPINION P4



News Digest

Petrol, Diesel Prices Hiked For Second Day

New Delhi: Petrol and diesel prices were hiked by 60 paise per litre on Monday, for the second day in a row, as state-owned oil firms reverted to daily price revisions after a 83-day hiatus.

Soldier Ends Life In Poonch

Srinagar: An army man on Monday allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself dead with his service rifle in Mankote sector along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district, officials said.

4 Gamblers Held In Ganderbal: Police

Srinagar: Police on Monday claimed to have arrested four gamblers in a raid in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. Following an input, a team from police station Lar raided Watlar area and apprehended four gamblers from the spot.

Bags Carrying Bullets Seized At Airport

Srinagar: Security forces recovered some live bullets and empty cases from two bags during X-Ray scanning at the Srinagar airport here on Monday, officials said.

Pak Breached Truce In Poonch: Army

Jammu: Pakistani troops on Monday opened fire and heavily shelled forward areas along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, drawing retaliation from the Indian Army, a defence spokesman said.

4 More Hizb Militants Killed In Shopian

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Four more Hizbul Mujahideen militants were killed in a fierce gun-battle with the government forces in Shopian district on Monday, a day after five militants of the same group were killed in a similar encounter with the state forces in the south Kashmir district on Sunday.



88 Militants Killed In J&K This Year: DGP

Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Dilbag Singh on Monday said 88 militants, including a number of top commanders, were killed and 280 others arrested so far in J&K this year.

INCriminating material including arms and ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other crimes.

Kashmiris Took Art-370 Abrogation Positively: Lt Gen Raju

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: People of Kashmir took the scrapping of Article 370 in a "positive manner" as there was relative peace for a long time but Pakistan is on a "hyperdrive" on peddling a false narrative to keep the pot boiling in the valley, a top army officer said on Monday.



Starting from the situation post abrogation of Article 370, I think the population took the decision in a positive manner. We saw relative peace for a fairly long period of time," Lt Gen B S Raju, heading the strategic XV corps, told reporters in Awantipora, 33 km from here.

Singh Inaugurates CAT Bench At Jammu

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Monday inaugurated the Central Administrative Tribunal's (CAT) Jammu bench and said it would speed up the process of redressing the grievances of employees.

The CAT adjudicates service matters of central government employees. Speaking after the inauguration, Singh said the setting up of the CAT's Jammu bench to deal exclusively with service matters of government employees would go a long way.

IAS Officer Faces Action For 'Creating Hurdles' In Prayers

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir administration has asked the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) to take action against an IAS officer who allegedly tried to prevent the Amarnath Shrine Board officials from undertaking "pratham pooja" (first prayer) for Amarnath yatra, sources said on Monday.

This is for the first time in many years that the J and K administration has made a complaint to the DoPT against a bureaucrat, they said.

This step was taken after the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) officials made a complaint to the

SC Serves Notice To Centre, J&K On Soz's Detention

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court Monday sought response from the Centre and the Jammu and Kashmir administration on a plea of former Union minister and senior Congress leader Saifuddin Soz's wife challenging his house arrest since August 5 last year.

A bench headed by Justices Arun Mishra issued notices to the Centre and the J-K administration asking them to respond by second week of July to the plea of Mumtazunnisa Soz, wife of the octogenarian leader.

Mumtazunnisa has also sought the production of veteran leader before the court and the quashing of the house arrest order.

Kashmir Records 5 Covid-19 Deaths, Toll In J&K 46

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir recorded five more COVID-19 deaths, including that of a CRPF trooper, taking the total number of fatalities in the Union Territory to 46, officials said on Monday.

The 40-year-old (Central Reserve Police Force) CRPF trooper, who was posted in Anantnag district in South Kashmir, was admitted at SKIMS Hospital here on Thursday with acute respiratory distress syndrome, they said.

The officials said the sample of the trooper, who hailed from Uttar Pradesh, was tested on Friday and it came out positive for coronavirus.

His condition became critical and he passed away on late Sunday night due to cardiopulmonary arrest, the officials said.

This is the first COVID-related death of a trooper in Jammu and Kashmir. In another death on Monday, a 35-year-old man

198 More Test Covid-19 Positive

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR- 198 more people tested positive for COVID-19 in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday, taking the number of cases in J&K to 4,285, officials said.

"198 new COVID-19 cases were detected in J&K. While 165 of them are from

SKIMS Discharges 18 More After Recovery

SRINAGAR: Eighteen more COVID-19 patients today discharged from SKIMS Medical College Hospital Bemia after their successive tests turned negative.

These patients were admitted in hospital for treatment after testing positive more than two weeks back at various referral centers.

'Durbar' To Reopen In Srinagar On July 6

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The 'Durbar Move' offices will formally reopen here on July 6 even as Civil Secretariat shall continue to remain functional both at Jammu and Srinagar and the move employees shall work on "as is where is" basis, the government has said.

"This arrangement is a peculiar one which is being adopted this year only keeping in view the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic," government said in an order.

"The Durbar Move offices for the Summer Session-2020 shall formally open at Srinagar on 6th July, 2020 (Monday) at 9:30 a.m.," reads an order issued here by the government.

This is for the first time in 148 years that the government has "halted" the traditional administrative tradition of Durbar Move.

The offices observing five days week shall close at Jammu on 26th June (Friday) after the office hours and the offices observing six days week shall close on 27th June, 2020 (Saturday) after the office hours to facilitate packing of records.

Unfortunately, India is yet to understand the strategic and economic importance of Ladakh. So, yes, I believe that if

Kargil Leader: 'China Is Strengthening Its Existence, Influence In J&K'

Auqib Javed

THE rugged region where the two South Asian nuclear-armed neighbours played the 1999 explosive summer war - forcing natives to take cover in trenches for weeks amid raining shells - is currently reliving the bitter war memories, as the ongoing Sino-India standoff dominates the discourse.

Even as the guards have been reportedly lowered at Line of Actual Control (LAC), apprehensions in the Muslim-majority Kargil region remain that the complexity of the situation might prolong the military faceoff.

One man, however, is seeing the

'great game' in Beijing's fiercest storm-trooping of Ladakh's pasturelands. He makes no bones about India's defense dearth at the strategic points under the jackboots of Dragon.

As an influential leader from Kargil, Asgar Ali Karbalai, a former lawmaker of the erstwhile state of J&K, has closely witnessed the shifting sands of the cold desert over the years.

In an exclusive chat with Kashmir Observer's Special Correspondent, Karbalai talks about the genesis of the fresh faceoff, stressing why New Delhi stands on a sticky wicket in Ladakh today.

What're the apprehensions of the people of Ladakh amid ongoing Sino-India standoff? There're obviously some serious

concerns in Ladakh today. We've witnessed the 1999 Kargil War and we know the consequences of an armed conflict.

And therefore, people don't want any escalation at LAC.

But what according to you was Beijing's method behind the latest Ladakh intrusion?

We've to understand that China has invested billions of dollars in Pakistan for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The CPEC passes through Gilgit-Baltistan, bordering with the entire Ladakh region of Indian territory.

So through Gilgit-Baltistan, China, in order to connect the economic corridor with Arabian Sea, made an international highway known as



Karakoram Highway (KKH).

Not only that, they've a lot of mega projects in Gilgit-Baltistan, and many of them have been already completed. Besides, China has borders from Zojila to Bandipora's Gurez area.

Gurez in-turn has borders with Drass in Indian side, and with Astore in Gilgit-Baltistan.

So, China exists in all the areas of Gilgit-Baltistan that has borders with India.

In the backdrop of the ongoing LAC faceoff, China is only strengthening their existence and influence in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir including Ladakh.

But has China already occupied strategic points in Ladakh?

Yes, the occupied Galwan Nalla is strategically important, for its proximity with KKH and CPEC.

Since these areas have strategic and economic importance for China, they'll surely try to protect their interests and expand their existence.

But while they've been doing it [incursion] since years now, what's India doing?

KKH is a 60 year old project. And all these years, New Delhi couldn't even build an all-weather road for Ladakh.

As a result, this region remains cut-off from the rest of the world for six months.

Since the LAC standoff started, even the national media says that government has sent heavy deployments, but for that you need connectivity and infrastructure.

The question is, what'll you do if war breaks out? How'll you provide heavy arms and ammunition to the troops? How'll you compete with them, when the dragon is already on your top?

They're on top of Zojila, Astore, Pangong and Galwan Valley, where they've built a top-class infrastructure.

Does that mean Ladakh will easily fall, if China attacks?

See, we've only one Airport in Ladakh. You've a runway in Kargil but the airport is not functional. If you see in the Himachal side, the area also remains cut-off for over six months. The main lifeline for Ladakh is Zojila, which is under construction for years now. These are some practical issues that the Government of India needs to address sincerely.

Unfortunately, India is yet to understand the strategic and economic importance of Ladakh.

So, yes, I believe that if

# From Front page...

## 4 More Hizb Militants Killed

escape from the besieged area. The joint team, police said returned the fire setting off a massive gun-battle. In the ensuing encounter, four militants associated with Hizbul Mujahideen were killed. Police said that the bodies of militants have been sent to Baramulla for last rites and asked the families of the militants to identify the bodies. If identified, police said, the families can associate in burial and last rites as per religious practices. "Incriminating material including arms and ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other crimes," a police spokesperson said.

He said that a case under relevant sections of law stands registered in Police Station Shopian and investigation has been initiated. Police also urged the locals to cooperate till the area is completely sanitised and cleared of all the explosive materials, if any. Meanwhile, the residents said that three houses also suffered damages in the gunfight that lasted for over four-hours. A cow was also killed in the exchange of fire.

According to the locals, all the slain militants were residents of various areas of the Shopian district. This is the second encounter in Shopian district in the past 24 hours.

Five Hizbul Mujahideen militants, including a commander, were killed in a gun battle in the district's Reban area on Sunday.

## 88 Militants Killed In J&K...

"Our strategy to counter-Pakistan is two-pronged, which is to stop infiltration along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) and tackle those who are active in the hinterland, besides stopping local youth from joining terror ranks. Thankfully, we are successful to a large extent in this endeavour," he told reporters here.

Referring to the killing of nine Hizbul Mujahideen militants in two back-to-back successful operations in the past 24 hours in Shopian district of South Kashmir, the police chief said the effort of the state forces is to control and wipe out militancy from Jammu and Kashmir.

Of these 22 militants, 18 were killed in South Kashmir districts of Pulwama, Kulgam and Shopian alone, while three infiltrators were killed along the LoC in Nowshera sector and one more in Kalakote sector of Rajouri district of Jammu region, the DGP said. Complimenting police and other security agencies for the successful anti-militancy operations, he said so far 88 militants were killed in 36 anti-militancy operations, while 40 militant associates who were either openly working for militants or were part of their support system were arrested.

In addition, he said 240 over ground workers (OGW) of militants were also arrested and some of them were booked under the Public Safety Act.

The police chief said all the state forces operating in Jammu and Kashmir are working on "mission peace" to provide better atmosphere to people.

"We are working overtime for the establishment of peace," he said and lauded the forces for scuttling an attempt by militants to carry out a Pulwama-type car bomb attack on the forces last month.

"The IED was fabricated by (JeM militant) Fouji Bhai, who was also known among the militant ranks at Idris and Abdul Rehman, and was killed in one of the recent encounters. They attempted to strike with the car bomb on the highway twice but were unsuccessful both the times due to our alertness," Singh said.

He said the Chenab Valley districts of Ramban, Doda and Kishtwar in Jammu region have almost been cleared of militancy once again.

"The Chenab Valley has reached a stage where it will be declared terrorism free shortly. No militant presence is in Ramban, one militant namely Masood from Doda is active in Kashmir, while three militants -- Riyaz, Jehangir Saroori, Mudasar -- are active in Kishtwar and are on the run. We are hopeful of clearing the area of militancy," the DGP said.

## Congress Sarpanch Shot...

by police and security forces in the area is going on to nab the militants," the police spokesperson added.

## China Displays Military...

including two types of helicopters and a light tank. On June 2, the Global Times reported that the People's Liberation Army in Tibet "sent troops to a high-altitude region at an elevation of 4,700 meters at night for infiltration exercises behind enemy lines..." On Saturday, India and China held Lt General level talks to diffuse the tension along the LAC that has witnessed an unprecedented buildup by the two nuclear countries. However, the talks remained inconclusive.

A day later, Global Times reported PLA's "large-scale manoeuvre operation" featuring thousands of troops and armoured vehicles transported over "thousands of kilometres" in "just a few hours" to the "high-altitude northwestern region". The report said that the troops were transported to Hubei and Xinjiang, a distance of around 3000 kms in a few hours.

The Global Times also shared a video showing hundreds of PLA personnel boarding buses, flights and trains from the central province of Hubei to an "undisclosed location" in the plateaus of northwestern China. Provinces in northwestern China include Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang, the last of which borders India. The report also showed PLA moving heavy artillery, tanks, armoured vehicles and other military equipment and supplies in the manoeuvre operation, "which ended successfully in just a few hours."

The report said that Chinese armoured vehicles, including tanks, of the PLA Western Theater Command took part in an exercise on May 14. The PLA Western Theater Command oversees the border with India. The continued media reports on high-altitude exercises is being perceived as an attempt at projecting a muscular image over the standoff with India.

"This manoeuvre mission saw significant breakthroughs not only in the scale of mobilised troops but also means of transportation. [Using civilian transportation] substantially expanded our means of transporting forces and increased efficiency in manoeuvring an entire organisation of troops." Major Colonel Mao Lei, head of the training department at the airborne brigade, told Chinese media. Another report in the Global Times on Monday quoted Chinese experts as saying the standoff over Ladakh "could continue for a little longer", but it would not escalate into a confrontation like "Doklam". Doklam stalemate continued for 73 days and was the most serious confrontation between the two neighbours in decades.

Qian Feng, a senior fellow at the Taihe Institute and director of the research department of the National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University in Beijing, told Global Times, "the ongoing standoff is not likely to end immediately, as concrete issues must still be resolved." Qian said "The trigger of the event, India's construction of infrastructure on Chinese territory, must be stopped, or China will not accept the situation."

## Chinese Army Up Chopper...

the activity of Chinese helicopters, including MI-17 has gone up significantly in the last seven to eight days on their side of the LAC, apparently to provide assistance to its troops deployed on various locations along the LAC. The Chinese army, the report says has been extensively using choppers to fly around Indian locations in the Eastern Ladakh sector including the Galwan area. "In the Galwan area, their choppers had even come above our locations and hovered over a road construction site there on one

occasion recently," the sources told the news agency. They added that the Chinese have been frequently doing air space violations using their choppers and have been carrying out patrols near the Indian locations on the LAC.

The report says that the Indian Air Force was forced to rush its fighter jet patrols in Ladakh after Chinese military choppers were found to be flying close to the LAC earlier this month. This incident happened around the same time the PLA troops and Indian army forces had face-offs in the first and second weeks of May. "The Chinese military helicopters were flying very close to the Line of Actual Control. After their movement was picked up, the Indian Air Force fighter jets flew patrols in the area," government sources had said.

India and China have been engaged in a stand-off since May over heavy military mobilisation by the Chinese troops along the LAC. The Chinese army has also brought in its heavy artillery and armoured vehicles in the rear positions on its side of the LAC. The two sides have had over a dozen rounds of talks at the military level, however the situation on the ground remains tense.

## Talks With China 'Positive',...

"The border dispute between India and China has been ongoing for a long time. We want to resolve it as soon as possible," Singh said.

"Talks with China are on at military and diplomatic level. The June 6 talks were very positive and both the countries have agreed to continue talks to resolve the ongoing tussle," he said.

"I want to assure people that leadership of the country is in strong hands and we will not compromise on India's pride and self-respect," he said.

Singh said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and some opposition leaders had sought the government's clarification on what is happening at the India-China border.

"As the Defence Minister of the country, I want to say that whatever I have to say I will say it inside Parliament, I will not mislead the people," the minister said.

## Kashmiris Took Art-370...

in the valley by February this year. "January-February people had begun to move around, schools had opened up, winter tourism had commenced in Gulmarg. So we were seeing all signs of normalcy before the issue of COVID-19 came in and we had to go into another round of lockdown...only to save lives," he added.

Gen Raju said Pakistan was "not happy" with the peaceful situation in the valley.

"Pakistan is unhappy because it is in its larger plan to keep the pot boiling in the valley. That is how the relevance of the Pakistan army remains within Pakistan. As far as Pakistan's contribution to violence here is concerned, it is a combination of two things -- on the physical front inducting weapons along the Line of Control and, the second is, the information warfare Pakistan intends to fight," he said.

Gen Raju appealed to people not to get swayed by the misinformation that is coming from Pakistan.

"This is very important. Pakistan is on a hyperdrive to bring in false propaganda. If there is one person who is not happy today as to what is happening in the valley in terms of peace is Pakistan. So we need to fight that.

"I would say that 120 crore of the country's population have a role to play in demolishing false narratives, which are coming from Pakistan. While we are fighting on ground, we will definitely look forward to the cooperation of the public and the population in general to spread the right message and demolish the false narratives," he added.

## SC Serves Notice To Centre,...

She had alleged that till date the reasons for the detention have not been supplied to them and they are unable to challenge the arrest under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978. This makes his detention not only illegal, mala fide and unconstitutional, but also extremely appalling, she said.

Soz was put under house arrest after the Centre had abrogated certain provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution granting special status Jammu and Kashmir.

## Kashmir Records 5 Covid-19

hours after he was shifted there from SMHS Hospital, the officials said.

They said the patient was shifted after he tested positive for the deadly virus.

He was admitted in SMHS Hospital due to head injury received in an accident, they added.

In the third death, a 55-year-old man, a resident of Pampore in Pulwama district of south Kashmir, died at SMHS Hospital on Monday, the officials said.

They said the man was suffering from bilateral pneumonia among other underlying ailments and tested positive on Sunday.

A 65-year-old man from Handwara area of North Kashmir died at CD Hospital here this afternoon, 11 days after he was admitted to the facility, the officials said.

The patient had tested positive for the virus and had several underlying problems.

In the fifth death, a 70-year-old woman from Baramulla died at SMHS Hospital here this evening, they said.

The officials said the woman, who was suffering from bilateral pneumonia, was admitted at the hospital on Saturday and she tested positive for coronavirus last night.

With these fatalities, the death toll in the union territory has risen to 46, which includes two non-locals.

## 198 More Test Covid-19...

Kashmir, 33 are from Jammu," the officials said.

Among fresh cases, 40 were reported from Budgam, 33 from Baramulla, 31 from Shopian, 14 from Anantnag, 12 from Jammu, 11 each from Kupwara & Kathua, 10 from Kulgam, nine each from Srinagar & Bandipora, seven from Pulwama, four each from Poonch & Samba and one each from Ganderbal, Rajouri & Doda, they said.

They said that 108 patients recovered and were discharged from different hospitals.

The number of confirmed cases has now reached 4,285, out of which 3,363 are in Kashmir, while 922 are in Jammu, the officials said.

There are 2,916 active cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in J&K -- 2,211 in Kashmir and 705 in Jammu -- and 1,324 (1,112 from Kashmir and 212 from Jammu) patients have recovered, according to officials.

The J&K has witnessed 45 COVID-19 deaths so far (40 from Kashmir, 5 from Jammu), including the four deaths that took place on Monday.

## SKIMS Discharges 18 More...

With this, the total number of COVID-19 recoveries rose to 244 out of total COVID positive admitted patients numbering 382 at present.

Among the admitted patients a large number of COVID positive pregnant women have been managed and till date 26 deliveries conducted including 13 major surgeries for child birth (LSCS).

## Singh Inaugurates CAT...

way in not only reducing the burden of various courts but also provide speedy relief in respect of their grievances and service

matters. The inauguration of the Jammu bench, which is the 18th bench of the tribunal, was done via video conference, according to a statement issued by the Personnel Ministry. He said the Modi government is committed to transparency and "justice for all", and the people-friendly reforms taken in the last six years have benefitted the entire country including people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Singh, Minister of State for Personnel, said more than 800 central laws, which were not applicable to J-K have been made applicable since the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A on August 5, 2019 for the benefit of people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Now they enjoy same rights as people from the rest of India, the statement quoting him said.

The minister expressed hope that pendency of about 30,000 cases would be resolved in a time bound and judicious manner.

Singh said all three important agencies of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) - CAT, Central Information Commission (CIC) and Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) are now operational in union territories of J-K and Ladakh.

Earlier, in a notification issued on May 28, the central government has specified Jammu and Srinagar as the places at which the benches of the CAT shall ordinarily sit for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, the statement said.

"Similarly, the CIC has started hearing Right to Information (RTI) Act applications of applicants from the UTs of J-K and Ladakh from 15.05.2020," the statement said.

Singh said Sanjay Kothari, Central Vigilance Commissioner who called on him on May 5, 2020 informed that the jurisdiction of the Central Vigilance Commission has been extended over the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir under the Prevention of Corruption Act, the statement said.

Chairman of the Central Administrative Tribunal, Justice L Narasimha Reddy gave the welcome address during the inauguration. The inaugural ceremony was addressed by Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir, Gita Mittal and Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Girish Chandra Murmu.

Member Judicial, Central Administrative Tribunal, Jammu, Rakesh Sagar Jain gave the vote of thanks on the occasion.

## IAS Officer Faces Action...

week, officials said. Normally, the ceremony marks the start of the Amarnath Yatra, which spans nearly two months.

However, this year, according to sources, the yatra is likely to begin on July 21 and its duration shortened to 15 days due to the coronavirus pandemic.

## Langars Union Favour...

the twin tracks of Pahalgam in Anantnag district and Baltal in Ganderbal district on June 23, but the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) headed by Lt Governor G C Murmu has said the appropriate decision on it would be taken after a fresh review of the situation arising out of the COVID-19 outbreak in the near future. On April 22, the SASB had announced the cancellation of the yatra due to the coronavirus pandemic but the statement was later "cancelled and withdrawn".

The traditional 'pratham pooja' (first prayer) for the annual Amarnath pilgrimage was held here on June 5, the ceremony which normally marks the start of the yatra.

According to sources, the SASB is planning to undertake the yatra in the last week of July for a short duration of 15 days due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The SASB is contemplating conducting the yatra from July 21 to August 3 for a short period of two weeks. Even if shrine board takes such a decision, we are ready to render our services as in the past, but for the safety and security of yatis in particular and all other stakeholders in general, we once again like to apprise our strong apprehensions about difficulties and grave threat involved in conducting the yatra amid the pandemic," the SABLO said in a statement here.

The SABLO, a non-profit and non-funded association of 'bhandara' (community kitchen) organisations which are engaged in rendering various services on both routes like serving free food, distribution of blankets, night shelter and various other facilities to the yatis, said it had already suggested to the SASB in the last meeting on April 22 that the yatra should not be conducted this year in the best interest of the pilgrims and other stakeholders.

It said the organisation is ready to set up community kitchens at designated sites in case the board still decides and plans to conduct the yatra under the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic. However, the SABLO said a decision to undertake the yatra despite the prevailing situation would not at all be good for the pilgrims, administration, bhandaraswallahs and other stakeholders including police, security forces, labourers, ponywallahs, porters and shopkeepers.

"It will put the lives of all into danger and will also create additional problems for all the stakeholders to render their services under this dangerous situation," it said.

## 'Durbar' To Reopen In...

and equipments. "There will be no closure of the Jammu Secretariat, which shall reopen on 1st July, 2020 (Wednesday)," the government said, adding, "The Civil Secretariat shall continue to remain functional both at Jammu/Srinagar and the move employees shall work on "as is where is" basis i.e. Kashmir based staff shall work from Srinagar Secretariat and Jammu based staff shall work from Jammu Secretariat." The move offices outside the Civil Secretariat, shall also continue to remain functional both at Jammu as well as at Srinagar "with employees working "as is where basis."

"All the Departments shall function from both the locations for which the Administrative Secretaries shall make necessary arrangements especially at the Senior Staff Level to ensure the functionality in their respective departments, both at Srinagar and Jammu. Similar arrangements shall be put in place by the Heads of the Departments observing Durbar Move," it said. The Civil Secretariat Treasury and J&K Bank Moving Branch at Civil Secretariat shall be functional at both the places within the Civil Secretariat viz; Jammu/Srinagar. "The Finance Department will put in place a suitable mechanism for the purpose."

## Kargil Leader: 'China ...

China attacks, it'll be difficult for India to defend Ladakh. We've 14 Corps of Indian Army in Ladakh, but what'll they do [in wake of war], when even they don't get military supplies on time. But you've to fight for your land, and you can't stand idle and do nothing. The government needs to build infrastructure on a war-footing.

Do you also believe that Union Territory status of Ladakh has provoked Dragon? I don't think this must be the reason because China has been eating away our land for years now.

China has a vast vision, and they do things keeping future in mind. But yes, Ladakh has become voiceless after the Centre nullified Article 370 of the Indian Constitution undemocratically, and bifurcated the erstwhile state into two union territories last summer. The legislative powers that we had before August 5 are gone. Once the status of the region got changed, China might've been looking for this opportunity.

But many people believe that China did it in the interest of Pakistan since the latter wasn't happy with the August 5 decision. Do you see any link?

I don't think so. I believe China is doing it for its own interests. But yes, maybe, Pakistan wants to divert the attention of the masses towards it, since the country is struggling with economic pressure and COVID-19 crisis.

Phunchok Stobdan, former diplomat from Ladakh earlier told Kashmir Observer that 'if Ladakh falls, Kashmir will be defenceless'. What do you think about it?

I don't think tensions will escalate to that level where India will lose Ladakh. In case of attack, India will definitely not remain silent. It will retaliate with full military might. We just had military level talks between China and India and the situation seems to be under control.

And China, right now, is not in a position to attack. It clearly wants some bargaining with India.

What type of bargaining? China wants to strengthen its position at the strategic points of Line of Actual Control (LAC). They may bargain for that. However, I don't think India will give up so easily.

The government needs to take it seriously and strength its position across the borders. But do you also think that India should build LoC-type fencing across the borders with China?

When you've hilly terrains, fencing is not the solution. The only thing, as I said, India needs to develop is infrastructure. They need to develop all-weather road, railway and air connections.

Until that doesn't happen, you can't protect your land with just fencing from China.

What do people of Kargil think about this standoff? People have a lot of apprehension, although the media is trying to downplay it, and we don't have ground reports from here.

But I must tell you, people of Kargil are very furious with government for not responding to the Chinese aggression.

The way the government responded to Pakistan is missing here. However, people also understand that China is stronger than India in terms of infrastructure.

People of Kargil have seen the worst and they hope this tension stops once for all.

Do you see any further escalation at LAC? It depends on the government of India's response.

If they respond to China with seriousness and sensitivity, and with a planning and strategy, then I don't think China will try to do any new misadventure.

It's important for India to stop China in Ladakh.

## Petrol, Diesel Prices Hiked...

increase in rates in a row. Oil companies had on Sunday raised prices by 60 paise per litre on both petrol and diesel after ending a 83-day hiatus in daily rate revision.

Daily price revision has restarted, an oil company official said. While oil PSUs have regularly revised ATF and LPG prices, they had since March 16 kept petrol and diesel prices on hold, ostensibly on account of extreme volatility in the international oil markets.

Auto fuel prices were frozen soon after the government raised excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 3 per litre each to mop up gains arising from falling international rates.

The government on May 6 again raised excise duties by Rs 10 per litre on petrol and Rs 13 per litre on diesel. Oil companies, instead of passing on the excise hike to consumers, decided to adjust them against the reduction required because of the drop in international oil prices. They used the same tool and did not pass on the Re 1 per litre hike required for switching over to ultra-clean BS-VI grade fuel from April 1.

## Soldier Ends Life In Poonch...

"The reason for him taking such an extreme step is being ascertained," the official added.

A police officer also confirmed the suicide and said that a case has been registered under relevant sections of law. (GNS)

## 4 Gamblers Held In Ganderbal

Mir and Fayaz Ahmed Beigh of Watlar have been shifted to the police station.

He said that a case FIR No.47/2020 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Lar and investigation has been initiated.

## Bags Carrying Bullets Seized

The bags, sent through courier, were meant for a soldier presently attached with Army's 1 Rashtriya Rifles Unit at the High Ground Anantnag in south Kashmir, they said.

The soldier, a resident of Maharashtra, is currently on leave, they added.

Police have registered a case at police station Humhama and investigation has been taken up, the officials said.

## Pak Breached Truce...

retaliated befittingly and cross-border shelling between the two sides was going on when last reports were received.

## Kejriwalln Self-Quarantine; LG Overrules AAP Govt's Orders On Hospitals, Testing

**NEW DELHI:** Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal has overruled the AAP government's controversial order on reserving hospitals except those run by the Centre for Delhiites in the national capital, ahead of chairing a crucial meeting on Tuesday to assess whether the city has entered the community transmission phase.

Delhi Chief Minister ArvindKejriwal went into self-quarantine on Monday after developing sore throat and fever and will undergo a coronavirus test, his deputy Manish Sisodia said, as concerns mounted over the surge in cases which, according to Health Minister Satyendra Jain, could rise to 56,000 in the next two weeks.

With 1,007 fresh cases, the total number of coronavirus cases reached 29,943 in Delhi, a bulletin issued by the Health department said. The death toll also climbed to 874. There are 17,712 active cases in Delhi.

LG Bajjal overruled the two orders on reserving Delhi government-run and private hospitals in the national capital for Delhiites and allowing COVID-19 test of only symptomatic pa-

tients, saying anyone can get treatment in the city and the asymptomatic too should be examined.

The AamAadmi Party reacted sharply to the LG's move, alleging that he had been pressured by the BJP which is doing "dirty politics" on the issue.

Delhi stands third (29,943) after Maharashtra (85,975 cases), Tamil Nadu (30,152) among the states with highest number of cases.

Health Minister Jain said the current doubling rate of COVID-19 in Delhi is 14 days so the national capital as per that estimation will see over 56,000 cases by the end of next two weeks, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain.

"The expert committee, which was set up by us earlier, has said that the doubling rate is 14-15 days and currently the city has recorded 28,936 cases in total so by the end of two weeks, it is estimated to rise to 56,000," the minister told reporters. A five-member expert panel formed by the Delhi government also said the city will require almost 15,000 beds by the end of June since the number of coronavirus cases is likely to touch the one-lakh mark by the end of this month.

# DDMA issues advisory for Red Zones; Reviews COVID-19 testing

Emphasises on strict adherence to Home Quarantine norms

SRINAGAR, JUNE 8: District Disaster Management Authority, Srinagar issued directions to essential services department for adherence to notified norms in revised Red Zones of district, and also appealed to the public of these areas for taking precautions and strict observance of notified norms to avoid spread of COVID-19. The status of testing in Red Zones was also reviewed.

Advisory for observance of precautions has been issued to residents of colonies including Bhagwanpora Lal Bazar, Eidgah, MIG Colony Bemina, Hyderpora, Soiteng Lasjan, Nowshera, Narwara, Solina, Habbak, Zadibal, Zaina kadal, Narkara, Palpora, Nehru Park, Saidpora Eidgah, Nawakadal, Kak sarai, Fateh Kadal, Al Farooq colony Bemina, Iqbalabad Bemina, Housing Colony Bemina, Narwara, Awanta Bhawan, Jeelanabad habak, Rainawari, Baaghat, Chattabal, Saderbal, Ali Abad Talbal, Nishat, Sanantnagar Batamalo, Budgair, Brein Nishat, Zakura, Balhama, Koolipora, HMT, Khonmoh, Guzarbal, Rajbagh, Natipora, Rawalpora, Umarabad HMT, Fateh Kadal, Qamarwari Nai Sadak Basantbagh, Barbarshah, Hawal, Soura, Gundipora, Naseem Bagh, Lawaypora, Sonwar, Peerbagh and two hostels. Meanwhile DDMA constituted committee headed by ADC Mr Masarat Hashim for clubbing of contiguous Red Zones for better and effective management.



Nearly 24,000 persons have been tested for Covid in Srinagar so far which include 6549 persons in notified Red Zones, 10,121 travellers at various quarantine centres, 4100 passengers arriving by Air, 2112 at transit locations and nearly 1300 at hospitals. Testing has been made compulsory in Red Zones for all persons with symptoms of Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI), Influenza Like Illness (ILI) and other conditions with similar symptoms as notified by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Testing has also been prioritised for key service de-

livery professionals apart from frontline healthcare workers in different sectors of COVID response system. The residents of Red Zones have been advised to avoid moving out unless necessary, mandatory wearing of masks as has been notified for the district, strict adherence to physical distancing norms and observing hygiene measures to avoid transmission. DDMA Chairman, Shahid Iqbal Choudhary asked the Additional District Magistrates of 5 Zones to reach out to the people in coordination with Zonal

Superintendents of Police, Zonal Administrative Officers and concerned Magistrates for effective measures on ground with greater public cooperation for strict adherence to norms. Essential services in Red Zones were also reviewed, meanwhile all Government and Private offices in these zones have been asked to minimise the staff strength and take special measures for observance of norms at work places. It also asked for focussed attention for patients with co-morbid conditions, continued care for expected women and elderly.

Earlier, in a joint meeting of DC Srinagar, Principal GMC, Director Health Services Kashmir, Principal SKIMS Medical College and other senior officers from health the detailed review of Home Quarantine was conducted. Persons recommended to be home quarantine, particularly contacts, have been advised for strict observance of notified SOPs. Pertinently it has been made mandatory to obtain undertaking for home quarantine, installation of geo-fencing App and display of quarantine poster, with instructions to response teams for regular visits. The administration urged the people to observe the recommended guidelines while being sent for Home Quarantine, particularly in view of instances of violations being reported. The team of officers also discussed measures for discharge of patients for home quarantine.

# First-ever online music concert by Kashmiri artists enthrall audience

Observer news service

Srinagar: The famed Kashmiri music artists—who came together for the first-ever virtual concert in the Valley during the COVID-19 pandemic mesmerized their audience globally.

Named 'Qarar' (Solace), the three-hour (6-9 pm) concert on Sunday by Kashmiri vocalists and instrumentalists on Facebook was held to cheer people up. Famed singer and chairman of The Kashmir Music Club, Waheed Jeelani and journalist, Nazir Ganaie, who organized the event, said that despite technical hiccups and internet proliferation—the artists were able to connect to the larger audience globally.

"We got an overwhelming response from the listeners across the globe," the organizers said. "There were viewers connected from all across the globe—mostly our Kashmir diaspora. That was a great beginning of a humble initiative which not only brought artists in distress together but also connected the people, living during this pandemic."

Apart from famed singer and composer, Waheed Jeelani, singers like Archana Jalali, from Ottawa in Canada, percussionist (Nutt), Ab Rashid Shah, journalist and Rabab player, Nazir Ganaie, vocalists

including Ishfaq Kawa, Raja Bilal, Altaf Sahil and assistant professor and vocalist, Dr Shaista Ahmad among others at the studio here enthrall the online audience. Jeelani said it was a step to connect people during these trying times. Jalali, a noted singer, performed live with the Kashmiri audience and artists post 1990.

"The idea came because of the lockdown. We wanted to connect with people, provide some solace to their hearts in these times when art and entertainment got affected," he said.

The singer said the idea was to keep the art and culture alive and launch a platform for artists as art gatherings are unlikely to be allowed even after the lockdown is lifted. "I think I have not seen anything like this taking place in the country before. Not even Bollywood has taken such an initiative during this pandemic," he said.

"We couldn't have huge gatherings because of COVID-19. So we wanted an alternative arrangement. This will also give a platform to budding and deserving young artists," he said.

Jeelani said The Kashmir Music Club would provide a platform to artists from other sectors as well in the future. Several eminent artists have hailed the idea and wished well to the organisers.

**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU KASHMIR**  
**Office Of The Executive Engineer P.H.E Division Budgam**  
H.Q: Budgam.  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDERS:**  
**Short Term NIT No: - 05/PHEDB/Civil of 2020-21.**

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of JK U.T. sealed tenders affixed with Rs. 4/- revenue stamps are invited from registered PWD (Contractors) of Jammu Kashmir Union Territory whose registrations are valid for the current financial year in terms of standing rules for the below mentioned work (s). The tenders should be addressed to the Executive Engineer PHE Division Budgam and will be received in Divisional office on 15.06.2020 upto 2:00p.m through registered post or by hand of the Contractor/s or his/their representative. Tender documents can be issued by this office on cash payment as shown against the work (s) mentioned below on 13.06.2020 upto 2:00 p.m in favour of those whose registrations are valid in all respects and can accommodate the amount of work as well. Further details of the NIT can be had from the office of the undersigned on any working day during office hours up to the due date of issue of tender documents.

S. No	Name of work	Estt. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of tender doc. (In Rs.)	E/M (In Rs.)	Time (in Days)	Class	MH of account
1	Laying and fitting of 6.I pipes of various diameters in various Mohallas of village Ichkoot (NRDWP)	0.72	70/-	1440/-	05 Days	DEE	NRDWP
2	Laying and fitting of 25/20mm dia G.I sub-main for Sikh Mohala Aarzagbi for WSS Shunglipora Nasserpora (M&R)	0.31	30/-	620/-	05 Days	DEE	M&R

**Note:-**  
1. All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in this office Master NIT for the year, 2020-21  
2. Payment shall be made only after funds are received by this office.  
3. Tender documents shall be issued only on production GST Registration / Returns/e-Statement without which tender documents shall not be issued.  
4. Successful Tenderer is requested to attend the Divisional office within 30 days for negotiation purpose if the quoted rates are on higher side, failing which the works shall be put to fresh tenders.  
5. If the Bid amount works out to be same for more than one contractor LOT system will be adopted.  
Date of issue of Tender documents:- 13.06.2020 up to 2.00 p.m.  
Date of Receiving of Tenders:- 15.06.2020 up to 2.00 p.m.

Executive Engineer,  
PHE Division Budgam.

No:- PHEDB/524-59  
Dated:- 06.06.2020

DIPK-1473/20

**Office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division,**  
**J&K Lakes & Waterways Development Authority, Dockyard Complex**  
**Ishber Nishat Northern Foreshore Road Srinagar – 191121**  
Ph. No: 91-94-2451073 e-mail: xenmechlda@gmail.com, vclwda@yahoo.com  
website: www.jklda.org

**GIST of Short Term Tender Notice. No.: 05 of 2020-21**  
Date: 05.06.2020

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir UT, sealed tender dully affixed with Rs. 5/- revenue stamps, are invited from Registered Electrical/ Mechanical Contractors / Workshop Holders on account of repairs/replacements of spares to various Lake cleaning machines of Mechanical Division, J&K Lakes & Waterways Development Authority, Srinagar.

Cost of Tender Document: Rs. 100/-  
EMD: Rs. 1200/-  
Sale of Tender document: 05.06.2020 to 15.06.2020 (upto 02:00 hrs)  
Last date of submission of tender: 16.06.2020 (upto 02:00 hrs)

Executive Engineer,  
Mechanical Division, J&K LDA, Sgr

No.: MD/LDA/ 503-13  
Dated:- 05/06/2020

DIPK-NB-560/20

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**SUB TRANSMISSION DIVISION GANDEBAL**

Tel No: - 0194-2416178 email: - xen-stgdgl@nic.in, engineer12@gmail.com

**NOTICE INVITING BIDDER**

For and on behalf of the Managing Director, KPDCJ Jammu and Kashmir UT, e-Tenders (In Two Cover System) are hereby invited Registered (A- Class) Electrical Contractors registered with J&K state Government, Central Public Works Department, Railways and other state/central governments for Stage Contract for Maintenance of 33KV Lines of Sub Division Gandebal in respect of STD Gandebal

S. No.	Description	e-NIT No	Estimated Cost (INR)	Last date for submission of e-bid
01)	Stage Contract for Maintenance of 33KV Lines of Sub Division Gandebal in respect of STD Gandebal	STD/GBL/01 of 2020-21	8.00 Lacs	20/06/2020 16:00 Hours

**Important Dates and Events**

A	Date & Time of downloading of Standard Bidding Document	The Standard Bidding Document can be downloaded over <a href="http://jktenders.gov.in">http://jktenders.gov.in</a> from 06/06/2020: 14:00 Hours
B	Clarifications start date	06/06/2020: 14:00 Hours
C	Clarifications end date	20/06/2020: 14:00 Hours
D	e-Bid submission (start) date & time (Submission of e-bidder fee, EMD and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS)	08/06/2020: 10:00 Hours
E	e-Bid submission (end) date & Time	20/06/2020: 16:00 Hours
F	Online Commercial and Technical e-Bid opening date & Time	22/06/2020: 14:00 Hours
G	Online financial e-Bid opening date & time (Only of the technically qualified bidders)	Will be communicated to the Technically Qualified Bidders
H	Venue of opening of technical & financial e-Bids	Office of The Executive Engineer STD Gandebal
I	Cost of e-Bid document	INR 1000.00 (Rupees one thousand only) Should be in Shape of Demand Draft in favor of Executive Engineer STD Gandebal
J	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit	2% of estimated cost should be in shape of CDR/TDR/FDR/BG in favor Executive Engineer STD Gandebal. Rs. 800449/- (eight Lakh, four hundred and forty nine only)
K	Estimated amount	Demanded
L	Status of Funds	Demanded
M	Validity offer	180 days from the date of opening of price tender.

The tender document can be downloaded from website [jktenders.gov.in](http://jktenders.gov.in) "Corrigendum, if any, would appear only on the [jktenders.gov.in](http://jktenders.gov.in) website. Sale of physical tender document is not applicable. No prices shall be submitted offline in any form. Bidder can modify his bid before last date of submission of online bid. After the last date of submission of online bid, no claim of bidders shall be entertained.

Executive Engineer,  
STD Gandebal

No.: STD/GBL/Ts/505-12  
Dated: 06-06-2020

DIPK-NB-543/20

**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**  
SHEIK 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 - (closed)
- Srinagar-Leh- (Open)

**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
17 Shawwal  
1441

**PRAYERS**

FAJR	3: 34
ZUHR	12: 30
ASR	5:30
Magrib	7:44
ISHA	9:25

**This Day In History**

- 641 - Arabic/Islamic army contrasts with the Hippo over Alexandria
- 1898 - China leases Hong Kong's new territories to the United Kingdom for 99 years
- 1915 - US President Woodrow Wilson sends 2nd Lusitania note to Germany protesting sinking of the Lusitania and refusing German claim British blockade illegal
- 1931 - First rocket-powered aircraft patent patented by Robert Goddard
- 1940 - General Charles de Gaulle's 1st meeting with Winston Churchill
- 1946 - Bhumibol Adulyadej becomes King of Thailand after the death of his brother King Ananda Mahidol
- 1956 - Heavy earthquake strikes Afghanistan, 400 killed
- 1957 - First ascent of Broad Peak (the world's 12th highest mountain).
- 1964 - Lal Bahadur Shastri becomes Prime Minister of India after being selected by the ruling Congress Party after Jawaharlal Nehru passed away
- 1967 - Israeli troops reach Suez Canal
- 1972 - In a show of support for Iraq, OPEC moves to prevent companies whose interests were nationalized in Iraq from increasing production elsewhere
- 1980 - Soyuz T-2 returns to Earth
- 1983 - Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party wins British parliamentary election
- 1983 - Zimbabwe win their 1st one-day cricket international, v Australia
- 1985 - USSR's Vega 1 deposits lander on surface of Venus

*From KO Archives*

**Ayub Khan's son says Kashmiris did not support Pak in 1965**  
*Doctored Reports Led To Killings Of Scores Of Pakistani Commandos*

Islamabad - A large number of some 4,00,0 Pakistani commandos sent to the Kashmir Valley in 1965 were butchered or caught by Indian forces after the local population failed to support them, former Pakistan foreign minister Gohar Ayub Khan says in another sensational disclosure.

He said Ayub Khan who took the crucial decision of sending commandos was, in fact, misled by the "doctored" reports of Kashmiri leaders from across the border that painted a rosy picture that the entire population of valley was ready to fight Indian forces and they would help the commandos occupy the target territory in the Valley with armed struggle of local masses.

He said these secretly conveyed doctored reports' from the then top leadership of Jammu and Kashmir about the potential of uprising against Indian rule led to a big disaster and resulted in killings and capturing of Pakistani commandos after Indians closed their entry and exit points at Kargil and others areas.

Once they were in the valley, the commando's realised that only four Muslim majority districts were fighting while the rest of the valley was in no mood to revolt against India.

Consequently Pakistan was left with no option but to open other fronts to ease Indian Army pressure on trapped commandos. Gohar, who is writing his autobiography, told Islamabad daily The News in an interview.

According to Gohar, then foreign minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had presented the report about Kashmiri disaffection with Indians to Ayub Khan, based on secret communications with the Kashmiri leadership.

Based on Bhutto's report, every commando sent to Indian Kashmir was given two rifles and additional ammunition.

Each commando was supposed to keep one rifle with him and distribute the other to the local population to fan a "massive Indigenous war against Indian occupation".

Gohar, who served as foreign minister of Pakistan in 1988 is writing his memoirs and Egging into the personal diaries of his father to unfold many secret aspects of Pakistani history from 1968 to 1974.

Once in the Kashmir valley, the commandos sent back "horrifying reports" saying earlier assertions by Kashmiri leaders were "doctored" and that they (commandos) were trapped. Ayoub and the entire leadership of Pakistan feared that the Indians would slaughter the Pakistani commandos. The Indian Army quickly captured all the major entry and exit points such as Kargil, Pirsahab and Nemil while Pakistani commandos were stranded without any support from local Kashmiris.

Gohar said many commandos were "martyred" or captured by Indians. Some managed to escape and return to Pakistan. At one stage, the Pakistan Army was about to capture Akhnoor in Jammu and Kashmir. After then Indian Prime Minister Lai Bhardu Shastri announced Sep 4 that New Delhi would attack the international border. Ayub asked the army chief to move Pakistani troops into operational areas. But the advance in the Chamb sector had to be halted in view of the difficulty of constructing a bridge on a river that lay between the Pakistanis and the Indian city.

Gohar said his father made Pakistan join the US-backed Baghdad Pact only to wage war against India.

Pakistan was getting ammunition from Americans and its allies in the name of training but half of the ammunition was being secretly stored in Pakistan Army depots for use against India in case of a full-fledged war. Pakistan also ran short of ammunition and had to seek help of Turkey and Iran.

(Kashmir Observer, 09 June, 2005)

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# The Cure Worse Than The Disease

Lockdown has not arrested the spread of Coronavirus but it has crushed Kashmir valley's economy, already reeling from months long lockdown

IFTTHIKAR BASHIR

## Exiting lockdown

**P**ast two weeks have seen the number of Covid-19 positive cases growing at an exponential rate. In past several days, the numbers have grown at upwards of 8000 daily. So much so, India is now the fifth worst coronavirus-hit country in the world, it surpassed Spain on Saturday. The country had earlier moved past Italy, one of the worst victims of the disease. Only positive takeaway is the number of recoveries which has been close to 50 percent so far. From nine states on May 1, the number of states where the tallies of confirmed cases is in four or more digits has reached 19. Maharashtra continues to top the charts in terms of total confirmed cases. Other states with high tallies are New Delhi and Gujarat.

The government has extended the lockdown till June 30 but this involves a phased plan to unlock Indian economy. From Monday onwards, malls, hotels, restaurants and places of worship have opened. There is, however, no such relaxation in red zones, the areas with the most number of coronavirus cases. Curbs have also been removed on movement of people and goods between states. Night curfew lingers, with the timings changed to 9 pm-5am from the earlier 7 pm-7 am.

Upcoming weeks are expected to be more challenging in the country. The cases are expected to grow at a faster rate. According to a top World Health Organization expert the risk of the explosion of COVID-19 cases remains even though there has been this hasn't happened so far. The lockdown that was expected to flatten the curve hasn't done so. Instead, the shutdown has hit the economy hard leaving millions of people jobless. It has also disrupted the supply lines and forced migrant workers to head home. This has forced the government to open up the economy, hence the steps for a phased exit from the lockdown.

As things stand, India has to brace for a tough trade-off: it is a choice between more Coronavirus cases and the hunger. But given the current state of India's economy and the millions of people who live below poverty line, the country can hardly afford a longer lockdown. It has to start re-opening. So also J&K which has so far been deprived of even the relaxations allowed in other parts of the country during the previous lockdowns. One can only hope that the local administration will follow the relaxation schedule in the new lockdown in letter and spirit.

OTHER OPINION

## Undoing the damage

**I**n its typically laconic statement on Saturday's talks between senior Indian and Chinese generals, the ministry of external affairs sounded surprisingly positive about the nature of the conversation and said there will be more military and diplomatic engagement to resolve the current crisis in Ladakh region. Saturday's military talks followed inconclusive local-level engagement between the two armed forces in the last few weeks. On the eve of Saturday's talks, there was intensive diplomatic consultation between the two sides that reaffirmed the mutual political interest in a peaceful resolution of the issues at hand. That the talks between senior generals were held in a "cordial atmosphere" is a relief. Delhi's affirmation that the two sides agreed to resolve the situation in accordance with the bilateral confidence-building measures instituted over the last three decades is welcome. It is reasonable to conclude that the talks mark a good beginning in the effort to resolve yet another military crisis on the China frontier.

Before Saturday's talks, Delhi was careful to downplay the prospects for an early breakthrough and suggested an extended process is at hand. The government's caution was complemented by widespread pessimism within the Indian strategic community about an immediate resolution. That scepticism was rooted in the fact that India was taken unawares in April by the big forward push by the People's Liberation Army across multiple locations along the so-called Line of Actual Control separating the two sides. That the PLA had dug into the new positions and had brought in heavy weapons systems seemed to suggest China was here to stay in the new positions it had secured. With China having seized some ground that it did not control before, Delhi's task of getting Beijing to undo the new facts it had created in Ladakh appears rather difficult. But having publicly signalled its case for the restoration of the status quo that existed in April, Delhi has little room to back off. Therefore the government's suggestions that the Indian armed forces are in this for a long haul.

The strategic community fears two negative implications of Delhi's current engagement with Beijing. One is that Delhi might be tempted to ease the standoff in return for some cosmetic steps from the PLA to defuse the current crisis. The other is that Beijing might demand rather costly political concessions from Delhi in return for a full restoration of the April status quo. Given the unenviable situation Delhi finds itself in, South Block's upbeat description of the talks suggests that the outcomes on Saturday may have exceeded initial expectations. But there is no forgetting that the April surprise has given the upper hand to the PLA. Delhi will have to press all its levers — on the military, diplomatic and political fronts — to persuade Beijing to restore status quo ante in Ladakh. If Delhi, however, is seen as making unreasonable concessions to ease the current crisis, it will face a domestic political backlash and considerable diminution of its regional and international status in relation to Beijing.

The Indian Express

**“The continuing lockdowns have had such an dreaded impact on the economy of Kashmir that the estimated losses are believed to exceed Rs 35 thousand crores. This data is based on the study focused on the impacted districts of Kashmir valley comprising 60 per cent of the total population of J&K. This assessment is calculated on the actual number of unit holders and persons engaged in each sector, job and financial losses suffered by them.**

**W**E have flattened the wrong curve i.e. GDP — these words were uttered by one of the most important business voices in India the other day. Covid-19 one of the greatest pandemics of our times, which has caught world leaders off-guard, has demonstrated that some of the powerful governments and their economies are ill-prepared to deal with an aggressive outbreak. While the world fights to mitigate the impact of the corona crisis which has unsettled lives, livelihoods and businesses worldwide, the outbreak also accentuates the need for leaders and people in power to be resilient. While the top of the line leaders are already hand in gloves in charting the right course to successfully lead their areas of operation amid the crisis, leading through a crisis of this magnitude requires more than just a rule book and best practices.

Amidst a high-octane debate, India finally announced the re-opening for business and revival. Too early or too late — while we deliberate on the timings, some might even ignore the important debate— how will businesses restart and consumers behave in a changed ecosystem. Predicting trends is fraught with risk. Noise can be ignored, signals read but forecasting the time and the intensity of the trend is strenuous. Foretelling the curve is arduous. Most trends die down as drifts. Some live as a 'niche' for a year or two. Very few accelerate into mass adoption. Those which do, are often non-linear, sticky and lasting. Businesses need an approach that is innovative and yet robust. As expected, India's fourth quarter Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has slowed down to 3.1 percent, lowest in last 11 years as per latest figures. This number fully reflects the slowdown, which the economy has been going through in the last two years. This number is more important than the quarterly number, as it would be the base against which the impact of the lockdown and consequent demand destruction, loss of productivity and employment would be mapped. Unemployment data, as per initial figures in India is estimated at 15 or approximately. While we can deliberate on the figures, the problem can't be simply brushed under the carpet.

Lockdown cannot be a permanent feature and it cannot continue, as rest of world is reopening now, even though the timing still remains a debatable topic. Specific to our part of the world, Kashmir has been under lockdown for over 10 months now. Businesses— big and small have suffered immensely and some of the most promising start-ups have got nipped in the bud. Almost all Kashmir based businesses have suffered losses because of Aug'19 lockdown, communications blockade etc and to add to our woes, lockdown because of Covid 19 is proving to be the last nail in the coffin for the economy of Kashmir. Local businesses are bearing the brunt of this pandemic, even job losses are running into lacs and as per latest estimates 1.5 lakh jobs have been lost in the transport sector alone. An estimated 50 thousand employees working in various MNCs in the state are under a lot of stress and are faced with the



horror of losing their jobs. We have witnessed the impact of previous lockdowns on the people involved with online shopping platforms, which was simply disastrous. We have read many a stories of people having faced bankruptcy because of restrictions and curbs on the Internet etc.

The continuing lockdowns have had such an dreaded impact on the economy of Kashmir that the estimated losses are believed to exceed Rs 35 thousand crores. This data is based on the study focused on the impacted districts of Kashmir valley comprising 60 per cent of the total population of J&K.

Simply put, the real problem at hand in the entire world and specifically in Kashmir is not pandemic but unemployment which is threatening to turn catastrophic unless and until, we let our businesses open up and function smoothly. The continuing lockdowns have had such an dreaded impact on the economy of Kashmir that the estimated losses are believed to exceed Rs 35 thousand crores. This data is based on the study focused on the impacted districts of Kashmir valley comprising 60 per cent of the total population of J&K. This assessment is calculated on the actual number of unit holders and persons engaged in each sector, job and financial losses suffered by them. The government has to look to address, a number of challenges, faced by a host of sectors now.

Once the lockdown ends completely, the exact extent of monetary and business pain would be known. While some sections of the population are yet to receive relief, we must understand that no one knows for sure when the pandemic will end and economic operations will fully return. However the timing to address these issues has to be apt and it cannot be too little too late. There is a clear case of loss of business and hence a big setback for incomes, salaries and wages.

Transformational outlook and new habits will have lasting implications. With the latest advisory on the opening up of all government offices, it's appalling to note that nobody in the administration is giving two hoots to the problems faced by the business fraternity, self employed and daily wage labourers. While the government employees who are faced with their own set of problems and issues, are at least guaranteed their remuneration, nobody seems to be bothered about the survival of the other class of the society. Peoples lives matter and we can't hold the majority to hostage and not let them earn their

livelihood. The administration needs to understand that you can't have different yardsticks for different sectors of the society.

While we see businesses outside of Kashmir opening up, traders and businesses in Kashmir are being forbidden to open up and are left at the mercy of officials and people in charge of law and order. We can't let the situation arise wherein by trying to save the lives from Covid 19, people end up dying because of hunger. While it's fully understood that the Covid 19 curve is peaking and we ought to have a set of standard operating procedures in place so as to minimise the impact. Opening up of businesses, reaching out to people and creating mass awareness is the only way forward. The world is reopening now and we too need to prepare the people to live with new reality (COVID19). The reopening (unlocking) phase belongs to the public as they have to take precautions at large scale. People need to maintain physical and social distance, wear masks, maintain hygiene and accept the new norms as responsible citizens.

Administration on the other hand, needs to soften up its stand a bit, be more compassionate, as the unlocking system needs a confidence of positive responses. Involving all stakeholders like trade bodies, businesses, restaurant owners and manufactures etc and seeking their support in adhering to the guidelines while operating their business is the need of the hour. Exploring the possibility of involving religious heads to educate people about the precautions against the pandemic has to be a must. As part of the re-opening process, special training sessions to be held across Srinagar and other major towns to smoothen the process. COVID 19 testing of persons involved in trade and service sectors can be conducted to ensure no infected person is involved in the operation of public dealing businesses. We need to prepare the people to live with this virus as we don't know by when the vaccine or treatment is discovered. Till then, let's learn to behave responsibly and take it in our stride.

We are aware of the recent surge in numbers across the valley and the dangers associated, however, our response to open up a lockdown can't and should not be another lockdown.

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## Kashmiris Stand Up To The Covid-19 Challenge

We live in a moment when the greatest act of love is to stay distant from the object of your affection

— SLAVOJ ZIZEK

**I**t is a fact that human life has never faced this big a challenge since the 2nd World War as it is faced with today. A powerful tide is surging across much of the world today creating a new, often bizarre, environment in which to work, play, marry, raise children etc is a matter of concern. In this bewildering context, businessmen, politicians, teachers and others seem powerless. The world powers are clueless and crumbling.

India reacted with a countrywide lockdown first on 22 March 2020 then on 24 March, and it continues till today. The other states of India and the world may have observed the lockdown for the first time but we in Kashmir are used to long time bandhs and

shutdowns either on the directions of separatist groups or by security agencies on the pretext of law and order. The agony and horror of lockdown cannot be understood by anyone other than Kashmiris.

In pre-COVID-19 lockdowns people, including scholars, students and professionals were spending their time in domestic works, reading books and watching movies and playing games on their smartphones but unfortunately in this lockdown the government has deprived us of high speed internet.

In absence of it educated and conscious people have used it in a very result oriented way. People from different spheres came up with different observations and advises for the masses and started awareness campaigns. Art is playing a vital role in making people understand the challenges posed by Covid-19. A come-

dian and few singers and skit players have joined hands to raise awareness among Kashmir's rural population about the outbreak and the precautions required.

Kashmir's own Johnny Lever-like comedian, Nazir Josh, widely known for his famous character Ahad Raaze, has come with a solo performance in his unique style.

"Comedy is also an important medium to reach out to the masses. In fact, art can play a vital role in making people understand this deadly virus.

"Besides these action video songs, skits, (Laddi Shah), the medium of video-magic fun has been launched. As the disease continues to evolve, there is need for a proactive approach to help ensure the safety of the people. There is a greater need to generate awareness locally in their own language and melody.

Another video surfaced on social

media of a song sung by Iqbal Hussain on the lyrics of Basharat Habib "Bahar mat ghoom qayamat hogi aaj fatwa ha ki ghar mein hi ibadat hogi". Besides comedians and singers, all other groups like teachers, doctors, responsible citizens are playing their role in awareness campaign and pivotal role is being played by religious scholars' from their pulpits in order to save the humans and humanity. Kashmir is the Muslim majority population and large gatherings and congregations are the routine throughout year but the leaders and preachers have shown responsibility and helped spread awareness about Covid-19 from their pulpits. Kashmir has shown collective resistance against the coronavirus and continued their life, culture and education without any resources.

Dr. Showkat Ahmad Sheikh  
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# There's No Home Remedy For Coronavirus Lies

Drinking warm water, eating garlic and applying black seed oil will not prevent COVID-19

ADNAN HIRAD | NEW YORK TIMES

**Families going through a trying experience like this can find reasons to blame each other or feel guilt. Into such a reservoir of recrimination, poured the osteopath's message, casting doubt on every decision the family made. After reading his claims, family members asked whether the mother needed to be hospitalised at all. If she did, they asked, did she need to be intubated and should she remain in the hospital. The onus of this inquest fell on my friend, because she is the one who made the decision to take her mother to the hospital.**

**A**round the beginning of the pandemic, I started receiving WhatsApp messages from fellow Somalis instructing me to drink warm water, eat garlic and apply black seed oil every day to prevent COVID-19.

These are homeopathy remedies familiar to most Somalis. So while the claims were untrue and could provide a false sense of invincibility to those who followed them, they were otherwise benign and I was not alarmed.

I told my mother that these claims have no scientific basis. I admonished my 21-year-old cousin, a medical student in the autonomous region of Somaliland, to stop using this message as his WhatsApp profile picture.

The broader impact of claims like this soon became clear. My Somali friends and family had stocked up on garlic, reported drinking more water and procured black seed oil. There were even reports of shortages of garlic in Somali markets. People who said these potions had suppressed their COVID-19 symptoms widely shared their views on social media.

#### Dubious treatment advice

But I became more alarmed late last month when I began receiving dubious advice about treating people seriously ill with COVID-19. These assertions came from a North Carolina osteopath who questioned whether the coronavirus even had anything to do with the disease that was sending people to intensive care units. The claims he made — like if you had the “flu shot, you will test positive for COVID-19” — would fail the slightest expert review. Nonetheless, he asserts his points with such passion, with an aura of claimed expertise, that his influence among Somalis was causing harm.

In early April, a nurse who is friend of mine, her father, mother, brother, sister, and nephew (14 months old) — all tested positive for the coronavirus. Her father was hospitalised for three days. Her mother was admitted to an intensive care unit and remained intubated for over five weeks.

Families going through a trying experience like this can find reasons to blame each other or feel guilt. Into such a reservoir of recrimination, poured the osteopath's message, casting doubt on every decision the family made. After reading his claims, family members asked whether the mother needed to be hospitalised at all. If she did, they asked, did she need to be intubated and should she remain in the hospital. The onus of this inquest fell on my friend, because she is the one who made the decision to take her mother to the hospital.

On April 20, my friend texted me a 47-minute YouTube video from Dr. Buttar and inquired whether I “have seen this.” I examined what “this” was and sent back a pithy verdict: He was full of it. She responded with a polite, “LOL” and continued to ask, “You think so?” as if she wanted me to contribute to her growing sense of guilt. I would not. “Of course,” I wrote back, “both your mum and dad got sick. Was that made up?”

#### Deluge of disinformation

At the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, where I recently graduated with dual degrees in medicine and translation biomedical science, we are taught that doctors need to consider a patient's social, psychological, as well as biological, context. So I called my friend and I asked her to remember her training and to demand an apology from her sibling who blamed her for their mother's ailment. (Family wounds now seem to be healing as the matriarch is out of the COVID-19 unit and seems to be improving.)

Disinformation has metastasised among Somalis in the United States and abroad.



**A vaccine is likely to be the only hope we have of eradicating the coronavirus. If too many Americans continue to doubt the value of vaccines, coverage will be low and success could be elusive.**

The latest iteration is a video, with Somali subtitles, in which a white American man in his 60s, asserts that Bill Gates — who is funding coronavirus vaccine research — is planning to “track every human who has been vaccinated with a coronavirus vaccine with a nano-size microchip.” He labels Gates “an enemy of the human race,” “an enemy of almighty God” and an “evil man.” The accompanying Somali text implores the recipient to “please, listen to the end” and exclaims, “Scary!” Indeed, it is scary that these messages are being used to terrorise vulnerable populations already struggling with the enormous disruptions of a pandemic.

How, when, where and why these messages spread through a network of Somalis inside and outside the United States remains a question. Does each ethnic community have its own special network of disinformation?

Anti-vaccine advocates were already preying on the doubts some Somali-Americans were grappling with because Somali children in the West are reported to have higher autism rates compared with other black children. As a consequence, in 2017, there was a measles outbreak in the Somali community in Minnesota, where measles vaccination rates among Somali-American children stood at 42 per cent, compared to 91 per cent among non-Somali children. Thankfully, the numbers are improving again, but remain much below the 95 per cent coverage needed to achieve herd immunity for measles.

A vaccine is likely to be the only hope we have of eradicating the coronavirus. If too many Americans continue to doubt the value of vaccines, coverage will be low and success could be elusive.

In the developing world, particularly Africa,

misinformation compounds the mistrust of Western-endorsed public health campaigns that have been a remnant of colonialism and a result of such Western-backed fiascos as the American government's use of polio vaccination as a cover to find Osama Bin Laden.

We have seen the catastrophic effect of that mistrust in South Africa's early denial of the AIDS epidemic. In Tanzania, the president, despite the deaths of several members of Parliament from COVID-19, has adopted a dangerous mix of denialism and miracle-cure mongering to address the epidemic in his nation.

It is also problematic when misinformation can be tied to the White House or when a prominent French doctor suggested that vaccine trials should be conducted on Africans, “a bit like it is done for some studies on AIDS,” on prostitutes.

And 20 per cent of Americans responding to a recent poll said they would not get a coronavirus vaccine if it were available.

To compete for the hearts and minds of communities against viral misinformation, public health approaches have to be organised around both national and local cultural touchstones. For example, in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Seattle and Columbus, Ohio, where there are significant Somali-American communities, public health officials should work with Somali-American health officers and imams — an approach that has been used in Seattle to increase vaccine coverage in the Somali community.

Such public health efforts to combat misinformation should start now.

If we are able to establish trust in medical expertise, we might achieve some semblance of control over the coronavirus and prevent any more needless death and despair.

## Why Should We Ease The Creases From The Bed?

Quarantine period offers an opportunity to live a wild life

SUDHA SUBRAMANIAN  
Gulf News

**I**t is that day of the week again. I gathered the fresh sheets and stepped into the bedroom. Sheet changing, like in most household, is the weekly affair I follow from the time I learnt that sheets need a bit of cleaning too. The ritual, which has previously been a lonely affair has suddenly garnered audience during these quarantine times.

“Let me give you a hand”, he said, as he took the fresh sheets and unfolded them. My husband makes the bed every single day, yet, the art of yanking, tucking was something, he was struggling with. “You got to pull it a harder and then tuck it well”, I said as I lifted one end of the bed and got into action.

I have been married for nearly 25 years. Yet, I cannot finish his sentences. But, I can pretty much predict the next discussion we may probably have or the questions he will ask as he followed my instructions.

#### Weekly ritual

After nearly 15 minutes of tucking,



pulling and easing out the creases from the centre of the bed, when I didn't hear those words, I was almost disappointed.

For one, my husband would have surely asked, “why do we have to ease out the creases from the centre of the bed when

it will eventually crumple?” I waited for a few seconds longer in anticipation. But, that was not to be.

I didn't have to wait for long. When I stood with a pair of new sheets the following week, he lifted his nose from the digital device. I knew that look. But, I wanted that to transform into words. He got up from the couch and held out his hand. “Again?”, he asked. “Yup”, I said. “But, didn't we just do this exercise?”, he narrowed his brows. “It has already been a week”, I sighed.

“We do this every week?”, he asked with his eyes widened.

I don't know about everyone but I could feel my blood pressure shooting up. I decided to resort to monosyllables.

“But why?”, he asked in disbelief.

I didn't know how to respond to that. I stood for a split second thinking of every single reasoning. But I also knew all the responses that would follow. “We all stay indoors. Nobody comes home. Nobody goes out. So, why should we do this?”, he asked again.

For a person who wonders why bath towels need to be washed this was going to be a path fraught with difficulty. I took in a deep breath. “Well, the sheets are in

use. So...” But, even before I could finish the sentence, there were more words from him. I indulged in the exercise of matching what he said with what I thought he would say in my head. As we both held the ends of the sheets and spread them evenly, I asked, “how often did you think, they got changed?”

“Never thought about that”, he asked, “but I think you should think about it. You don't have to change this every week. It will help the environment”, he said, in his last desperate attempt to hit my conscience at its weakest spot.

“Or maybe we can just follow some protocol that has been there for two and a half decades”, I was miffed.

“Or, why not live a wild life this quarantine period?”, he was pushing it.

I didn't bother answering. That was surely going to be a big NO.

I walked out carrying the dirty sheets. But, I am glad we had that conversation. This pandemic may have taught different things to different people. But, in my household, my husband has finally learnt that, sheets have to be changed, just like how bath towels need to be washed — for the simple reason that we use them!

# COVID-19: GRADUAL EASING OF Lockdowns Might Benefit The Global Economy



**Agencies**

wing to the coronavirus crisis, many countries across the world are under lockdown. A new study has revealed that a cautious approach to easing lockdown restrictions that reduces the risk of later lockdowns may be better for the global supply chain in the long run.

The study led by researchers at the UCL and Tsinghua University was published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*.

This is the first peer-reviewed study to comprehensively assess potential global supply chain effects of Covid-19 lockdowns, modelling the impact of lockdowns on 140 countries, including countries not directly affected by Covid-19.

The study found that stricter lockdowns imposed earlier - such as the two-month lockdown imposed in China - are economically preferable to more moder-

ate lockdowns imposed for four or six months, as the duration of lockdown matters more to economies than their severity.

This is because businesses can absorb the shock of a brief lockdown better by relying on reserves and because shorter lockdowns cause less disruption to regional and global supply chains.

Researchers also found that countries not directly affected by Covid-19 may nonetheless experience large losses of more than 20% of their GDP due to fall in consumer demand and bottlenecks in supply chains.

Particularly at risk are open or highly specialised economies, such as Caribbean countries that rely on tourism and Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan that rely on energy exports. Also vulnerable are globalised industries that rely on difficult-to-replace suppliers, such as automobile manufacturing, where production is estimated to fall by up to half.

Lead author Professor Dabo

Guan (UCL Bartlett School of Construction & Project Management and Tsinghua University) said: "Our study shows the ripple effects caused by lockdowns along global supply chains, with countries not directly affected by Covid-19 still experiencing heavy economic losses.

"While predicting the true cost of lockdowns is not possible at this stage, our research suggests that shorter, stricter lockdowns minimise the impact on supply chains, while gradually easing restrictions over the course of a year may also be less disruptive than a swift lifting of restrictions followed by another lockdown," Guan added.

The researchers estimated that gradually easing lockdown measures over 12 months would minimise supply chain impacts compared to lifting restrictions more quickly, over two months, and then introducing a second round of lockdowns in January next year, which they estimated would increase the cost by one-third.

Co-author Professor Steven Davis (University of California, Irvine) said: "Our analysis quantifies the global economic benefits of robust public health responses and suggests that economic justifications to re-open businesses could backfire if they result in another round of lockdowns."

Looking ahead to a potential second wave, the researchers found that a strict, globally co-ordinated lockdown implemented for two months would be less economically costly than lockdowns happening in different parts of the world at different times - risking a potential economic loss to global supply chains by 50% rather than 60%. This is because the economic cost of a lockdown goes beyond national borders and a shorter, one-off shock is easier to absorb.

Professor Guan said: "Companies will survive the supply chain failures that lockdowns cause by relying on reserves of stock or finding new suppliers. If a second

shock hits, reserves may be low and supply chains only recently repaired - making a new break much more costly."

If recurrent global lockdowns occur, New Zealand's food services sector and Jamaica's tourism industry would face estimated productivity losses of about 90%, while China's electronics business and Iran's oil industry would face productivity losses of about two thirds.

The cost to the UK economy, meanwhile, would rise from a potential supply chain loss of 38% (one lockdown gradually eased over 12 months) to 57% (recurrent global lockdowns happening at different times in different countries).

In the United States, the cost to the financial sector would nearly double if a second global lockdown occurs, with potential supply chain loss rising from 33% (one lockdown gradually eased over 12 months) to 57% (recurrent global lockdowns happening at different

times in different countries).

The most important factor affecting the global economic cost of lockdowns, the study found, was the number of countries implementing them, highlighting the importance to the global economy of one country containing an epidemic.

Co-author Professor D'Maris Coffman (UCL Bartlett School of Construction & Project Management) said: "Just as individuals staying at home protect others as well as themselves, so countries imposing strict lockdowns provide a public good to other countries.

"In preparing for the next pandemic, a global facility, in all likelihood administered by the IMF, could ensure that the costs of containing an outbreak are not borne by one country alone. This would remove some of the disincentives to early action and provide enormous health and economic benefits over the long term," Coffman added.

The paper used a "disaster footprint" economic model to quantify the direct costs of lockdowns in terms of labour reduction as well as the cascading effects of loss of labour on the supply chain, simulating how constraints to output affect upstream suppliers as well as the firms to which the goods are being supplied. Supply chain data was drawn from the Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP) database, which divides the world into 141 economies, with 60 sectors within each economy.

Researchers simulated three kinds of lockdown: strict lockdown in which 80% of travel and labour ceases; a more moderate lockdown with a 60% reduction; a third, lighter lockdown with a 40% reduction in travel and labour. The strict, 80% reduction is based roughly on China's lockdown, during which data suggests 80% of travel stopped, while the 60% lockdown broadly reflects the approach taken in Europe and the United States.

## This Study Develops Ways To Trace Spread Of Major Plant Disease

**Agencies**

A team of scientists has found potential ways to prevent the spread of a disease-causing bacterium that harms more than a hundred plant species worldwide, an advance that could save the nursery industry billions of dollars a year.

The research was led by Oregon State University scientists worked with researchers at the USDA Agricultural Research Service on the study. The findings were just published in the journal of 'Science.'

The research has important implications for commercial plant growers because it could help halt the spread of *Agrobacterium*. The bacterium causes crown-gall disease, which impacts more than 100 plant species including fruit trees, roses, grapevine, nursery plants, and shade trees.

The methods developed for the study can also potentially be applied to track diseases in humans and animals and even foodborne disease outbreaks. For example, plasmids spread antibiotic-resistant genes, a pressing problem for human and animal health.

"Understanding the genetic basis for how pathogens emerge and diversify in agricultural ecosystems is foundational for determining their spread and assessing risks," said Jeff Chang, a professor in Oregon State's College of Agricultural Sciences and one of the authors of the study.

"These are critical to informing policies for improving plant health and preparing against dis-



ease outbreaks to increase global food security," added Prof Chang.

The paper centres on plasmids, self-replicating DNA molecules that are found in *Agrobacterium*. Their spread amplifies the spread of disease.

The plasmids of *Agrobacterium* have genes that give *Agrobacterium* the unique ability to transfer a portion of the plasmid into plant cells and genetically reprogram the host to cause crown-gall or hairy root disease.

These plasmids also have genes that allow *Agrobacterium* to transfer the entire plasmid horizontally from one bacterium to another rather than through vertical, or parent to child, inheritance.

Upon acquiring a harmful plasmid, a previously benign strain of *Agrobacterium* can become a novel pathogen lineage. This ability makes the control of the pathogen and tracking of an outbreak difficult. Thus, to develop their tracing system, the researchers first had to understand the evolution and classification of the plasmids.

The researchers focussed on

quences of *Agrobacterium* allowed the researchers to link nurseries on the basis of having strains with the same genome and plasmid sequences, the same genome sequence but different plasmid sequences, or different genome sequences but the same plasmid sequences, added Weisberg.

They were able to track at least seven cases in which the global distribution of plants contributed to the widespread transmission of a single *Agrobacterium* strain-plasmid combination. One of these cases included a nursery that produces plants for wholesalers and may have served as a kind of patient zero source for many outbreaks. Strains of the same genotype-plasmid combination were later identified in two other nurseries in another part of the world. With the ability to separately analyse the bacteria from the plasmid, the researchers found many cases in which plasmid transmission perpetuated disease spread. For example, they found one strain-plasmid combination that was collected in 1964. Plasmids with the same sequences were identified in strains collected 30 to 40 years later in different parts of the world. A few strains of *Agrobacterium*, and some plasmids, have been modified and are used in tools for studying plant function, and for introducing new traits into plants.

By characterising the variation and relationships between plasmids, findings from this study also have potential applications in optimising these biotechnology tools or developing new ones to advance research.

Alexandra Weisberg, lead author and a post-doctoral researcher co-mentored by Chang and Niklaus Grunwald, of the USDA-ARS Horticultural Crops Research Unit in Corvallis, sequenced 140 strains with plasmids and, surprisingly, found the plasmids all descended from just nine lineages.

"Armed with this extensive genetic sequencing information about how to classify plasmids and *Agrobacterium*, we could infer both how bacteria move among nurseries and how the plasmids move among bacteria," said Weisberg.

Having whole-genome se-

## Study Analyses Differential Impact Of Major Life Events On People's Well Being

**Agencies**

Major life events such as marriage, childbirth, bankruptcy are known to affect one's well-being. However, for the first time, researchers have analysed the differing degree these events hold, which can eventually impact one's happiness and life satisfaction.

The study - published recently in the journal of *SSM - Population Health* - examined 18 major life events, and how they affected a sample of 14,000 Australians between 2002 and 2016.

The data was taken from the HILDA survey, which examines the social, health and economic conditions of Australian households using face-to-face interviews and self-completion questionnaires.

The study based on the differential impact of major life events on cognitive and affective wellbeing was conducted by authors from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and the University of Sydney.

The results show that some events, such as moving house, getting fired, or getting a promotion, had little impact on wellbeing, while others, such as the death of a partner or a large financial loss, had profound impacts.

"Marriage, childbirth and a major financial gain produced the greatest elevation to wellbeing, however, they did not lead to long-lasting happiness - the positive effect generally wore off after two years. However, there was also an anticipatory effect for marriage and childbirth, with wellbeing increasing prior to these events," said lead researcher, UTS economist Dr



Nathan Kettlewell.

"The life events that saw the deepest plunge in wellbeing were the death of a partner or child, separation, a large financial loss or a health shock. But even for these negative experiences, on average people recovered to their pre-shock level of wellbeing by around four years," he added.

A greater understanding of how life events impact wellbeing, and how long it takes to adapt, can help government and policymakers better target resources to improve the happiness and welfare of society.

"A growing number of countries, including the UK, Iceland and New Zealand, as well as the OECD, are measuring wellbeing, alongside economic growth, as a way to gauge success in improving the lives of citizens," Dr Kettlewell said.

"Information on wellbeing also helps clinicians and healthcare professionals better understand the repercussions of major life crises such as the death of a loved one, a health shock or job loss," Dr Kettlewell added.

The researchers examined two different types of wellbeing. The first was 'affective' well-

being, which reflected 'happiness' or the frequency and intensity of positive or negative emotions. The second was 'cognitive' wellbeing, which refers to a more deliberate, goal-directed evaluation of 'life satisfaction'.

While some life events such as marriage and retirement had positive effects on 'cognitive' wellbeing, the net effect of positive events on 'affective' wellbeing was close to zero.

Pregnancy and childbirth, in particular, saw the largest gap between the two domains. Measures of 'life satisfaction' were quite positive in the first year after the birth of a child, while happiness or emotional wellbeing actually declined during this time.

The researchers also accounted for how life events often occur together, for example, divorce and financial loss, to tease out the differing impacts.

The four most common life events were moving house, finding a new job, a serious injury or illness in a close family member and pregnancy. The least frequent were becoming widowed and getting married.

"While chasing after happiness may be misplaced, the results suggest that the best chances for enhancing wellbeing may lie in protecting against negative shocks, for example by establishing strong relationships, investing in good health and managing financial risks," said Dr Kettlewell.

"And we can take consolation from the fact that, although it takes time, wellbeing can recover from even the worst circumstances," added Dr Kettlewell.

## Business economists expect worst slump in US since 1940s: Survey

Agencies

Washington: Business economists expect the United States to suffer its worst downturn this year in more than seven decades before growth resumes sometime next year.

Overhanging that forecast, though, is the risk that a second wave of the coronavirus could threaten the economy once again.

A survey released Monday by the National Association for Business Economics predicts that the gross domestic product — the total value of goods and services produced in the United States — will fall 5.9% for 2020 as a result of the recession triggered by the virus.

That would be the sharpest annual decline since GDP fell 11.6% in 1946, when the nation was demobilizing after World War II.

The NABE panel of 48 forecasters expects the 5% annual GDP drop that occurred in the January-March quarter to be followed by a record 33.5% annual plunge in the current April-June quarter. Yet the NABE panel foresees economic growth returning in the second half of the year, with strong annual expansions

of 9.1% in the July-September quarter and 6.8% in the October-December quarter.

Even so, those gains would fall far short of making up for the dizzying economic contraction in the first half of this year.

In 2021, the panel forecasts GDP growth of 3.6%. But not until at least the second half of next year, according to an overwhelming majority of the forecasters, will the economy recover all its lost output from the recession. If a second eruption of viral infections were to occur, though, it would likely take much longer.

"Eighty-seven percent of panelists view a second wave of COVID-19 as the greatest downside risk through 2020," added Eugenio Aleman, an economist for Wells Fargo and the chair of the outlook panel.

He noted that 51% of the economists regard the potential discovery of an effective vaccine as offering the biggest upside potential for the economy.

The new forecast represents a sharp downgrade from the NABE panel's previous survey results, which suggested that the economy would grow 1.8% in 2020.



## Minneapolis Police Department To Be Dismantled Over Floyd's Death

Agencies

Washington: The police department in the US city of Minneapolis will be dismantled and rebuilt, city councilors said late Sunday, after the death in custody of George Floyd sparked nationwide protests about racism in law enforcement.

"We committed to dismantling policing as we know it in the city of Minneapolis and to rebuild with our community a new model of public safety that actually keeps our community safe," Council President Lisa Bender told CNN.

Council Member Alondra Cano tweeted that the decision came through "a veto-proof majority of the MPLS City Council," which agreed that the police de-

partment "is not reformable and that we're going to end the current policing system."

A white Minneapolis police officer has been charged with murder in the May 25 death of George Floyd, after bystander video showed the officer's knee pinned on Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes while he pleaded for his life and called for his mother.

US sees biggest rallies yet for racial justice

Demonstrations were planned across the US on Sunday to demand racial justice after George Floyd's death in Minneapolis police custody, with most more peaceful than the preceding week's.

It was the latest case of white law enforcement authorities being blamed for the death

of an unarmed black person.

Floyd's death has sparked two weeks of mostly peaceful demonstrations across the country against racism in US law enforcement. Some marchers have called for the police to be defunded.

Last year, a black former Minneapolis police officer was sentenced to 12 years and six months in prison for the fatal shooting of an unarmed white Australian woman trying to report a crime.

Bender told CNN she was looking to shift police funding toward community-based strategies, and that the city council would discuss how to replace the current police department.

"The idea of having no police department is certainly not in the short term," she added.

## As Pakistan glacier melt surges, efforts to cut flood risk drag

Agencies

ISLAMABAD: Late last month, residents of the tiny village of Hassanabad noticed floodwaters quickly rising in the stream that runs near their homes, carrying water



from the towering Shishper glacier.

"The flows became so high that they eroded the land and reached 10 feet from my family's home. We evacuated," said Ghulam Qadir, a resident of the village.

The ensuing flood, carrying huge boulders from the melting glacier, demolished the cherry, apricot and walnut orchards many families depend on, and left homes cracked, 16 families in tents and local irrigation and hydropower systems damaged.

"The flood water broke all the retaining walls that were built last year in order to protect the village," Qadir told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by telephone.

How healthy are glaciers in Pakistan?

"Now there is a ravine right next to our houses and we live in dread of another flood." The area is one of 24 valleys in northern Pakistan scheduled to receive warning systems, between 2018 and 2022, for glacial lake outburst floods using \$37 million in funding from the Green Climate Fund.

But work has been delayed as a result of differences between the partners — the UN Development Programme-Pakistan and the Ministry of Climate Change — as well as by a change of government and now the coronavirus, said Ayaz Joudat, national programme director for the project.

"The delay is partly due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and partly because UNDP-Pakistan would not finalise the letter of agreement signed with the Ministry of Climate Change, which would give us oversight over hiring of staff and other matters," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

That delay, however, was recently resolved, he said, and hiring now will begin at the end of June, with an aim of installing the first early warning systems on glaciers by September.

## US Police Back Off As Peaceful Protests Push Deep Reforms

Agencies

Washington: Calls for deep police reforms gained momentum in the United States as leaders in the city where George Floyd died at the hands of an officer pushed to dismantle the entire department.

Floyd's death sparked nationwide protests demanding a reckoning with institutional racism that have sometimes resulted in clashes with police, but many officers took a less aggressive stance over the weekend when demonstrations were overwhelmingly peaceful.

Two weeks after Floyd, an out-of-work black bouncer, died after a white Minneapolis officer pressed a knee on his neck for several minutes, a majority of the Minneapolis City Council vowed to dismantle the 800-member agency.

"It is clear that our system of policing is not keeping our communities safe," City Council President Lisa Bender said on Sunday. "Our efforts at incremental reform have failed, period."

It's not the first time an American city has wrestled with how to deal with a police department accused of being overly aggressive or



having bias in its ranks. In Ferguson, Missouri — where a white officer in 2014 fatally shot Michael Brown, a black 18-year-old — then-Attorney General Eric Holder said federal authorities considered dismantling the police department. The city eventually reached an agreement short of that but one that required massive reforms.

The state of Minnesota has launched a civil rights investigation of the Minneapolis Police Department, and the first concrete changes came when the city agreed to ban chokeholds and neck restraints.

On Sunday, nine of the Minneapolis City Council's 12 members vowed to end policing as the city currently knows it. Mayor Jacob Frey said he

doesn't support the "full abolition" of the department.

Protesters nationwide are demanding police reforms and a reckoning with institutional racism in response to Floyd's death, and calls to "defund the police" have become rallying cries for many. A heavy-handed response to demonstrations in many places has underscored what critics have maintained: Law enforcement is militarised and too often uses excessive force.

Trolice Flavors holds up a fist during a "We Want to Live" march and protest against racial inequality in the aftermath of the death in Minneapolis police custody of George Floyd, in Seattle, Washington, US on June 7. — Reuters

## Shallah Laid to Rest in Syria; Officials, Resistance Groups Mourn His Death

Agencies

Jerusalem: The former head of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement was laid to rest Sunday in the Syrian capital Damascus, a day after he passed away following a long illness.

Hundreds of people attended the funeral of Shallah, 62, who had been in a coma for more than three years after heart surgery.

Shallah was buried following the afternoon prayers in the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk in Damascus. His funeral was attended by Syrian-based Palestinian officials.

According to an AFP report, dozens of mourners gathered around his coffin draped in the movement's banner in the Mazzeh neighborhood of Damascus, after receiving special permission to gather amid the novel coronavirus outbreak.

A funeral procession then headed to a cemetery in the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp on the edge of the capital, Damascus, where Shallah's body was buried.

"We pledge to continue the route of resistance until we liberate Palestine with the allies in Syria, Iran and Hezbollah," Islamic Jihad Leader Ziad al-Nakhalah told Al-Mayadeen TV during the funeral.

Hezbollah issued a statement mourning the resistance leader, stressing that the resistance group will continue to side with the Islamic Jihad and Palestine.

"With his departure, we lost a great resistance figure in the modern era with what he had of illuminated thought, an open mind, sincere passion, solid will, unwavering determination, great confidence in Allah Almighty's promise of victory and great devotion to the central cause [Palestine]," Hezbollah said in a statement.

The statement underscored the deep grief the resistance suffered by Shallah's death, assuring that his path will forever be preserved.

In a message, Hamas Political Bureau Chief Ismail Haniyeh described Shallah as a Palestinian leader who raised the flag of resistance and his life was one of self-sacrifice, Jihad and resistance. Haniyeh also hailed his long-time endeavor to boost unity among Palestinian groups.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in a message said, "By losing Shallah we lost a great national man."

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani issued a message of condolence, noting that Shallah spent all his life in defending and supporting the cause of the



oppressed people of Palestine.

"Ramadan Abdullah was source of lasting services in the history of this country's combatants, which will shine like a beacon of light for the next generations in the field of jihad and resistance," Iran's president said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also issued a message, saying Dr Ramadan Abdullah spent his life on the path or resistance and made efforts to liberate Palestine. He offered condolences to the Palestinian people, current leader of Islamic Jihad and the family of the deceased.

Shallah, who was born in Gaza, did his PhD in economics from the United Kingdom and taught at the University of South Florida from 1993 to 1995 before he assumed PIJ's leadership. Shallah left to Egypt to pursue his study in the field of economics.

## New Zealand succeeds in eradicating coronavirus

Agencies

Wellington: New Zealand has eradicated the coronavirus from its shores after health officials reported Monday that the final person known to have been infected has recovered.

It has been 17 days since the last new case was reported in New Zealand, and Monday also marked the first time since late February that there have been no active cases.

Health officials caution that new cases could be imported into the country, which has closed its borders to everybody but citizens and residents, with some exceptions.

Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said it was a pleasing development.

"Having no active cases for the first time since February 28 is certainly a significant

mark in our journey but as we've previously said, ongoing vigilance against COVID-19 will continue to be essential," Bloomfield said.

Experts say a number of factors have helped the nation of 5 million wipe out the disease. Its isolated location in the



South Pacific gave it vital time to see how outbreaks spread in other countries, and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern acted decisively by imposing a strict lockdown early in New Zealand's outbreak.

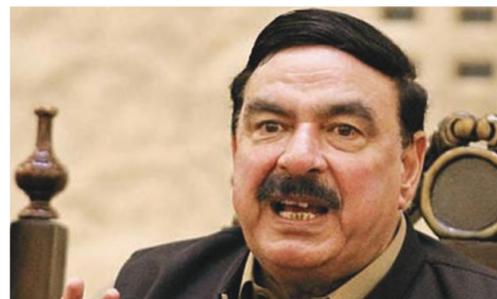
### NEWS MAKERS

## Outspoken Pakistan Railway Minister Sheikh Rashid tests coronavirus positive

Dubai: Outspoken Railway Minister of Pakistan Sheikh Rashid has become the latest victim of coronavirus in Pakistan.

Sheikh Rashid announced on his Twitter account on Monday that he has tested positive for COVID-19, joining a growing list of politicians who have contracted the disease. Sheikh Rashid tweeted: "I have been tested Positive for COVID-19 though I have no symptoms of COVID-19, whatsoever. I am fine, Alhamdu Lillah. Need your prayers."

Earlier on Monday, former Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahid Khaqan Abbasi also announced he would be self-quarantining after he tested positive for coronavirus.



According to a statement by the Ministry of Railways, Rashid is showing no symptoms of the virus. However, he has decided to self-isolate for two weeks.

Sheikh Rashid is the founding chairman of his political party, Awami Muslim

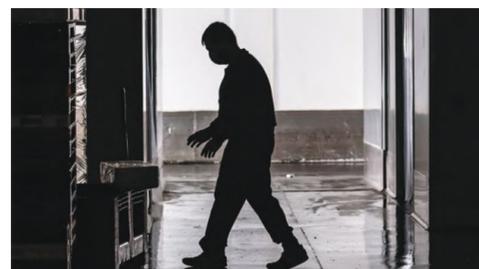
Legue (AML). He entered into a political alliance with Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf during the 2018 general elections. Imran later appointed the 69-year-old veteran politician to the post of Federal Minister for Railways.

## Man Paid To Do Nothing Wanted \$2 Million. He Missed His Chance By 2 Days

An executive who was paid about \$18,000 a month by LafargeHolcim Ltd. to do nothing failed in his suit to force the cement maker to fire him with a payout worth more than \$2 million. Timing was his undoing.

When his employer Lafarge SA announced in 2015 a staff-buyout program as part of its merger with Holcim Ltd., Antoine Zenone hoped he could get a golden handshake. But the company told him he wasn't eligible and French judges have said "non" — three times in a row.

The Paris appeals court ruled that Zenone couldn't benefit from the plan because he'd already agreed to an



expatriate position in Singapore. That suspended his French employment contract and excluded him from buy-out offers made to Lafarge's domestic staff.

Zenone was seeking about 2.1 million euros (\$2.3 million)

and until recently had been paid 16,195 euros gross a month by Lafarge without having to provide any work, according to last week's ruling.

The world's two largest cement makers combined in 2015 to cut costs and boost value as

demand for building materials eroded. But LafargeHolcim shares slid in subsequent years on a loss of investor confidence and a scandal over operations in war-torn Syria.

Chief Executive

When Zenone came back from his posting as chief executive officer of Lafarge's branch in Singapore two years ago, Lafarge offered him a project manager position but he didn't take the role. He states on his LinkedIn profile that he started a new job at a plastic pipe maker last month.

LafargeHolcim said in a statement it doesn't comment on personnel matters. Zenone didn't respond to requests for comment on the lawsuit.

## Digital Divide May Turn Shift To Online Classes Operational Nightmare, Warn Experts

From virtual classes to open-book exams, the coronavirus pandemic may have forced classroom learning online but the digital divide in the country may turn it into an "operational nightmare", experts have warned.

Suicide by a Kerala schoolgirl allegedly over not having access to a smartphone to attend classes, stories of students in remote areas having to sit on rooftops to catch Internet, siblings competing to get their parents' gadgets are just a few case studies of the existing "worrying" digital divide, they said.

They are manifold. The Kerala schoolgirl's death, pictures of a girl trying to study from a tilted rooftop to get signals, three kids in a house trying to have their share of their parents' phone to attend the lessons, these are worrisome case studies.

"An unprecedented social disaster can be avoided if more entities pitch into short-term and long-term future of the children in this digital divide," said Rajni Palriwala, HOD, Department of Sociology, Delhi University.

Universities and schools across the country have



According to the Key Indicators of Household Social Consumption on Education in India report, based on the 2017-18 National Sample Survey, less than 15 per cent of rural Indian households have access to Internet as opposed to 42 per cent in urban households.

A mere 13 per cent of people surveyed (aged above five) in rural areas -- just 8.5 per cent female -- could use the Internet. The poorest households cannot afford a smartphone or a computer, according to the survey.

"The implications of school closures in the country due to COVID-19 pandemic are not just about education.

been closed since March 16, when the Centre announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as part of a slew of measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

A nationwide lockdown was announced on March 24, which came into effect the next day.

As per official statistics, there are over 35 crore students in the country. However, it is not clear as to how many of them have access to digital devices and Internet.

While the government has announced easing of certain restrictions, schools and colleges continue to remain closed.

## LG Overrules AAP Govt's Decision To Reserve Hospitals For Delhiites



**NEW DELHI:** Lt-Governor Anil Bajjal has overruled the AAP government's order to reserve Delhi government-run and private hospitals in the national capital for Delhiites, sources said on Tuesday.

On his government's order on reserving hospitals being overruled, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said, "Providing treatment to people coming from all over the country is a big challenge during COVID-19 pandemic, said the CM.

The lieutenant-governor is also the Chairman of Delhi Disaster Management Authority. The move may trigger a confrontation between the AAP dispensation and the LG office.

On Sunday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had announced that the hospitals run by the Delhi government and private entities will only treat Delhiites during the coronavirus crisis.

He had cited the report of a panel which stated that Delhi will need 15,000 beds by the end of June and if people of other states are allowed to get treatment, all beds here will be occupied within just three days.

The panel had been appointed by the Delhi government to guide it on healthcare infrastructure augmentation and overall preparedness of hospitals to battle COVID-19 in the national capital. — PTI



## After US, Israel Only India Can Protect Its Borders: Amit Shah At Virtual Rally

**NEW DELHI:** Home Minister Amit Shah, in his first virtual rally on Sunday, said that the Modi government has solved long pending issues in the country, hinting at the scrapping of Article 370, the amended Citizenship Act, among other things, done in the ongoing second term.

"Issues which none dared to touch in 70 years were resolved in first year of Modi government's second term. Modiji brought the Citizenship Amendment Act. This Act provided citizenship and respect to refugees in India," Mr Shah said at the Bihar

Jansamvad rally held through video conferencing.

The Home Minister further said that India's defence policy has gained widespread recognition and acceptance.

"India's defence policy has gained global acceptance. The whole world agrees that after USA and Israel if there is any other country that is able to protect its borders, it is India," he said.

"There was a time when anybody used to enter our borders, beheaded our soldiers and Delhi's darbar re-

mained unaffected. Uri and Pulwama happened during our time, it was the Modi and BJP government, we did surgical strikes and airstrike," he added.

Earlier in the course of the rally, Amit Shah had said that these virtual rallies were not political in nature but were aimed at joining the people in the fight against COVID-19.

He had, however, praised Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, and said that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will retain power in the state with a two-third majority in the upcoming Assembly elections.

## 'Everyone Knows Reality Of Borders': Rahul Gandhi Takes Jibe At Amit Shah

**NEW DELHI:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday took a swipe at Home Minister Amit Shah for his remarks that India is strong in protecting its borders and said everyone knows the reality of the situation at the country's borders.

"Everyone knows the reality of the 'borders', but the thought is good to keep one's heart happy," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

Gandhi tweaked a couplet from noted Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib to take a dig at the Home Minister.

Shah had on Sunday said India's defence policy has gained global acceptance and the world agrees that after the US and Israel, if there is any other country that is able to protect its borders, it is India.

Gandhi has been attacking the government and the Prime Minister over the border stand-off with China in Ladakh and has been asking the government to come clean on the situation there. PTI



## Self-Protection Suites In New VVIP Planes, Pilots From Air Force: Report

**New Delhi:** Two custom-made B777 aircraft, which will be used to fly Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top Indian dignitaries, are likely to be delivered by Boeing to Air India by September, senior officials said on Monday.

In October last year, government officials had said that the delivery of these two planes, which are earmarked for VVIP travel only, would be done by July. "There has been some delay, primarily because of COVID-19. The two planes are likely to be

delivered by September," the officials said on Monday. The two B777 aircraft will be operated by pilots of the Indian Air Force and not of Air India.

However, the new wide-body planes will be maintained by the Air India Engineering Services Limited (AIESL), which is a subsidiary of the Indian national carrier, the officials said. Currently, the prime minister, the president and the vice president fly on Air India's B747 planes, which have the call

sign "Air India One". Air India pilots fly these B747 aircraft for the dignitaries and the AIESL maintains them. When these B747 aircraft are not flying the dignitaries, they are used by the Indian national carrier for commercial operations. The new planes will be used for travel of the dignitaries only. These two aircraft were part of Air India's commercial fleet for a few months in 2018 before they were sent back to Boeing for retrofitting them for VVIP travel.

## Prolonged growth slowdown likely to hit India's external sector: SBI report

The prolonged period of growth slowdown is likely to adversely impact India's external sector which currently is comfortably placed on account of subdued prices of crude oil in the international market, said a SBI report on Monday.

As per SBI's research Ecovrap report, India is likely to end the current fiscal with current account surplus, if the oil prices in the international market remain subdued and do not show volatility during the course of the financial year.

We should be mindful of our external sector in 2020-21 as a prolonged period of growth slowdown could impact the external sector metrics, specifically the rupee, it said.

In 2020-21, the report maintains that India is going to achieve a current account surplus owing to lower oil prices, although the magnitude might shrink if oil prices show undue volatility and stay at over USD 40/bbl for a sufficiently longer period of time, it said.

Noting that the gross domestic product (GDP) growth has declined from 8.3 per cent in 2016-17 to 4.2 per cent in 2019-20, the report said, the FY21 median growth contraction is currently at 5 per cent, indicating a growth collapse of at least 9 per cent from FY20 levels because of COVID-19.

The only saving grace is that our external debt position is sustainable with the external debt to GDP ratio at 19.8 per cent at end-June 2019, it said.

On COVID-19, the report said India was testing less than 1 lakh samples per day till May 18. This has consistently topped 1 lakh testings per day since then with minor exceptions.

For the first seven days of June, India has tested on an average 1.32 lakh samples, with the number crossing 1.4 lakhs on June 6 and June 7.

"This is perhaps the reason why the cases have started increasing at a much faster rate," it said.

## India's Steel Demand Likely To Fall By 18 Pct In 2020: Worldsteel

India's steel demand is likely to face a sharp decline of 18 per cent in 2020, while global steel demand is expected to contract 6.4 per cent to 1,654 million tonnes (MT) due to the COVID-19 crisis, as per industry body worldsteel.

According to official figures, India consumed over 100 MT steel during 2019.

"In 2020, worldsteel forecasts that steel demand will contract by 6.4 per cent, dropping to 1,654 MT due to the COVID-19 crisis," the World Steel Association (worldsteel) said in its latest Short Range Outlook (SRO), a publication on steel demand scenario.

Steel demand in developed economies is expected to decline by 17.1 per cent in 2020.

Although the downturn is led by consumer and service sectors, massive dislocations in spending, labour markets, and confidence are fuelling declines in steel-using sectors, the global body said.

"While, the steel demand in the developing econo-



mies, excluding China, is expected to fall by 11.6 per cent in 2020, India is likely to face an 18 per cent decline in steel demand in 2020, which will rebound by 15 per cent in 2021," it added.

In India, it said, the government implemented the most stringent nationwide lockdown measures in the world, bringing industrial operations to a standstill. Construction activity was halted entirely at the end of March, and recovery is expected to remain subdued due to the slow migration of labourers. Further, supply chain disruptions coupled with slower demand recovery will hit the steel-using industries like the automotive and machinery sectors. On demand recovery, worldsteel said global steel demand is expected to recover by 3.8 per cent to 1,717 MT in 2021.

### NEWS MAKER

## Editors Guild Slams FIR Against Vinod Dua, Calls It 'Brazen Attack' On His Free Speech

**NEW DELHI:** The Editors Guild of India on Monday termed the filing of an FIR against senior journalist Vinod Dua as a "brazen attack" on his right to free speech, as it expressed deep concern over the "growing tendency" among police in various states to take cognisance of frivolous charges against journalists.

Delhi police on Friday said they have registered an FIR against Dua for allegedly "making statements conducive to public mischief" on the complaint of BJP spokesperson Naveen Kumar.

In his complaint to the Crime Branch, Kumar accused

Dua of "spreading fake news" through "The Vinod Dua Show" on YouTube.

In its statement, the Editors Guild said it is deeply concerned by the growing tendency among police in various states to take cognisance of frivolous charges against journalists and convert them into a First Information Report (FIR).

"The latest instance is of the Delhi Police's FIR against veteran journalist Vinod Dua, based on a complaint by Naveen Kumar, who has been identified as a spokesperson of the Bharatiya Janata Party," the Guild said.



The accusations are a "brazen attack" on his right to free speech and fair comment, it said.

An FIR based on this is an instrument of harassment setting off a process that is itself a punishment, the Guild said.

It unequivocally condemned this practice and urged the police to respect constitutional freedoms rather than behave in a "manner that raises questions on its independence". Dua was also accused by

Kumar of "misreporting" on the Delhi communal violence and stating that the "central government had done nothing to stop the violence".

Kumar has alleged that Dua had called the prime minister "toothless". — PTI

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Website: www.cancersocietykashmir.org E-mail: cancersocietyofkashmir@gmail.com

Ref. No. CSK/DCC-66/2020/5380

Dated: 06-JUN-2020

Subject: - Notice inviting tenders for Anticancer drugs & other related supportive items.

### (Extension Of NIT)

The last date of receipt of tenders for Anticancer drugs etc. invited vide society's No: - Csk/Dcc-66/2020/5041 & Csk/Dcc-66/2020/5166-70 Dated 03-03-2020 is extended upto 25-06-2020. All other terms & conditions as laid down in the detailed NIT shall remain unchanged.

For Cancer Society of Kashmir.

4-Bagh-i-Islam Colony Lal Nagar, Chanapora Srinagar 190 015 TeleFax 0194-2441899/2430899