



Maximum : 26°C  
Today : 07:43 PM  
Minimum : 14°C  
SUNRISE  
Humidity : 56%  
Tommrow : 05:19 AM

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.....OPINION

P4

## CORONAVIRUS KNOWS NO IDEOLOGY

“The only thing it wants is targets,” a George Mason University Ph.D. candidate in computer science, Adam Elkus, wrote of the coronavirus in March. “It does not think,” he went on, “it does not feel, and it lies totally outside the elaborate social nuances humans have carved out through patterns of communication, representation and discourse. And this, above all else, makes it a lethal adversary for the West. It has exposed how much of Western society is permeated with influential people who have deluded themselves into thinking that their ability to manipulate words, images and sounds gives them the ability to control reality itself.” In each stage of the response to the coronavirus, this delusion has been at work. In the first stage it was liberals and portions of the public health establishment (including, fatefully, key decision-makers) who treated the virus as something to be spun or narrativized away. By the time this effort at reality-denial collapsed, the baton of narrative delusion had been passed to Donald Trump, who spent crucial weeks behaving as though the power of positive thinking could suffice to keep his glorious economy afloat.....

## News Digest

### 2 Soldiers Die In Separate Accidents

Srinagar: Two soldiers died on Thursday in two separate accidents in the twin districts of Baniptora and Ganderbal in Jammu and Kashmir. Subedar Yamaha Kumar (Belt No. JC 542433F) of 6 Maratha Infantry Regiment slipped and fell down into a gorge while he was part of a patrolling party at Rekha forward post of Chakwali Tulail along the (LOC) in Gurez sector, resulting in his on spot death, reported news agency KNO. **● P-02**

### Top Army Commander Briefs LG Murmu

Jammu: Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi, the commander of 9 corps, called on Lieutenant Governor Girish Chandra Murmu at Raj Bhavan on Thursday and briefed him about the security situation, an official spokesman said. The LG and the GoC discussed effective security management and overall security environment in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, he said. The LG lauded the role of security forces in safeguarding the territorial integrity **● P-02**

### Man Ends Life In Anantnag

Srinagar: A 35-year-old man on Thursday allegedly committed suicide in Dooru village of South Kashmir's Anantnag district. 35-yr-old man (name withheld) from Mirmadan Dooru village of South Kashmir's Anantnag district allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself at his home, reports said. The deceased was a driver by profession. Meanwhile, police have initiated inquest proceedings under section 174 CrPc and started further investigations in this regard.

### 3 Lashkar Associates Arrested: Police

Srinagar: Police on Thursday claimed to have busted a Pakistan-sponsored narco-militant module by arresting three alleged Lashkar-e-Toiba associates and confiscating 21 kg of heroin and Rs 1.34 crore in cash from their possession in the Handwara area of Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district, officials said here. "Acting on reliable information, the police in Handwara busted a narco-terror module sponsored by Pakistan and arrested three terrorist associates of the proscribed **● P-02**

### Over 1 Lakh J&K Residents Return Home

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir administration has brought home over 1.20 lakh residents of the union territory who had been stranded in other parts of the country due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown, officials said on Thursday. The evacuation exercises were carried out in strict observance of all necessary guidelines and standard operating procedures, they said. "J&K administration has evacuated about 1,20,868 J&K residents, stranded **● P-02**

## India Speeds Up Work On Strategic Road Near China Border

Rushes Additional Troops To Forward Positions Along LAC: Report

Press Trust Of India

PITHORAGARH: Helicopters have landed heavy road-building machinery in the tough Himalayan terrain of Uttarakhand's Johar Valley to help speed up construction of the strategic Munsiyari-Bugdiyar-Milam road near the India-China border, an official said.

After several failed attempts in 2019, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) recently succeeded in carrying heavy road building equipment by helicopters to Laspas, raising hopes of the road's faster completion, BRO Chief Engineer Bimal Goswami said.

The absence of heavy stone cutting equipment at Laspas near the alignment site of the 65-km



Image for representation

road had delayed its construction.

The Munsiyari-Bogdiyar-Milam road, which is being constructed in the high Himalayan region of Johar Valley in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, will be a link to the last posts on the Indo-China border.

"After several unsuccessful attempts last year, we succeeded this month in landing helicopters carrying heavy machines to Laspas. We now hope that cutting work of the challenging stretch will be completed in the next three **►PAGE 02**

**THE CHINESE MILITARY HAS DONE MILITARY build-up not just in Ladakh but also in other sectors including Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh wherever it shares borders with us. The build-up includes troops and heavy weaponry which are deployed in rear positions,"**

## India, China Engaged To Resolve Ladakh Row: MEA

NEW DELHI: India and China are maintaining military and diplomatic engagements to peacefully resolve the eastern Ladakh row at the earliest, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday.

At a weekly media briefing, Spokesperson in the MEA Anurag Srivastava said both sides have agreed to work for an early resolution to the issue in keeping with broader guidance provided by leaders of the two countries for ensuring peace and tranquillity along



The Pic: Anil Bhat

the border areas.

He, however, did not respond to questions relating to reports of pulling back of troops by both India and China from certain friction points

in the Galwan Valley and Hot Spring areas in eastern Ladakh in the last few days.

"A meeting was held between core commanders of India and China on June 6. **►PAGE 02**

## Srinagar Doctor Hides Covid-19 Status, Flies Home

Agencies

SRINAGAR: District administration Srinagar has ordered police to register an FIR against a doctor for allegedly hiding his COVID-19 positive status and travelling to Srinagar in a GoAir flight from New Delhi three days ago.

A resident of Parraypora Srinagar, the doctor had been declared positive for COVID-19 infection in New Delhi, officials said.

Despite having knowledge of this, he boarded (Go Air 191 flight) from New Delhi on June 8, thereby risking the life of co-passengers.

He then directly drove to his

home from the airport and later the COVID-19-infected doctor approached health officials and urged them to admit him in a covid-19 hospital. However, on being told that he has to undergo a test first, he informed them that he had already done the test in New Delhi which has confirmed the infection.

Subsequent to the development, the district administration Srinagar has written to the police to register FIR against him.

Confirming it, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary said that on being spotted at airport, the doctor **►PAGE 02**

## CIC Rejects RTI On Centre Denying Prosecution In 47 J&K AFSPA Cases

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Central Information Commission (CIC) has rejected a Right to Information Act (RTI) petition seeking access to the files over Centre denying prosecution sanction under the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act 1990, in 47 cases involving allegations of custodial deaths and disappearance of civilians, fake encounters, instances of rape and kidnapping, torture, and extortion in Jammu and Kashmir.

The CIC on June 5, rejected the petition filed by activist Venkatesh Nayak, who had sought permission



File Pic

to inspect the files. The CIC rejected Nayak's plea to access the documents in the "larger public interest". The appeal pertains to the gov-

ernment of Jammu and Kashmir having sought sanction from the Centre for prosecuting the accused in 50 such alleged cases **►PAGE 02**

## Masrat Zahra Wins Top Photojournalism Award

SRINAGAR: Masrat Zahra, a freelance photojournalist from Kashmir has won the 2020 Anja Niedringhaus Courage in Photojournalism award from International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF).

Named in the honor of German photojournalist Anja Niedringhaus who was killed in Afghanistan in 2014, the prestigious award recognises the **►PAGE 02**



## 2 Shopian Youth Arrested In Punjab On Militancy Charges

Press Trust Of India

CHANDIGARH: The Punjab Police on Thursday claimed to have foiled a major attempt to smuggle arms and ammunition into Kashmir to carry out militant attacks there with the arrest of two alleged Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) operatives.

Ten hand grenades, an AK-47 rifle with two magazines and 60 live cartridges were seized from the duo, identified as Aamir Hussain Wani (26) and Wasim Hassan Wani (27) of Shopian, the police said.

"The duo, actively involved in transporting automatic weapons and hand grenades from Punjab to the Kashmir Valley, were nabbed by the Pathankot police, which intercepted a truck bearing J&K registration

number at a naka on the Amritsar-Jammu highway," Punjab Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta said in a statement here. **►PAGE 02**

## Youth Held After Brief Gunfight In Budgam

Government forces on Thursday arrested a youth after militants gave them a slip during a brief gunfight in Pathanpora area of Central Kashmir's Budgam district. Special operations group (SOG) of police, army and CRPF cordoned off Pathanpora area on Thursday morning amid reports **● P-02**

## A Decade Later, Dad's Devotion Defines His Defiance

Fahad Amin

SRINAGAR: Three boys were eagle-eying street football at Srinagar's Saída Kadal area when a familiar figure emerged from an alley. Sporting snow-white hairdo and moustache, the man took a modest walk around, before quietly going for the court hearing.

"There we go again," said a boy in blue shirt and grey trousers. "The poor father is again out to chase the long denied justice."

"It's not about justice only," interrupted another boy flaunting a long hairdo, "it's equally about injustice done to his son."

"Rather," a sulking one, among the trio, chipped in, "it's his way

to console himself: 'Son, you can't be forgotten'."

Mohammad Ashraf Mattoo, the man about whom the boys were talking about one summer day in recent past, has indeed demonstrated through his decade-long court battle that he's fighting to uphold his son's memory against the concerted efforts of forgetfulness.

But what's his idea of memory all about, he was once asked.

"It's to remember him the way he was — the apple of my eye, who was badly plucked from my garden."

Today, it's his constant fight for elusive justice which explains Ashraf Mattoo's resilient world.



Photo By: Syed Shahmir

But over the years, as the scope for justice got squeezed, the father only grew stronger in his resolve.

He held his ground even after the official probe-makers termed schoolboy Tufail Mattoo's killers

as "untraceable". Later, the father would be even denied the contents of the probe commission report.

And yet, he remains, as the boys in his neighbourhood described him, 'the rebel with a cause'.

By now, his son's seething summer obituary has fared on every possible global publication. But the details of that day, June 11, 2010, continue to unsettle the father who along with others has only become a courtroom campaigner for his son's sake.

Today, Mattoo Sr turns taciturn when people say the slain son could've been a promising 27-year-old man right now. He could've been a scientist. **►PAGE 02**



## India Speeds Up Work On..

years, Mr Goswami said. Cutting of hard rocks, which are standing straight on a 22-km portion of the road, will now become easy as heavy machines can be transported by helicopters to the spot. "Construction of the road was started in 2010 with an amount of Rs 325 crore sanctioned for the project, the BRO chief engineer said.

He said the road is being constructed from both ends and except the 22-km hard portion, cutting work has been completed on 40 km of the road.

Meanwhile, India has rushed additional troops to the forward positions in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh fearing any 'misadventure' by China, ANI reported Thursday.

Quoting government sources, the report says that the Chinese army has deployed its troops all along the over 4,000 kilometre-long Line of Actual Control after which India has also rushed its fighting formations to forward locations in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

"The Chinese military has done military build-up not just in Ladakh but also in other sectors including Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh wherever it shares borders with us. The build-up includes troops and heavy weaponry which are deployed in rear positions," sources said.

"To avoid any possibility of any misadventure by the Chinese, we have rushed in our fighting formations to forward locations in all these sectors," they added.

According to the report, the Indian side has also rushed in its new ultra-light howitzers and other heavy weaponry to the forward locations for countering this build up on the other side by China.

The report says that the reserve brigades of a Corps with an area of responsibility including Himachal Pradesh have gone up to the Ladakh sector to provide backup and cushion to the 3 Infantry Division based in Karu there.

It adds that additional fighting formations have also been moved forward to the border locations in Himachal Pradesh where Chinese choppers had shown up in April.

The report further adds that additional troops have been deployed in the Harsil-Barahoti-Nelang Valley and other sectors in Uttarakhand, where Chinese soldiers were seen carrying out foot patrols and chopper activity was observed before the buildup started.

Similarly, in the Eastern sector starting from the Chicken's neck corridor, the training brigades of the Corps formations including the Sukna-based 33 Corps and Tezpur-based 4 Corps have been deployed on the front locations and a Brigade of the 17 Mountain Strike Corps is also ready for deployment, the sources said.

The report says that along the LAC in Ladakh sector only, 10,000 PLA soldiers and heavy weaponry including tanks and long-range artillery guns have been deployed by China.

## India, China Engaged To ...

This meeting was in continuation of our diplomatic and military engagement which both sides maintained in order to address the situation in areas along the India-China border," the MEA spokesperson said.

"It was agreed in the meeting that an early resolution of the situation would be in keeping with guidance of our leaders. The two sides are, therefore, maintaining military and diplomatic engagements to peacefully resolve the situation at the earliest and also to ensure peace and tranquillity in the border areas," he said.

"This is essential for further development of India-China bilateral relations," Srivastava said.

Military sources on Tuesday claimed that the two armies began "disengagement" around patrolling points 14 and 15 in Galwan Valley and another in the Hot Spring area, adding that the Chinese side has even moved back up to 1.5 km in the two areas. Indian and Chinese troops were in an eyeball-to-eyeball situation since May 5 following a violent clash on the banks of the Pangong lake.

## Soldier Killed, Civilian ...

"Pakistan targeted over a dozen villages along the LoC in Nowshera and Balakote sectors late Wednesday night with heavy mortars and guided missiles," they said.

People living in border hamlets took shelter in bunkers, they said. The slain soldier identified as Lance Naik Gurcharan Singh of 14 Punjab Regiment was cremated at his native village in Gurdaspur. Soldier's wife Ranjit Kaur, who is in Punjab Police, said she was proud of her husband and would send their son Agamjot Singh to serve in the Indian Army.

Before Rajouri, both the armies were engaged in a two-day fire-fight in Mankote and Khari Karmara sectors of Poonch district on Monday and Tuesday.

## Govt Invites Fresh Bids...

winters due to heavy snowfall.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways through National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) invited bid ... for "construction of 14.15 km long tunnel across Zojila Pass on Sonmarg-Kargil section of NH-1 between union territories of J&K and Ladakh along with approaches" through an engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract.

The Zojila tunnel project and a road both will be built under EPC mode at an estimated cost of Rs 4,430 crore, as per officials.

Earlier Road Transprot and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari had said that the tunnel for all-year connectivity between Leh and Srinagar may undergo some design changes to prevent cost escalation as the government plans to complete the project at the earlier estimated cost of about Rs 6,800 crore.

"We are planning to make some design changes that may include doing away with escape tunnel and instead (have) alternative tunnels to cross from one side to the other as it will be my endeavour to prevent cost escalation and build it at the previous estimated cost of Rs 6,800 crore," he had told PTL. Though the revised project cost estimate of a little over Rs 8,000 crore has been sent to the Cabinet, "we are deliberating on minor design changes to prevent cost escalation," the minister had said.

"Besides the escape tunnel, we can do away with vertical shafts not compromising with safety," he had said, adding that rebidding for the project was expected in a month or two. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in May 2018 laid the foundation stone for the Rs 6,800 crore project, billed as the Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel, in Jammu and Kashmir.

However, barely months after the foundation, the NHIDCL on January 15, 2019 terminated the contract awarded to troubled IL&FS group company IL&FS Transportation after it abandoned the project citing financial problems.

The project which was earlier constructed on hybrid annuity mode will now be converted into EPC mode, according to Gadkari.

The cancellation of the award in January last year was the second time NHIDCL had scrapped the contract for the 14.15-km tunnel project which would cut down the 3.5-hour long drive through the mountainous Zojila Pass to just 15 minutes. The corporation had earlier cancelled the bid of IRB Infrastructure. IL&FS Transportation in 2017 emerged as the lowest bidder in the rebidding process.

Unveiling a plaque for commencement of work for the tunnel, Modi had said, "Zojila tunnel is not a mere tunnel but a modern day marvel."

The Cabinet on January 3, 2018 had approved the Zojila tunnel project with Parallel Escape (Egress) tunnel between Baltal and Minamarg on the Srinagar-Leh section of NH-1A at a total cost of Rs 6,800 crore.

The project was expected to be completed in seven years.

## Kulgam Woman Dies ...

positive following which the patient was shifted to the infectious disease ward a day later, the officials said.

With this fatality, the death toll due to the Covid-19 has risen in Jammu and Kashmir to 52— 47 in Valley and 5 in Jammu division. So far Srinagar district with twelve deaths due to the virus has the highest fatalities, followed by ten in Baramulla, eight in Kulgam, five in Anantnag, four in Shopian, three in Kupwara & Jammu , two each in Budgam & Pulwama while one death each has been reported in Bandipora, Doda & Udhampur.

## Surgeon, 2 Cops Among 67...

4,574, officials said.

"Sixty-seven new positive cases of coronavirus were detected in the union territory on Thursday," an official said.

According to officials, 24 of the fresh cases were from Jammu and 43 from the Kashmir region. The union territory has registered 52 deaths due to COVID-19 so far.

The officials said Thursday's cases included 26 people who had returned to the union territory recently.

"A senior surgeon at SKIMS Hospital at Soura and two Jammu and Kashmir Police personnel are among those infected," the official said.

Contacts of the doctor, including his colleagues, have been identified and put under isolation, the official added.

Anantnag district in south Kashmir recorded the highest number of cases at 13, followed by Jammu 11, the officials said. They said there were no fresh cases in six districts -- Shopian, Ramban, Kathua, Samba, Reasi and Kishtwar.

With Thursday's fresh cases, the total number of infected persons in Jammu and Kashmir stood at 4,574.

Of these, 3565 are in Kashmir, while 1,009 are in the Jammu region, an official said.

There are 2,702 active cases in the union territory -- 1,996 in Kashmir and 706 in Jammu -- while 1,820 patients have recovered, they said.

## India Denies Visas To US...

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said the government firmly repudiated the surveys of the commission, which had little knowledge of the rights of Indian citizens, describing it as biased and prejudiced.

"We have also denied visas to USCIRF teams that have sought to visit India in connection with issues related to religious freedom," he told a lawmaker from Modi's ruling group in a June 1 letter.

The step was taken because the government saw no grounds for a foreign entity such as the USCIRF to pronounce on the state of Indian citizens' constitutionally protected rights, he added.

Reuters has reviewed a copy of the letter to Nishikant Dubey, an MP who had raised the issue of the panel's report in parliament. The US embassy in New Delhi referred all queries to the commission based in Washington, DC, which was not immediately available to respond.

The commission is a bipartisan US government advisory body that monitors religious freedom abroad and makes policy recommendations to the president, the secretary of state, and Congress. However, these are not binding.

India would not accept any foreign interference or judgement on matters related to its sovereignty, Jaishankar added.

## US Envoy Says ‘Very ...

Large for International Religious Freedom, came hours after the release of the '2019 International Religious Freedom Report' on Wednesday.

Mandated by the US Congress, the report documenting major instances of the violation of religious freedom across the world was released by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at the State Department.

India has previously rejected the US religious freedom report, saying it sees no locus standi for a foreign government to pronounce on the state of its citizens' constitutionally protected rights.

Brownback, during a phone call with foreign journalists on Wednesday, said India has been a country area that spawned four major religions itself.

"We do remain very concerned about what's taking place in India. It's historically just been a very tolerant, respectful country of religions, of all religions," he said.

"The trendlines have been troubling in India because it is such a religious subcontinent and seeing a lot more communal violence," Brownback said.

"We're seeing a lot more difficulty. I think really they need to have a I would hope they would have an - interfaith dialogue starting to get developed at a very high level in India, and then also deal with the specific issues that we identified as well. It really needs a lot more effort on this topic in India, and my concern is, too, that if those efforts are not put forward, you're going to see a growth in the violence and of the increased difficulty within the society writ large," said the top American diplomat on international religious freedom.

Responding to a question, Brownback hoped that the minority faiths are not to be blamed for the COVID-19 spread and that they would have access to the healthcare and the foods and the medicines that they need during the crisis.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has criticised any form of discrimination, saying the COVID-19 pandemic affects everyone equally.

"COVID-19 does not see race, religion, colour, caste, creed, language or border before striking. Our response and conduct thereafter should attach primacy to unity and brotherhood," Modi said in a post on LinkedIn in February.

The Indian government, while previously rejecting the US religious freedom report, had said: India is proud of its secular credentials, its status as the largest democracy and a pluralistic society with a longstanding commitment to tolerance and inclusion.

The Indian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights to all its citizens, including its minority communities. It is widely acknowledged that India is a vibrant democracy where the Constitution provides protection of religious freedom, and where democratic governance and rule of law further promote and protect the fundamental rights.

We see no locus standi for a foreign entity/government to pronounce on the state of our citizens' constitutionally protected rights, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in June last year.

Earlier in the day, the US State Department in its India chapter of the report said that there were reports of religiously motivated killings, assaults, riots, discrimination, vandalism and actions restricting the right of individuals to practice and speak about their religious beliefs.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) data, 7,484 incidents of communal violence took place between 2008 and 2017 in which more than 1,100 people were killed, it said.

The Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations (FIACONA) in a statement welcomed the US annual religious freedom report.

FIACONA President Koshy George said that his organisation finds the list of incidents affecting the rights of the people to believe and practice their faiths as reported to be accurate though there are a few more thousand such incidents that have taken place in India during the reporting period.

## Srinagar Doctor Hides ...

told surveillance team that he himself is a doctor and that the fever is not related to covid-19 infection.

"Then he drove to Srinagar and after he was telephoned to visit the hospital by the officials, he went to a covid-19 hospital and asked them to admit him," the deputy commissioner said, adding, "on being told that he had to wait for the test and when it comes positive only then he would be admitted, the doctor informed the hospital authorities that he had already tested positive at New Delhi and showed them the certificate."

Despite being a doctor, the deputy commissioner said, he threatened the life of those who arrived by the flight.

"We have initiated legal action against him. We have written to the police for FIR. We will take action against him under disaster management action against him also," he said. Agencies

## CIC Rejects RTI On Centre...

that had occurred between 2001 and 2016. This is an essential requirement under the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act 1990, under which the armed forces of the Union operate in J&K.

In January 2018, the Union government had informed the Rajya Sabha that request from the government of Jammu and Kashmir for sanctioning the prosecutions was refused in 47 cases due to lack of sufficient evidence, prima facie.

A month later in February, Nayak had submitted an application to the Ministry of Defence under the RTI Act seeking copies of the Standard Operating Procedures, criteria and standards of measuring evidence used, designation of the final decision-making authority and inspection of the 47 case files. MoD transferred the RTI application to the Indian Army. Both public authorities denied they held in their custody any of the information described in the RTI application.

The matter escalated to the Central Information Commission in August 2018. The CIC conducted a hearing in February 2020, issued an interim order and reserved the final order to allow for additional submissions to be made after the hearing. On June 5, the CIC issued its final order permitting access to a copy of the orders issued by MoD refusing sanction to prosecute in each of the 47 cases. The CIC, however, rejected access to the concerned case files in the larger public interest.

"Commission has considered the detailed arguments of the Appellant and the stance of Respondent No. 3 (the CPIO and the Army) as regards the denial of information on Para 5... under Section 8(1)(a) of RTI Act. While admittedly, Appellant has raised quite valid objections expounding larger public interest citing the Hon'ble Supreme Court judgement in the matter of Extrajudicial Victim Families Association Manipur (EEVFAM) & Anr Vs. Union of India & Anr.,," the CIC said in its order

"however we ought to appreciate the fact that the instant case hinges on an extremely sensitive aspect of the Kashmir conundrum. Given the limited jurisdiction of the Commission under RTI Act, the bench is neither adjudging the merits of the violation of human rights argument of the Appellant in relation to the alleged victims or their families nor the conjecture and surmises associated with the denial of prosecution sanction in the 47 cases referred to hereunder. Rather, the facts of the instant case require a dynamic attribution to the meaning of larger public interest within the framework of RTI Act by associating non-disclosure with larger public interest," the order adds.

The appellate body further said that the Commission is in complete agreement with Respondent No. 3((the CPIO and the Army) that disclosure of the elaborate aspects of the Army Operations will impact future operations.

"The disclosure of operational details will gravely impact the security and strategic preparedness of the Armed Forces, which by common knowledge is vital to the State's diaspora," the order reads. It adds that the other aspect of sensitivity lies in the inevitable vulnerability of this subject matter to speculations cutting across national and international borders; perhaps even trial by media that will emanate from such disclosure.

"As a cumulative effect, these eventualities may further compound the situation of unrest and instigate festering emotions in the State in addition to the international ramifications.... Indisputably, the larger public interest of the State (vis-a-vis its susceptibility to unrest) prevails over that of the alleged victims," the order by CIC reads.

"As regards, the contention of the Appellant that Section 10 of RTI Act can be invoked to severe [sic] the operational details, Commission finds the argument far fetched given the nature and form of information sought. Identifying and severing such intricate details from the papers, correspondence, file notings, emails etc desired in the RTI Application will invariably cause disproportionate diversion of the resources of the public authority as per Section 7(9) of RTI Act," it adds.

## 2 Shopian Youth Arrested In

Gupta said a search of the truck led to the weapons and ammunition, and the accused, during a preliminary investigation, revealed that they had been directed to collect the weapons from Punjab by Ishfaq Ahmed Dar, alias Bashir Ahmed Khan, a former J&K constable.

The DGP said that as per disclosures made by the two arrested LeT operatives, the weapons were to be delivered to Dar for carrying out attacks in the Valley.

Currently an active militant of the LeT in the Kashmir valley, Dar had absconded in 2017, he said.

During questioning, the duo further disclosed that they had collected the consignment from two unknown persons early Thursday morning at a pre-arranged location on the Maqboolpura-Vallah road near the vegetable market in Amritsar. They had concealed the consignment in the truck brought ostensibly for the purpose of loading vegetables and fruits from the mandi in Amritsar, according to the DGP.

## Youth Held After Brief ...

about the presence of militants in the area, an official said.

He said the operation turned into a gunfight after the militants fired upon a search party of the forces, who retaliated.

During the exchange of fire, militants managed to flee from the spot, leaving behind some ammunition

Indian Army's Chinar Corps said in a tweet said that a joint operation was launched earlier in the area after getting intelligence inputs. It said that the militants fired on security forces during the operation and one suspect was apprehended later. The Army's Srinagar based 15 Corps added said that a Chinese pistol, 1 grenade and 6 AK magazines and 147 rounds were recovered from the spot, while a joint search operation is in progress to nab the terrorists who escaped in the morning.

"Op Patahanpora (#Budgam). Joint operation was launched on intelligence. Terrorists fired on the Security Forces. One suspect apprehended. 1 Chinese pistol, 1 grenade & 6 AK magazines and 147 rounds were recovered. Joint search operation in progress," the army's tweet read.

## A Decade Later, Dad's ...

as the father recall his treasured 'aim in life'. He could've been anything, if not lying in his grave.

The father, however, has immortalized his son as 17-year-old boy who was last seen running for his life in a cricket stadium in Old Srinagar, before shot dead. The assault shell hit his head, opened his skull, and splattered his brains, not far from the place, where his lifeless body fell with a thud on the ground. In that watershed year, the schoolboy's killing only steamed

the street simmer, and went on to consume over 100 lives in Kashmir.

But before rage would engulf the valley, it was a local shopkeeper who, as a courier of the fatal news, had rushed towards the address of the Mattoos of Saïda Kadal.

Like any other day, Ashraf was waiting for his son's return from tuition. As part of family fun routine, he would hide behind the door, and surprise his son with his sudden shouting appearance.

A hearty laugh would uplift the mood of the family—now grappling with a disturbing silence.

But that day, when his son's fate was sealed, the father—who was still wearing young looks on his yet to be furrowed face—was running like a crazy person on Srinagar streets—uttering his beloved's name: 'Tufail Souba'—before spotting him dead to his heartbreak.

They had retrieved a five-rupee coin from his son's clasped fist. "What unsettles me now, is the fact my son is buried at two places," the father lamented. "His brain lies buried at some distant corner of Gani Memorial Stadium where he was shot dead, while his rest of the body is sharing the sacred space with martyrs of Kashmir at Eidgah, Srinagar."

That year, amid street slaughter, Omar Abdullah as the controversial chief minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir broadcasted a sentimental message—"my chips are down". It hardly deterred the father from being the lifelong justice campaigner for his son.

What sets Mattoo and his tribe apart is their commitment for justice despite being denied the same so far. "Tomorrow," the father once said, "I would at least face my son, and tell him: 'Son, I did my best!' "

But to thwart his campaign, his son's killers were time and again declared "untraceable and untraced". He was offered blood money and told to move on. The father, however, continues to hold his fort.

And that's exactly why on that summer day, those three boys in his neighbourhood were speaking high of the man who has already walked miles to seek justice for his dreamer son, now forever silenced.

## Masrat Zahra Wins Top ...

courageous work of women photojournalists working in difficult situations.

"It was a pleasant shock for me. When I heard the news, I couldn't believe myself. I am happy that my work has finally been recognised. Winning an award like this is an acknowledgement of the circumstances in which journalists work in places like Kashmir. It is a tribute to all those journalists in Kashmir, who risk their lives, face continuous threats," Zahra said.

Zahra was recently charged under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for her social media posts by the police in Kashmir. Under this stringent law, a person could be jailed for up to seven years. Her work focuses on people who have been going through immense sneering because of the conflict in Kashmir. An IWMF jury member while commenting on Zahra's work said that the story behind her work lends a closeness to her subjects, which requires a huge level of courage.

IWMF said in a statement, "We are deeply honoured to recognise the work of Masrat and others. Our winner and honourees this ear exhibited stunning emotion, dynamic composition and most significantly, put themselves in direct contact with those experiencing immediate suffering, at immense personal risk. Taking to micro blogging website Twitter, Zahra wrote that she was happy that her work has finally been recognized.

"After thanking Almighty, I would like to say a big thank to my mentor, Showkat Nanda, for his guidance, love and care. When I applied for the award earlier this year, he was there at every single step – from helping me prepare my application to editing and sequencing my work. He has truly revolutionised photojournalism education in Kashmir and inspired hundreds like me. Thank you, Baba. I owe this to you!," she Tweeted.

Zahra also expressed her gratitude to her family, friends, colleagues and everyone who supported her when she was going through difficult times.

"I dedicate this award to the unshakable courage of my fellow journalists of Kashmir, especially women reporters and photographers," she said.

## 2 Soldiers Die In Separate...

His body was airlifted to army's 92 base hospital at Badamibagh Srinagar here for further medical formalities.

In a separate accident, a soldier was killed after an army vehicle met with an accident on Srinagar-Leh highway.

Karan Singh of Nagrota, Jammu died on the spot when an army vehicle he was travelling in, skidded off from the main road at Ranga-Zojila.

## Top Army Commander..

and the internal security of Jammu and Kashmir. He stressed on maintaining a sustained coordination between Army and other security forces.

The GoC presented a reusable eco-friendly handbag prepared by Army Wives Welfare Association and the LG appreciated the initiative of AWWA, observing that this would spread awareness about the use of environment friendly products in our day-to-day life.

The LG assured the Lt Gen that all possibilities would be explored to showcase such products in the outlets of JK Handicrafts and Handloom department throughout the country.

## 3 Lashkar Associates ...

Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) outfit," an official said.

The arrested persons were identified as Abdul Moomin Peer, Is-lam Ullhaq Peer and Syed IftikharIndrabi -- all residents of Handwara -- the officials said.

The incriminating recoveries from the trio included 21 kg of high-quality heroin, valued at around Rs 100 crore in the international market, Rs 1.34 crore in cash and a cash-counting machine, they added.

Other members of the module were also identified and efforts were on to arrest them, the officials said.

A case under the relevant sections of law was registered at the Handwara police station, the officials said, adding that a special investigation team (SIT) was formed for an in-depth probe into links between militant outfits, radical elements, smugglers and other anti-national elements.

## Over 1 Lakh J&K Residents...

in other parts of the country due to COVID lockdown, via Lakhnapur and through special trains and buses till date," an official spokesman said.

The union territory has received 50 special trains at Jammu and Udhampur stations with about 39,413 stranded passengers from other parts of the country so far, while about 81,455 persons have been evacuated by the government through Lakhnapur till date.

"Therefore, a total of about 1,20,868 J&K residents stranded outside UT have been brought back to the UT by the Jammu and Kashmir government by 50 special trains and a fleet of buses through Lakhnapur after strictly observing all necessary preventive measures regarding the Virus," according to a statement.

So far, 29 trains have reached Jammu with a total of 23,717 stranded passengers belonging to different districts, while 15,696 passengers have reached Udhampur in 21 special trains. According to the statement, 81,455 people have been evacuated through Lakhnapur till June 11.



# No-Confidence Motion Moved Against Srinagar Mayor

Press Trust of India

Srinagar- Srinagar mayor Junaaid Azim Mattu on Thursday said a no-confidence motion has been moved against him at the behest of the BJP, and asserted that he enjoyed majority in the municipal corporation and would take on the challenge democratically and legally.

Asked whether the BJP had submitted a no-confidence motion against the mayor, the BJP's media in-charge for Kashmir, Manzoor Bhat, said, "Yes.... Over 40 corporators have submitted the no-confidence motion."

He said the motion had the backing of 43 corporators — 27 affiliated with the BJP and the rest are either Independents or belong to other parties.

In a statement later, Bhat, however, said the party had only extended support to the Independent corporators who filed the motion.

The Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) has 74 wards.

"Been informed that BJP has sought a 'Vote of No Confidence' in the SMC against me. Those who have submitted the motion are either elected members/office bearers of BJP or

unambiguously associated with BJP. This is the second such motion by BJP against me within 6 months, Mattu said.

In a series of tweets, the SMC mayor said the BJP-led group in the civic body has also claimed they have support from the Congress and the National Conference, but both these two parties have clearly denied that.

"The incumbent Dy. Mayor @Parvaiz\_Qadri has also denied these claims, he said.

Deputy Mayor Parvaiz Ahmad Qadri belongs to the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, but election to the post was held on non-party basis.

The National Conference, on its official Twitter handle, said the party has no understanding with the BJP.

"JKNC has no understanding, or inclination to have an understanding with BJP. Neither in SMC Srinagar nor elsewhere, the party said in a tweet.

Mattu said there are also apprehensions of forged signatures on affidavits as well as attempts to break the law that bars anyone from seeking a floor test within six months of the previous one.

This is a repeat of what was attempted in SMC on 26th December, 2019, Mattu said.



Mayor Junaaid Azim Mattu

Been informed that BJP has sought a 'Vote of No Confidence' in the SMC against me. Those who have submitted the motion are either elected members/office bearers of BJP or unambiguously associated with BJP. This is the second such motion by BJP against me within 6 months.

The mayor said it was a travesty that something like that was being done in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

That this is being done in the MIDST of an unprecedented pandemic is another travesty. That it is being claimed and alleged that INC and BJP are

on the same page is bizarre beyond comprehension and hints at some clear illegality and foul play, he said.

Mattu, who belongs to the Jammu and Kashmir People's Conference, said he would fight the motion democratically and legally and he was certain of

proving his majority.

We will fight this democratically and legally as this is yet another litmus test for the mainstream. This is the second such attempt in 6 months and we are certain of proving our majority and defeating this blatantly illegal, undemocratic maneuvering (sic), he said.

In his statement, BJP leader Bhat said his party was not "directly" involved in filing the motion against Mattu.

"We had extended our support in favour of filing no-confidence motion against Mattu," Bhat said.

"Earlier, we had filed a no-confidence motion against the mayor, but this time Independent corporators led by former Deputy Mayor Sheikh Imran have filed the no-confidence motion against him," he said.

Bhat, however, said the BJP was always of the opinion that Mattu should be removed as there has been a "halt" in development work.

The corporators have understood that they were being "misled" in the name of development, the BJP leader said, adding, "Our party has always talked about development and will not tolerate anything except that."

## Kashmir Railway gets first local Chief Area Manager

Srinagar: Saqib Yousuf, an Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS) officer hailing from Budgam district has assumed charge as Chief Area Manager, Srinagar. He is the first local to hold such post in the Railways.

After completing primary schooling in his native village of Nagam, Chadoora, Yousuf did his senior secondary from Nowgam. He secured admission in National Institute of Technology, Srinagar in Electronics and Communication stream after qualifying the AIEEE exam in 2010.

On successful completion of his engineering degree, Yousuf chose to prepare for the UPSC Civil Services exam despite having secured campus placement. He was fully supported by his family in this endeavour and was allotted IRTS after qualifying the coveted exam in his second attempt securing 472nd rank.

Yousuf then joined the Indian Railways Institute of Transportation Management, Lucknow for his training which lasted a total of 18 months. The training also included various related modules/courses at other related



institutions such as National Academy of Indian Railways, Baroda, National Academy of Audit and Accounts, Shimla, Zonal Railway Training Institute, Udaipur and Centre for Railway Information Systems, New Delhi among others.

During the course of this training, Yousuf got an opportunity to travel over 75,000 kms across the length and breadth of the country from the Sunderbans in West Bengal to Kutch in Gujarat and from Srinagar in J&K to Kanyakumari in Kerala.

Yousuf believes the training for IRTS has made him realise the vast diversity of the country, the challenges faced by the country the potential that can be unlocked to face those challenges. He believes that the railways have a role to play not only in driving the economy but also in cutting across social and linguistic barriers to unify the nation.

This is the first posting for Yousuf and he intends to use his position to provide the best possible transportation services to the citizens.

## R&B to macadamized 1000 KM road length this summer in Kashmir

Agencies

Srinagar: After facing severe criticism for not repairing dilapidated roads, authorities at Roads and Buildings (R&B) department Thursday claimed that one thousand kilometers road length will be macadamized this summer in Kashmir.

Much to the dismay and discomfort of commuters as well as residents, the majority of the roads in Kashmir including important road links in Srinagar city are in shambles.

Chief engineer R&B, Kashmir Sami Aarif said that work to macadamize roads has already begun.

"We have target to macadamize one thousand KM road length across Kashmir this summer," Aarif told news agency.

He said major roads are on priority list for macadamization. "Roads leading to hospitals, colleges and other vital public institutions are on priority list," he said.

He added that the macadamization work has already started around ten days ago. "We have macadamized Boulevard and Nishat road. All major vital roads will be covered on a first priority basis," he said.

He said that there would be a

"great change" on ground in next ten to fifteen days as the process to repair dilapidated roads have been expedited.

Presently, vital roads in Kashmir are dilapidated causing a lot of hardships and delays in reaching the desired destination, said commuters.

While the roads in rural areas are in mess, the situation in Srinagar is even worse. The roads in the capital city are in shabby condition, and travelling is proving to be back breaking experience in the city. Further, road links to tourist destinations are too in dilapidated state giving a bad name to Kashmir.

The R&B Chief Engineer said that sufficient funds are available for the execution of the plan and one thousand kilometers will be covered by the end of current summer.

Macadamization of roads in Kashmir is being carried mostly from May to September — when temperature is high and favorable for the process. No such activity can be carried in winters.

R&B department have so far remained under severe criticism by commuters and residents for failing repair dilapidated roads across Kashmir. (KINS)

## 'Halt in Srinagar's developmental work puts a question mark on its Smart City Status'

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) leader and former legislator Noor Mohammad Sheikh on Thursday expressed deep concern over incompletion of various developmental projects in Srinagar putting a question mark on its Smart City status.

In a statement, the JKAP leader observed that the inhabitants of Bemina, Tengpora, Shalteng, Mustafabad, Umarabad, Iqbal Abad upto Lawaypora are suffering immensely because of the incompletion of drainage projects that were started by the government two years ago.

"The construction work on the dewatering station at Shalteng has not been completed for the last over one year, not to talk of the construction work on the main drainage project that was started under AMRUT scheme. The work on this prestigious project has halted since the last two years," the former legislator remarked.

Similarly, he said the Mominabad drainage project under Smart City connecting almost around 20 colonies of at new court road Momin Abad, Tengpora is approved but no

work has been started on this project so far.

"The JKAP leader said that almost all roads connecting different areas in Srinagar particularly in Batmaloo constituency are in dilapidated condition and the commuters are immensely suffering on this account.

"Roads in Qamarwari, Mujund, Lawaypora, Barthana, Parimpora, Boatman Colony, Takenwari and Bemina including Firdous Abad, Nundreshi Colony, Toto Ground, Sir Sayed Abad, Bhakshi Abad, Iqbal Colony and Tengpora are fully damaged and potholes and ditches giving a tough time to the commuters," Sheikh observed. He said that Batmaloo constituency is hugely populated and the people of this area have been neglected by the government. "The inhabitants of this constituency are suffering for want of basic amenities and the government seems least bothered about their plight," Sheikh said, appealing the Lieutenant Governor G.C. Murmu to call a meeting reviewing the progress of Smart City projects on urgent basis.

## CUK holds 22nd Executive Council meeting

Ganderbal: Central University of Kashmir (CUK) Thursday held its 22nd meeting of the Executive Council at its Green Campus with Vice Chancellor Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir in chair. The Executive Council is the highest decision making body of the University.

The meeting was held both through offline and online mode. Among others who attended the meeting included Prof. V.K. Bahuguna Chairman Foundation for Integrated Resource Management, Prof. P. Fazul Rehman Director HRDC MANUU Hyderabad and Prof Rakesh Kumar Sharma Vice Chancellor Gaphic Era University. The meeting was also at-

tended by Prof. Ashok Aima, Vice Chancellor Central University of Jammu as a special invitee and also by Deans of faculties namely Prof. Mohammed Afzal Zargar, Prof. G.M. Bhat and Prof. Wali Mohammad Shah.

The members expressed grief over the demise of Prof. N.A. Nadeem, former member of the Executive Council and expressed their solidarity with the bereaved family. They also offered prayers for peace to the departed soul and observed two-minute silence as a mark of respect.

Welcoming the guests, Prof Mehraj ud Din Mir briefly threw light on the functioning of the university highlighting the im-

pediments it had to face and the strategic approach adopted by the university to overcome these impediments. Replying to a query from a member, the Chairman said the complete operations of the university have been shifted to Ganderbal. He further said that despite absence of several student centric facilities, the varsity has become a preferred destination for the students due to quality teaching and action oriented academic calendar. He expressed his optimism that expertise of newly appointed external members shall help the university to capitalize on their wisdom for better growth.

### Public Notice

I have lost the RC of my vehicle bearing Regd No: JK05C-5655 somewhere. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the RTO Ganderbal within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Firdous Ahmad Mir  
S/O Ghulam Mhammad Mir R/O  
Kurhama Lar Lar, Jammu & Kashmir  
Ganderbal

### DIAL-EMMA



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- PCR: 0194-2452092, 2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
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SHIEKH UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



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- 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  
20 Shawwal  
1441

### PRAYERS

FAJR	3: 34
ZUHR	12: 30
ASR	5:30
Magrib	7:45
ISHA	9:27

## This Day In History

- 1547 - King Ferdinand of Austria subjects himself on Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent
- 1707 - Hungary declares itself independent under Ferenc Rákóczi II (aka Francis II Rákóczi)
- 1721 - England signs Treaty of Madrid
- 1727 - Spain underwrites Preliminary of Paris
- 1753 - Austria, Great Britain & Modena sign secret military treaty.
- 1951 - UN arm forces reach Pyongyang Korea
- 1963 - Vostok 6 launched, pilot is 1st woman cosmonaut
- 1980 - UN Security Council calls for South Africa to free Nelson Mandela
- 1982 - Fahd becomes King of Saudi Arabia after King Khalid dies at 69
- 1983 - NASA's Pioneer 10 becomes the 1st man-made object to leave the solar system
- 1990 - Boeing 767 sets non-stop commercial flight, Seattle to Nairobi Kenya.
- 1993 - Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani re-elected President of Iran.
- 2000 - President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea meets Kim Jong-il, leader of North Korea, for the beginning of the first ever inter-Korea summit, in the northern capital of Pyongyang.
- 2002 - The United States of America withdraws from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
- 2006 - The US Senate issues a formal resolution apologizing for failure to create anti-lynching legislation
- 2007 - The Al Askari Mosque in Samarra is bombed reportedly by Iraqi Baathists, destroying the mosque's two ten-story minarets
- 2012 - A series of bombings across Iraq kill 93 and wound 300 people
- 2015 - Philae, 1st spacecraft to land on a comet in European Space Agency's Rosetta mission re-awakes after 7 months
- 2017 - Otto Warmbier returns to the US in an unresponsive state after being held in North Korean jail for 17 months,

## From KO Archives

## Hurriyat Being Roped In For Mid-Term Polls: Omar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR - National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, today said that the state was moving towards mid-term polls in view of the rapidly changing political situation. He said that efforts were on to rope in the leadership of the Hurriyat Conference for the election which, according to him could be held either at the end of this year or the start of the next.

The NC chief attacked the PDP, describing it as a "branch of the Congress with headquarters in New Delhi" and held die present coalition government responsible for the death of Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah.

"The Assembly elections in the state would be announced anytime as the political situation is witnessing a rapid change. We might have to plunge in the electoral battle anytime," Omar told party workers at session held in NC headquarters in memory of Mirza Muhammad Afzal Beg and Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah. He said that efforts were being made to persuade the Hurriyat leadership and other separatist groups to take part in the polls.

The NC president also launched a scathing attack on the moderate Hurriyat and other separatist leaders who are currently on a visit to Pakistan and Pakistan-controlled Kashmir (PoK) for their "conflicting statements." Omar said after becoming a Union Minister, he had advised the Centre to allow the Hurriyat leaders to visit Pakistan to enable them to prevail upon the militant leadership there to stop bloodshed and help put an end to use of the gun in the state.

"In the Muzaffarabad assembly, the Hurriyat leaders talked of silencing the guns, but in a secret meeting with Syed Salahuddin, they advised the continuation of the role of the gun," the KNS quoted him as having said "They (Hurriyat leaders) have misled the Kashmiri people."

"What was the point in meeting Syed Salahuddin in secret when they had publicly announced that they were going to talk to the militant leadership?" he asked.

"No political party, including the National Conference can claim to be the sole representative of the state," Omar said "The participation of all political parties is essential in any negotiations aimed at resolving the Kashmir issue."

The NC Chief said the party leadership — Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beigh had given a roadmap about 60 years ago to resolve the Kashmir issue.

The ongoing peace talks between India and Pakistan and the dialogue initiated by the two countries is part of that roadmap, he added.

"We had always urged the Indian and Pakistani leadership to resolve, the Kashmir issue through talks which also include the people of the state. Had they accepted our proposal, there would have been no violence and no bloodshed," Omar said.

"We would not have lost hundreds of youths and seen this beautiful place being destroyed. The two countries would have shown tremendous progress both socially and economically had they not been embroiled in the dispute," he added.

The NC President said his party had always favoured opening of all road links between the divided Kashmir to enable the people to meet each other.

(Kashmir Observer, 12 June, 2005)



KASHMIR  
OBSERVER

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## Pregnancy And Pandemic

In recent days, there have been fears of a deeper community transmission in Kashmir. One indicator for this is the sharp spike in number of Covid-19 positive pregnant women. On June 8 Kashmir reported 620 new coronavirus cases, highest since the lockdown began on March 25. Among the cases were 51 pregnant women. This has taken their total number to 240. Such sharp spike in the number of Covid-19 positive pregnant women has taken the health authorities by surprise. They see it as one of the clearest indicators of the community transmission of the Coronavirus in Kashmir Valley. It is true the government has been specifically testing pregnant women, so more of their cases are coming to light.

In early May, Jammu and Kashmir Government had made COVID-19 testing of all pregnant women mandatory, after a local court took suo motu cognisance of the deaths of two pregnant women in south Kashmir's Anantnag district. Following the court's intervention, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole, had directed the Health authorities "to devise a birth plan for the pregnant women so that they could be screened for COVID-19 well in time". Thereafter it was made mandatory for the pregnant women to be tested at least a week ahead of their delivery. But the authorities were surprised when not only the pregnant women turned out Covid-19 positive but their numbers kept steadily rising. In recent days things have become much worse. In the first four days of June, 70 pregnant women were diagnosed as Covid-19 positive. Most of the positive cases of pregnant women—around 79—are from South Kashmir's Anantnag district which also tops the list of the cases in the union territory with around 400 cases. Kulgam, another South Kashmir district follows with around 50 positive cases of pregnant women.

The pregnant women are not picked up for testing as part of the regular testing regime that involves contact tracing of the Covid-19 positive patients. They come from general masses and their examination therefore falls into the category of random testing of the healthy population. Most of these pregnant women have no travel or contact history. Doctors are now advising pregnant women to avoid unnecessary visits to hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centers. They also stress the need for a dedicated help lines for pregnant women in each district where doctors are available on call to address the health-related queries of these women. A doctor on call will obviate the need for these women to visit health facilities which can be a source of infection.

Meanwhile, fresh coronavirus cases are growing exponentially in Kashmir Valley with the daily caseload now growing around 100-200 daily. Total number of deaths from the coronavirus contagion is now over 40. This has forced the administration to declare all districts in Kashmir Valley except Ganderbal and Bandipora as red zones ahead of issuance of new guidelines for easing out the corona lockdown. But to fight the community transmission the government needs to undertake some creative measures rather than go for another lockdown. It has to taken steps to strictly enforce social distancing while people go ahead with their daily lives. Government has done so with Covid-19 positive pregnant women by deciding to set up separate hospitals for them in all the ten districts of the Valley.

### OTHER OPINION

## A slow turn

Going by leading indicators, economic activity in India appears to have picked up, although marginally, as the restrictions stemming from the lockdown have been eased gradually across the country. While activity remains well below levels observed in the pre-COVID period, the pace of contraction in some of the economic indicators has moderated from the lows observed in April when the impact of the lockdown would have been more pronounced.

On the consumption side, data from GSTN shows that while e-way bills (both intra-state and inter-state) generated continue to contract, the pace of contraction has eased—from declining by a staggering 84 per cent in April to 54 per cent in May. The disaggregated data indicates a greater pickup in intra-state e-way bills as compared to inter-state bills, suggesting that perhaps inter-state restrictions continue to hurt the flow of goods. Over the course of the coming weeks, as restrictions are eased further, household consumption will rise as pent-up demand is satiated, though how and when this demand ebbs is debatable. On the production side, labour market data also suggests a gradual resumption of economic activity. As per CMIE data, the unemployment rate eased to 17.5 per cent during the week ended June 7, down from the peak of 27.1 per cent observed almost a month ago. As restrictions are eased further, and economic activity picks up, the labour market should slowly improve, although even a sustained pick-up may not translate to a recovery of all the jobs lost over the past few months as firms will focus on lowering their costs in light of continuing economic uncertainty. A similar trend is observed in electricity generation, and railway revenue (freight traffic)—while both continue to contract, the pace of contraction has eased, indicative of a resumption in some industrial and commercial activities. The RBI data also shows a spurt in transactions—the average value of IMPS transactions rose by 28 per cent in June, after contracting in May and April, while UPI growth is back to pre-COVID levels.

How economic activity shapes up over the course of the coming weeks and months will depend in large part on the spread of the virus and efforts to control its spread. Data volatility is likely to increase as the effects of the lockdown, and the response of households and firms to the health and economic uncertainty, play out over the coming weeks and months. However, it is possible that as in previous episodes such as demonetisation and GST, the formal sector gains at the expense of the informal sector. In that case, going forward, the official GDP estimates, which tend to capture the formal sector more accurately, may end up masking the pain in large parts of the informal economy.

*The Indian Express*

ROSS DOUTHAT  
New York Times

For the record, I still believe those rules were mostly right. The lockdowns lasted too long and imposed too much in certain places, and the George Floyd protests reflect pent-up energies that had to be released.

# Coronavirus knows no ideology

After months of stopping every sort of assembly, US is now witnessing mass gatherings

The only thing it wants is targets," a George Mason University Ph.D. candidate in computer science, Adam Elkus, wrote of the coronavirus in March.

"It does not think," he went on, "it does not feel, and it lies totally outside the elaborate social nuances humans have carved out through patterns of communication, representation and discourse. And this, above all else, makes it a lethal adversary for the West."

It has exposed how much of Western society is permeated with influential people who have deluded themselves into thinking that their ability to manipulate words, images and sounds gives them the ability to control reality itself."

That the rules are now dissolving amid ideological double talk from health authorities says something important about the American capacity for political delusion.

In each stage of the response to the coronavirus, this delusion has been at work. In the first stage it was liberals and portions of the public health establishment (including, fatefully, key decision-makers) who treated the virus as something to be spun or narrativized away.

By the time this effort at reality-denial collapsed, the baton of narrative delusion had been passed to Donald Trump, who spent crucial weeks behaving as though the power of positive thinking could suffice to keep his glorious economy afloat.

#### Magic words of reopening

Eventually the plunging stock market and the rising infection rate forced even Trump to adapt somewhat to reality. But the next delusion belonged to some of his conservative supporters, who embraced the idea that the economic carnage was just the result of government policy—even though many stay-at-home orders only happened after steep drops in din-

ing and shopping and travel, not before—and that if the government simply spoke the right magic words of reopening, something close to normal life would immediately resume.

Now finally, amid the wave of protests against police brutality, the baton of words-against-reality has been passed back to the public health establishment, many of whose leaders are tying themselves in ideological knots arguing that it is not only acceptable but essential, after months circumscribing every sort of basic liberty, to encourage mass gatherings to support one particular just cause.

With this last turn, we've reached the end of the progression, because it means the original theory behind a stern public health response—that the danger to life and health justified suspending even the most righteous pursuits, including not just normal economic life but the practices and institutions that protect children, comfort the dying, serve the poor—has been abandoned or subverted by every faction in our national debate.

Yes, there are ongoing liberal attempts to prop up a distinction between mass protests and other forms of non-distanced human life.

But these attempts will fall apart: There is no First Amendment warrant to break up funerals while blessing Black Lives Matters protests, and there is no moral warrant to claim that only anti-racism, however pressing its goals, deserves a sweeping exception from rules that have forbidden so many morally important activities for the past few months.

#### Pent-up energies

For the record, I still believe those rules were mostly right. The lockdowns lasted too long and imposed too much in certain places, and the George Floyd protests reflect pent-up energies that had to be released.

But the rules bought time for warmer weather and social adaptations and hopefully a slower spread, they bought time for hospitals and masks and medical equipment, they brought us at least some distance closer to a vaccine—and on the evidence of the stock market and the jobs numbers, they did so without creating the total economic calamity that many on the right were prophesying.

That the rules are now dissolving amid ideological double talk from health authorities says something important about the American capacity for political delusion.

But it doesn't prove that we were wrong to implement them—not when there are thousands of people who are still alive, and whose lives emphatically matter, because we sustained restrictions for a time.

The progression I've described, though, in which all sides have embraced delusions or found something to value more than public health, does signal that there will be no further comprehensive attempt to fight the virus.

Trump and conservatism won't support it, the public health bureaucracy won't be able to defend it, and we didn't use the time the lockdowns bought to build the infrastructure to sustain a campaign of actual suppression.

So in this sense we are back with Elkus' original point. All the virus wants is targets, and if it doesn't ultimately find another hundred thousand victims, or more than that in some autumn second wave, it will not be political decisions or public health exhortations that save us.

On the left and right we've exhausted those possibilities, and like the earthlings unexpectedly preserved from alien domination at the end of "The War of the Worlds," now only some inherent weakness in our enemy can save us from many, many deaths to come.

# Covid-19: Salon Makes Me Sign A Consent Form

You only see this in movies when something terrible has happened

MAHMOOD SABERI  
Gulf News

I did a dangerous thing the other day and went for a haircut to a hairdressing salon after it opened for the first time after more than two months.

It was a bit disappointing as I was expecting a huge crowd, somewhat like the queues that form in front of a beverage shop after a long dry spell, or the first day of the opening of an Ikea or a Mama's Samosas eatery in your city.

"It must be because of movie stars giving their sons a haircut during lockdown. The middle class may now be giving themselves upper lip and hair dye jobs at home. Salons could be another services sector that may go out of business," I pondered.

I pressed the foot pedal and got two squirts of warm hand sanitiser in my palms. I sang, 'Happy Birthday to You, Happy Birthday to you,' twice while rinsing my hands and grinned at the hairdresser, but she seemed impatient. "Come in, Come in," she said quickly, as if she wished to shut the door against something lurking outside.

"Hand sanitise, please," said the hairdresser from inside the salon. I looked around and there it was, a plastic bottle hanging in mid-air.

Looking closely, I realised it was clever piece of engineering. The bottle was on a tiny shelf and there was a foot pedal down below at the end of the long contraption.

I pressed the foot pedal and got two squirts of warm hand sanitiser in my palms. I sang, 'Happy Birthday to You, Happy Birthday to you,' twice while rinsing my hands and grinned at the hairdresser, but



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she seemed impatient. "Come in, Come in," she said quickly, as if she wished to shut the door against something lurking outside.

As I was walking up the steps she pointed something in my face and I came to a dead halt with my other foot still hanging in the air. She said, "34.5". It was one of those non-touch thermometers that is shaped like a gun and has a laser that points at your forehead, like some Arnold Schwarzenegger movie.

What would happen if my temperature was higher than normal, would the thermometer turn into a gun, and would I have to hastily run away from the salon, as the hairdresser slowly takes aim at me, I wondered.

#### Fahrenheit guy

Then I took out my phone from my pocket and checked on the converter app, as I am a Fahrenheit guy, and I remember when growing up, everyone periodically scream-

ing, "OMG, he has 101.4!"

My temperature 34.5 Celsius, was below normal. "It must be because of my wife," I thought. Summer has barely begun in Bengaluru and she has the air-conditioner at full blast and it seems like working in an ice-cold Dubai office, all over again.

She also does not believe that air-conditioners spread coronavirus inside our home with the circulating air, and my money plant and I have to suffer the Arctic wind blasting at us.

As I was going to plonk myself in the barber chair, without first sanitising it with the pocket spray my wife had given to me, looking very worried as I stepped out into the germ-laden world, the hairdresser said, "Sign this please."

Then I saw the thick stack of Xerox copies at the receptionist table. The contents reiterated that it was I, and only of my own volition, that I had stepped into the hairdressing salon and that nobody had invited me here and I take responsibility for anything untoward happening.

It was like the paper they shove in your face as you are being wheeled on a trolley into surgery, that you take full responsibility for going in for an operation, and the doctor and the hospital, have nothing to do with it, so "Goodbye for Forever, or "Wishing you a quick recovery".

Then the hairdresser disappeared into a room and appeared with a disposable face shield and a blue apron and gloves, and you only see this in movies when something terrible has happened, like a virus pandemic.

— Mahmood Saberi is a storyteller and blogger based in Bengaluru, India. Twitter: @mahmood\_saberi



June 12- Child Labor Prohibition Day

# Protect Children From Exploitation

DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH,

Child labor affects 45 million boys and 28 million girls worldwide. According to the 2011 census, more than 4.3 million children were found working in India. India alone accounts for 12 percent of the world's total labor force. According to unofficial figures, there are around 50 million child laborers in India.

The United Nations defines child labor as work that deprives children of their childhood, dignity, and potential, which is detrimental to their physical and mental health. Interferes with children's school life. Child labor exists as a threat to the world today. Today's children are the future of tomorrow. The progress and development of the country depend on them. But child labor hurts their physical and mental health. Problems such as working conditions, and abuse, premature aging, malnutrition, depression, drug dependence, physical and sexual violence, etc. detach these children from the mainstream of society. It is a violation of their rights. It deprives them of their rightful opportunity which can trigger other social problems.

#### World Child Labor Day

Child labor is a global challenge. Different countries have taken many steps regarding child labor. "World Child Labor Prohibition Day" is celebrated on June 12 every year to combat child labor. World Child Labor Day was started by the International Labor Organization in the year 2002. The purpose of this day is to highlight the need to protect the rights of children and to eliminate child labor violations in various forms of child labor. The United Nations sets a theme on World Child Labor Day, celebrated on June 12 each year. On this occasion, representatives of different nations, officials, and many international organizations that curb child labor take part, where the problem of child labor around the world is discussed.

There are many areas around the world where children are being employed as laborers. Earlier children used to work entirely in the fields, but now they are moving to non-agricultural jobs. A large number of child laborers are now seen in the textile industry, brick kilns, sugarcane, tobacco industry, etc. Due to poverty along with illiteracy, parents force their children to work instead of getting them enrolled in schools. In search of family income, parents encourage child labor. Ignorantly, they believe that educating children means consuming money and making them work means earning income. But they do not understand that child labor does not increase but increases poverty because children who are forced to give up education for work are doomed to lifelong paid jobs.

#### Child labor in statistics

Of the 152 million children involved in child labor worldwide, 73 million do hazardous work. Hazardous labor includes manual cleaning, construction, agriculture, quarries, factories, and working as a ferryman and domestic helper, etc. In this way, saffron threatens the



health, safety, and moral development of children. Due to this children are deprived of a normal childhood and proper education. Child labor affects 45 million boys and 28 million girls worldwide. According to the 2011 census, more than 4.3 million children were found working in India. India alone accounts for 12 percent of the world's total labor force. According to unofficial figures, there are around 50 million child laborers in India.

#### Who is behind child labor?

Child labor is not limited to India, it is a global phenomenon. Children are used in child labor because they can be easily exploited. Among the reasons why children work hard according to their age, poverty is usually the first reason. In addition, there are other reasons such as population explosion, cheap labor, non-enforcement of available laws, parents reluctant to send their children to school (they are willing to send their children to work instead of school, so as to increase family income). Another major problem responsible for child labor is trafficking. An estimated 1.2 million children are sexually abused and trafficked annually for child labor. India has a high rate of child trafficking. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, one child goes missing every eight minutes. These children are mainly victims of begging, sexual exploitation, and trafficking for child labor.

#### Child Labor and Law

In accordance with the constitutional order, the Constitution of India states through various sections of fundamental rights and state policy-directing principles that no child under the age of 14 shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engage in any other hazardous employment. The Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 prohibits the employment of children under the age of 14 in any illegal profession and in 57 procedures which are considered to be detrimental to the life and health of the child. These professions and processes are mentioned in the schedule of law. The Factory Act 1948 prohibits the employment of children under 14 years of age. Adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18 can be employed in a factory only if they have a fitness certificate from an authorized doctor. The law stipulates four-and-a-half hours per day for children between the ages of 14 and 18 and prohibits them from working at night. Significant judicial intervention in action against child labor in India came from a 1996 Supreme Court decision directing the federal and state governments to identify, employ, and provide quality education to children working in hazardous processes and occupations.

#### How the future will survive child labor

It is important to create awareness about child rights and the importance of education. Educating less educated or il-

literate parents about the shortcomings of child labor can help fight this crisis. Motivating parents to send their children to school can bring the dangers of child labor under control. Social workers, media persons, citizens Societies, NGOs, in fact, people from all walks of life need to unite against this issue so that our children can have a prosperous life. Let us work on an individual level to protect child rights against child labor on this World Day (June 12).

#### The way forward

Child labor is a vicious cycle of poverty, unemployment, and low wages. To improve the economic situation of families and prevent them from sending their children to work, the government will have to make concerted efforts towards social security programs and cash transfers. There is a need to improve the quality of educational institutions and education as well as changes in the educational infrastructure to ensure the relevance of education. There is a need to bring uniformity in the existing Indian laws dealing with child labor. Free and compulsory education must be made effective. There is a need to launch an international campaign to raise awareness of the interests and the dangers of child labor and to prevent child labor.

Author is a Research Scholar in Political Science at Delhi University

The pandemic represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world to create a healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous future

Covid-19 lockdowns may be gradually easing, but anxiety about the world's social and economic prospects is only intensifying. There is good reason to worry: a sharp economic downturn has already begun, and we could be facing the worst depression since the 1930s. But, while this outcome is likely, it is not unavoidable.

To achieve a better outcome, the world must act jointly and swiftly to revamp all aspects of our societies and economies, from education to social contracts and working conditions. Every country, from the United States to China, must participate, and every industry, from oil and gas to tech, must be transformed. In short, we need a "Great Reset" of capitalism.

There are many reasons to pursue a Great Reset, but the most urgent is Covid-19. Having already led to hundreds of thousands of deaths, the pandemic represents one of the worst public-health crises in recent history. And, with casualties still mounting in many parts of the world, it is far from over.

This will have serious long-term consequences for economic growth, public debt, employment, and human wellbeing. According to the Financial Times, global government debt has already reached its highest level in peacetime. Moreover, unemployment is skyrocketing in many countries: in the US, for example, one in four workers have filed for unemployment since mid-March, with new weekly claims far above historic highs. The International Monetary Fund expects the world economy to shrink by 3 per cent this year - a downgrade of 6.3 percentage points in just four months.

All of this will exacerbate the climate and social crises that were already underway. Some countries have already used the Covid-19 crisis as an excuse to weaken environmental protections and enforcement. And frustrations over social ills like rising inequality - US billionaires' combined wealth has increased during the crisis - are intensifying.

Left unaddressed, these crises, together with Covid-19, will deepen and leave the world even less sus-

## Time For A Great Reset

KLAUS SCHWAB



tainable, less equal, and more fragile. Incremental measures and ad hoc fixes will not suffice to prevent this scenario. We must build entirely new foundations for our economic and social systems.

The level of cooperation and ambition this implies is unprecedented. But it is not some impossible dream. In fact, one silver lining of the pandemic is that it has shown how quickly we can make radical changes to our lifestyles. Almost instantly, the crisis forced businesses and individuals to abandon practices long claimed to be essential, from frequent air travel to working in an office.

Likewise, populations have overwhelmingly shown a willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of health-care and other essential workers and vulnerable populations, such as the elderly. And many companies have stepped up to support their work-

ers, customers, and local communities, in a shift toward the kind of stakeholder capitalism to which they had previously paid lip service.

Clearly, the will to build a better society does exist. We must use it to secure the Great Reset that we so badly need. That will require stronger and more effective governments, though this does not imply an ideological push for bigger ones. And it will demand private-sector engagement every step of the way.

The Great Reset agenda would have three main components. The first would steer the market toward fairer outcomes. To this end, governments should improve coordination (for example, in tax, regulatory, and fiscal policy), upgrade trade arrangements, and create the conditions for a "stakeholder economy." At a time of diminishing tax bases and soaring public debt, governments have a power-

ful incentive to pursue such action.

Moreover, governments should implement long-overdue reforms that promote more equitable outcomes. Depending on the country, these may include changes to wealth taxes, the withdrawal of fossil-fuel subsidies, and new rules governing intellectual property, trade, and competition.

The second component of a Great Reset agenda would ensure that investments advance shared goals, such as equality and sustainability. Here, the large-scale spending programmes that many governments are implementing represent a major opportunity for progress. The European Commission, for one, has unveiled plans for a \$838 billion recovery fund. The US, China, and Japan also have ambitious economic-stimulus plans.

Rather than using these funds, as well as investments from private entities and pension funds, to fill cracks in the old system, we should use them to create a new one that is more resilient, equitable, and sustainable in the long run. This means, for example, building "green" urban infrastructure and creating incentives for industries to improve their track record on environmental, social, and governance metrics.

The third and final priority of a Great Reset agenda is to harness the innovations of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to support the public good, especially by addressing health and social challenges. During the Covid-19 crisis, companies, universities, and others have joined forces to develop diagnostics, therapeutics, and possible vaccines; establish testing centres; create mechanisms for tracing infections; and deliver telemedicine. Imagine what could be possible if similar concerted efforts were made in every sector.

The Covid-19 crisis is affecting every facet of people's lives in every corner of the world. But tragedy need not be its only legacy. On the contrary, the pandemic represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world to create a healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous future.

Klaus Schwab is Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum. -Project Syndicate



# Here's How Widespread Mask-Wearing Could Prevent Covid-19 Second Waves



## Agencies

Population-wide face mask use could push COVID-19 transmission down to controllable levels for national epidemics, and could prevent further waves of the pandemic disease when combined with lockdowns, according to a British study on Wednesday.

The research, led by scientists at the Britain's Cambridge and

Greenwich Universities, suggests lockdowns alone will not stop the resurgence of the new SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, but that even home-made masks can dramatically reduce transmission rates if enough people wear them in public.

"Our analyses support the immediate and universal adoption of face masks by the public," said Richard Stutt, who co-lead the study at Cambridge.

He said combining widespread

mask use with social distancing and some lockdown measures, could be "an acceptable way of managing the pandemic and re-opening economic activity" before the development of an effective vaccine against COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus.

The study's findings were published in the "Proceedings of the Royal Society A" scientific journal. At the onset of the pandemic,

scientific evidence on the effectiveness of face masks in slowing transmission of respiratory diseases was limited, and there was no data on COVID-19 since it was a previously unknown disease.

But, prompted by some new research in recent weeks, the World Health Organization said on Friday it now recommends that everyone wear fabric face masks in public to try to reduce disease spread.

In this study, researchers linked the dynamics of spread between people with population-level models to assess the effect on the disease's reproduction rate, or R value, of different scenarios of mask adoption combined with periods of lockdown.

The R value measures the average number of people that one infected person will pass the disease on to. An R value above 1 can lead to exponential growth.

The study found that if people wear masks whenever they are in public it is twice as effective at reducing the R value than if masks are only worn after symptoms appear.

In all scenarios the study looked at, routine face mask use by 50% or more of the population reduced COVID-19 spread to an R of less than 1.0, flattening future disease waves and allowing for less stringent lockdowns.

Experts not directly involved in the latest British study were divided over its conclusions.

Brooks Pollock, a Bristol University infectious disease modelling expert, said the likely impact of masks could be much smaller than predicted. Trish Greenhalgh, an Oxford University professor, said the findings were encouraging and suggested masks "are likely to be an effective population measure".

## Climate Change: Small Islands May Not Disappear Under Rising Seas, Researchers Find

### Agencies

In recent years, the leaders and inhabitants of many small-island nations like Kiribati and Tuvalu have warned that climate change is an existential threat to their homelands, fearing they could disappear under rising seas as the planet warms.

But according to research published on Wednesday, small, low-lying islands dotted around the Pacific and the Caribbean - often seen as the places most vulnerable to global warming - can naturally adapt and raise themselves above encroaching waves.

A three-year study led by Britain's University of Plymouth, which looked at coral reef islands such as the Maldives and the Marshall Islands, found that tides move sediment to create higher elevation, a process that may keep the islands habitable. "The dominant discourse is that of an island drowning, and

the outcome of that is coastal defences and relocation ... We think there are more trajectories for the islands," said lead author Gerd Masselink, professor of coastal geomorphology at the University of Plymouth.

Low-lying island states are judged to be at greatest risk from increasingly powerful storms and rising oceans, with some making preparations to resettle their people within decades.

Many are already building sea walls, moving coastal villages to higher ground, appealing for international aid or setting up projects to repair damage caused by climate change impacts.

The world's tens of thousands of coral reef islands are mostly uninhabited, but are home to about 1 million people who largely rely on fishing or tourism for a living, said Masselink.

Although the islands have different structures due to varying weather and wave patterns, they tend to be relatively



small, low-lying, sandy or gravel islands sitting on top of a living reef platform.

They were formed hundreds of thousands of years ago by waves moving and piling up reef material or sediment to create higher ground - a natural defence mechanism that continues, he noted.

For the study published in the journal Science Advances, scientists built a model coral reef and island in a laboratory tank with rising water levels, and used

computer simulations to replicate how such islands respond to higher seas in reality.

The results suggest that by opting for climate-resilient infrastructure that allows for occasional flooding, like buildings on stilts and movable houses, islanders with enough space could adapt to their shifting environment, Masselink said.

Dredging coral sand and sediments found in island lagoons and moving it to beaches could also aid the natural process of

raising the islands, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Sea walls, however, are compromising the natural ability of the islands to adjust to rising sea levels, he said.

"If you stop the flooding of the islands, you also stop the movement of the sediment on top of the island," he said.

Most coral islands do not depend on agriculture, and import food and fresh water, making saltwater contamination during flooding less of an issue, he noted.

Hideki Kanamaru, natural resources officer with the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization in Asia-Pacific, said the study provided a "new perspective" on how island nations could tackle the challenge of sea-level rise.

But even if islands can adapt naturally to higher seas by raising their own crests, humans still need to double down on global warming and protection for island populations, he added.

## BP Medicine Linked To Lower COVID-19 Death Risk In Hypertension Patients: Study

### Press Trust Of India

Patients with high blood pressure who are not taking medication to control the condition may be at a greater risk of dying from novel coronavirus infection, according to a review of studies which says drugs treating the underlying disease may offer protection in some COVID-19 patients.

The research, published in the European Heart Journal, noted that patients with elevated blood pressure have a two-fold increased risk of dying from the novel coronavirus infection, compared to those without the underlying disease.

In the study, scientists, including those from Xijing Hospital in China, assessed data from 2,866 COVID-19 patients who were admitted to Huo Shen Shan hospital in China, between February 5 and March 15.

They said nearly 30 per cent of these patients (850) had a medical history of high blood pressure, also known as hypertension.

According to the study, led by Fei Li and Ling Tao from Xijing Hospital, 34 out of 850 hypertensive patients (4 per cent) with coronavirus died compared to 22 out of 207 patients without hypertension (1.1 per cent).

The scientists said this was a 2.12-fold increased risk of dying from the disease after they adjusted for several health-related factors that could affect the results, such as age, sex, and other medical conditions.

Among the patients with hypertension who were not taking medication for the condition, the study said 11 out of 140 people (nearly 8 per cent) died from coronavirus, compared to 23

out of 710 (3.2 per cent) of those who were taking medication -- a 2.17-fold increased risk after adjusting for confounding factors.

Analysing data from nearly 2,300 patients in three other studies, the researchers probed into the death rates in patients being treated with drugs to control blood pressure levels which targeted the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS) of the human body.

These drugs, they said, included angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors or angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs).

The scientists also assessed the performance of other, non-RAAS inhibiting drugs used for treating high blood pressure such as beta

blockers, calcium channel blockers (CCBs), or diuretics.

In their analysis, the researchers found a lower risk of death

among the 183 patients treated with RAAS inhibitors than in 527 patients treated with other drugs.

However, the scientists say this result should be treated with caution as the number of patients in this analysis was small, and so it could be due to chance.

"It is important that patients with high blood pressure realise that they are at increased risk of dying from COVID-19," Li said.

"They should take good care of themselves during this pandemic and they need more attention if they are infected with the coronavirus," he added.

In addition, the scientists noted that there were 140 patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19 who had discontinued their anti-hypertensive treatment due to various reasons.

"We found that this was associated with a greater risk of dying from the coronavirus," Li said.



## High-Salt Diet Impacts Health Of Gut Microbiome Especially In Women

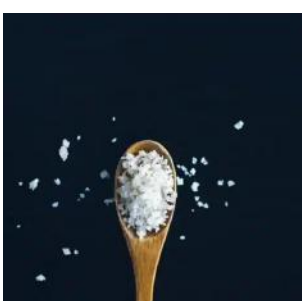
### Agencies

Particularly in females with untreated hypertension, reducing salt intake to what's considered a healthier level appears to be good for both their gut microbiome and their blood pressure, a new study by researchers suggests.

In the blood of 145 adults with untreated hypertension, the scientists found that, particularly for the females, just six weeks of a daily sodium intake close to the 2,300 milligrams recommended by groups like the American Heart Association, resulted

in increased levels of short-chain fatty acids, an indicator of a healthy microbiome, circulating in the blood. The hypertensive adults also experienced decreased blood pressure and more compliant blood vessels.

"There is a connection," Dr. Haidong Zhu, molecular geneticist at the Georgia Prevention Institute at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University, said about increasing evidence that the microbiome has a direct role in regulating blood pressure and how the average American high-salt diet can interfere with a healthy direction.



To the scientists' knowledge their study in the journal Hypertension is the first to look at how decreasing salt intake in humans affects circulating short-chain fatty acids, or SCFAs, says Zhu, the study's corresponding author.

Emerging evidence suggests that a high-salt diet alters the gut microbiome, particularly in animal models of salt-sensitive hypertension, but there is little human data.

"We are trying to understand underlying mechanisms," said Zhu, whose research focus includes increasing understanding of the ways a high-salt diet induces high blood pressure.

The gut microbiota are all the bacteria, viruses, protozoa, and fungi populating the gastrointestinal tract, which have a wide range of functions from helping digest your food to your immune response to

influencing a propensity to gain weight. Problems with the microbiome are associated with a wide range of diseases from cancer to gastrointestinal problems to allergies.

Short-chain fatty acids, or SCFAs, are known to play a role in blood pressure regulation. These small metabolites originating from the gut, get absorbed into the entire circulation, binding to receptors on the lining of blood vessels and in the kidneys, regulating things like the release of renin, an enzyme that works to keep the kidneys well perfused and a major player in blood pressure control.



## Don't bother yourself, we won't submit to sanctions: Iran to US

### Agencies

Tehran: Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi has condemned US sanctions against Iranian shipping companies and tankers, saying Iran will not give in to such pressure.

"We advise the American officials to stop the imposition of unilateral sanctions, as their illegal and unilateral sanctions are more against their allies and global trade than Iran," Mousavi said on Wednesday.

He said that the fresh US sanctions are not different from those already in place against the Islamic Republic, as Washington once put sanctions on the entire Iranian nation and now is sanctioning Iranian citizens or officials individually.

"American officials are categorizing the sanctions in detail, but they are only bothering themselves as the Islamic Republic of Iran will not submit to such sanctions and pressure," Mousavi said.

He said the illegal and unilateral US measures and its playing with international rules and regulations would be of no avail as "their sanctions are ineffective, have domestic consumption and do not enjoy international backing."

The Iranian official called on the international community to stand up to the US actions, which he said would af-

fect other countries as well.

The remarks came two days after the US enforced the sanctions imposed on Iran's shipping network took, months after the State Department announced them in December.

The US blacklisted the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) and its Shanghai-based subsidiary, E-Sail Shipping Company Ltd, along with more than 100 ships and tankers over accusations of transporting items related to Iran's ballistic missile and military programs, as well as what it claimed were other "proliferation-sensitive items."

"These designations serve as a clear warning that anyone doing business with or otherwise supporting IRISL or E-Sail are exposed to potential sanctions and risk contributing to Iran's proliferation-sensitive programs, including its nuclear and missile programs," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement on Monday.

The new US sanctions are believed to further hamper imports of food and medical supplies into Iran at a time when the country is fighting to contain a deadly coronavirus outbreak.

The sanctions also come in blatant defiance of growing international calls for Washington to ease its Iran sanctions, which have severely prevented the country's access to lifesaving medical items.



## Covid may push 49 million into extreme poverty this year: UN chief

### Press Trust Of India

United Nations: Nearly 49 million more people are likely to fall into extreme poverty this year due to the Covid-19 crisis and every percentage point drop in the global GDP would mean hundreds of thousands of additional children will have stunted growth, UN chief Antonio Guterres has warned, calling on countries to act immediately to ensure global food security.

Secretary-General Guterres warned that unless immediate action is taken, it is increasingly clear that there is an impending global food emergency that could have long-term impact on hundreds of millions of children and adults.

"There is more than enough food in the world to feed our population of 7.8 billion people. But, today, more than 820 million people are hungry. And some 144 million children under the age of 5 are stunted — more than 1 in 5



**The number of people who are acutely food or nutrition insecure will rapidly expand. Every percentage point drop in global gross domestic product (GDP) means an additional 0.7 million stunted children.**

children worldwide. Our food systems are failing, and the Covid-19 pandemic is making things worse," Guterres said at the launch of the policy brief on food security on Tuesday.

Nations must mobilise to save lives and livelihoods, focus-

ing attention where the risk is most acute. "Countries need to scale up support for food processing, transport and local food markets, and they must keep trade corridors open," he said. — PTI

United Nations: UN General Assembly President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande has recommended that heads of state and government and ministers address the UNGA session in September through pre-recorded video statements as Covid-19 restrictions on international travel and large in-person meetings are likely to be in place. PTI

United Nations: In adherence to the social distancing guidelines due to the Covid-19 pandemic, 193 UN member states have been allotted different time slots to cast their ballot next week in the General Assembly Hall for three crucial elections, including the non-permanent members of the Security Council, for which India is a candidate. PTI

## UK PM offers new 'support bubbles' out of COVID-19 lockdown

### Agencies

London: People living alone in England will be able to stay at one other household as part of a further easing of the coronavirus restrictions, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said.

He announced that, from Saturday, single adults can spend the night at another house in a so-called "support bubble", which means all members of the bubble must self isolate in case any one member develops symptoms of COVID-19.

He said the change aims to help combat loneliness and allow for some further relaxation to the rules, which so far only allow for a gathering of up to six outdoors. "All those in a support bubble will be able to act as if they live in the same household, meaning they can spend time together inside each others' homes and do not need to stay two metres apart," Johnson explained.

"I want to stress that support bubbles must be exclusive, meaning you can't switch the household you are in a bubble with or connect with multiple households. And if any member of the support bubble develops symptoms, all members of the bubble will need to follow the normal advice on household isolation," he said.

One part of the bubble has to be a single household, or be a single parent to children aged under 18. It does not apply to grandparents who live together, people living in houses of multiple occupancy, such as flat shares, or to couples who already live together.

Those who are shielding due to other underlying health conditions, are not advised to form a bubble.

The move came as the UK government's chief scientific adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, said the R number, the number of people an infected person passes the virus on to, remains below the required level of one.

"The epidemic is shrinking, but not fast. Numbers are coming down but are not yet very low," he said.

Further easing of lockdown measures, including opening up of non-essential shops, from next Monday as the UK's death toll from the deadly virus crossed 41,000.



## Widespread mask-wearing could prevent Covid-19 second waves: study

### Agencies

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In this study, researchers linked the dynamics of spread between people with population level models to assess the effect

on the disease's reproduction rate, or R value, of different scenarios of mask adoption combined with periods of lockdown.

The R value measures the average number of people that one infected person will pass the disease on to. An R value above one can lead to exponential growth.

The study found that if people wear masks whenever they are in public, it is twice as effective at reducing the R value than if masks are only worn after symptoms appear.

In all scenarios the study looked at, routine face mask use by 50 per cent or more of the population reduced Covid-19 spread to an R of less than 1.0, flattening future disease waves and allowing for less stringent lockdowns.

## Norway Mosque Attacker Gets 21-Year Sentence

### Agencies

OSLO : A 22-year-old Norwegian man who said he was inspired by far-right attacks was sentenced on Thursday to 21 years in prison after being convicted of killing his stepsister and opening fire in a mosque near Oslo last August.

The lawyer for the gunman, Philip Manshaus, had sought to use an insanity defense to argue that her client was not criminally liable, but the court made clear on Thursday that it considered him sane in handing down the sentence, which can be extended if he were to be considered a continued threat to society.

Still, the strategy employed by Mr. Manshaus's legal team prompted a debate in Norway about the limitations

ted killing his stepsister, Johanne Zhangjia Ihle-Hansen, and attacking the al-Noor Islamic Center in Baerum, an Oslo suburb, while wearing a helmet, camera and body armor. He opened fire in the mosque, but was overpowered by two men inside before anyone was shot.

Mr. Manshaus admitted to carrying out the attack, but he maintained that he was not guilty of any crime during courtroom tirades in which he expressed anti-Semitic views, made homophobic slurs and flashed a hand signal linked to the white power movement.

Speaking during the trial, Mr. Manshaus said his only regret was that he failed to cause more harm. He pleaded not guilty to murder and terrorism charges, claiming his acts



of the insanity defense and whether protections intended to preserve free speech have allowed right-wing extremists to spread hateful ideology on social media platforms.

Mr. Manshaus, 22, admit-

were in "self-defense" on behalf of "the European people."

He must serve at least 14 years, but the sentence could be extended indefinitely under conditions known as special detention.

## Woman's High-Risk Pregnancy Ends With Birth On Ventilator

### Agencies

Baton Rouge, La: A new baby was coming, so the aunts, uncles and cousins arrived by the dozens, their cars taking up the entire block and the lawn across the street, as they always did for Allen family parties. Carrying diapers and wipes, they gathered on the cracked driveway beneath the arching branches of an oak tree, waiting to learn whether Kenna Allen was having a boy or a girl.

It was Saturday, March 7, just days before they would learn how dangerous gatherings like this one had become. In 48 hours, Louisiana would report its first case of a lethal new virus, a distant worry that no one mentioned as they boiled crawfish and took photos in matching shirts with the words "He or she, what will baby be?"

Kenna, a 34-year-old single mother navigating a high-risk pregnancy, took a selfie of her baby bump at about 18 weeks. She was wearing a "Mommy to bee" sash, part of the bumble bee theme she had chosen for the party. Her two daughters, 7 and 15, released blue and pink smoke bombs on the driveway. The guests wrote out ideas for names on a chalkboard: For a boy, Traylon, Travis or Taylor. For a girl, Brooklyn, Taylin or Treasure.

Her best friend and her

sister, the only ones who knew the baby's sex, held up a sheet with rows of black balloons and the words "What will baby be? Pop to see."

"Hit it!" Kenna's cousin shouted.

Kenna popped each balloon until a onesie fell out of one of them, revealing what they all came to learn: The baby would be a girl.

Everyone hollered. Kenna ran from the garage into the living room, overwhelmed and disappointed. In a family of so many women, Kenna and her daughters had prayed for a boy. But a few moments later, Kenna walked back outside and smiled.

"This baby is loved," she told her guests. "I can't wait for her to be here."

As a gift, Kenna's best friend gave her matching necklaces for her three daughters, delicate gold chains with the words "big sis," "mid sis," and "lil sis."

Second-grader E'lajah imagined teaching her little sister how to dance. Tenth-grader Darrielle dreamed of getting her license and driving around with two little sisters in the back seat. And Kenna thought about the outfit her baby would wear as she came home from the hospital in August: A white onesie with pink bows and a rhinestone princess crown.

It was one of the last days

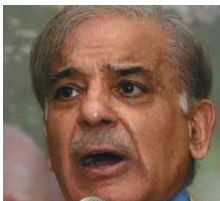
### N E W S M A K E R S

## Nawaz Sharif's Brother Shehbaz Sharif Gets COVID-19, Party Blames Pak PM "Imran Niazi"

Islamabad: Former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's brother Shehbaz Sharif, chief of the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), has tested positive for the coronavirus, becoming the latest top politician in Pakistan to be infected by the deadly virus on a day when the number of COVID-19 cases in the country touched 119,536.

PML-N leader Ataulah Tarar confirmed on Thursday that Shehbaz Sharif, 68, has been infected with the virus. He claimed that Shehbaz Sharif contracted the virus as he had to appear before the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on June 9 in a money laundering case.

"NAB was informed



multiple times in writing that Shehbaz Sharif has suffered from cancer and compared to other people, his immunity system is weak," Mr Tarar said.

He said Shehbaz Sharif was already living in quarantine due to the threat of virus and had to leave home to appear before NAB.

"Imran Niazi (Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan) and NAB will be responsible if something happens to Shehbaz Sharif," he said.

Earlier, in a statement submitted to NAB, Shehbaz Sharif, who is the younger brother of Nawaz Sharif, said, "It has been widely reported in the media that some NAB officials have tested positive for COVID-19. Please appreciate (that) I am a cancer survivor and 69 years old. I have been advised limited exposure on account of the peculiar background of low immunity."

Shehbaz Sharif has added to the list of top leaders in the country who have contracted the virus, including former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and incumbent Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad.

At least four lawmakers, including a provincial minister, have died due to coronavirus in Pakistan.

## Twitter Tests Feature That Stops Sharing Links If You Haven't Read Them

Washington, United States: Twitter said Wednesday it was testing a new feature that seeks to limit the sharing of articles by users who haven't read them.

The feature -- which asks users whether they have read an article before they retweet it -- appears to be aimed at slowing the spread of unverified information.

"Sharing an article can spark conversation, so you may want to read it before you tweet it," Twitter's support team said.

Twitter said it would be testing the feature on its Android application "to help promote informed discussion." "When you retweet an article that you haven't opened on Twitter, we may ask if you'd like to open it first," the company said.

In a reply to one user, Twitter noted, "We wanted to test a way to



improve the health of a conversation as it gets started." But it said users will "always have the option" to go ahead with the retweet.

Twitter and other platforms are struggling to contain misinformation, which often is passed along by users who fail to review details of the comments they are sharing.

Last month, Twitter decided to limit the reach of some comments by President Donald Trump, in one case because they were misleading and in another case because of a violation of platform rules promoting violence.

## Christopher Columbus statue beheaded in Boston

A statue of Christopher Columbus in Boston has been beheaded, police said Wednesday, as calls to remove sculptures commemorating colonisers and slavers sweep America on the back of anti-racism protests.

A Columbus statue was also vandalised in downtown Miami, and another was dragged into a lake earlier in the week in Richmond, Virginia, according to local reports.

The incidents come as pressure builds in the United States to rid the country of monuments associated with racism following massive demonstrations over the killing of George Floyd by a white police officer in Minneapolis last month.

Italian explorer Columbus, long hailed by school textbooks as the so-called discoverer of "The New World," is considered by many to have spurred years of genocide against indigenous groups in the Americas.

He is regularly denounced in a similar way to Civil War generals of the pro-slavery South.



## India Criticises Pak PM For Offer On Cash Transfer Programme

**NEW DELHI:** In a sharp re-tort to Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's offer to share experience of his government's cash transfer scheme, India on Thursday reminded him that the size of its economic stimulus package to deal with the coronavirus pandemic is as large as Pakistan's GDP.

The response by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) came hours after Khan, in a series of tweets, offered to share with India Pakistan's experience of implementing its "successful" cash transfer programme following reports of how poor people in India are battling poverty

ing an online media briefing. "We all know about their debt problem (almost 90 per cent of GDP) and how much they have pressed for debt restructuring. It would also be better for them to remember that India has a stimulus package, which is as large as Pakistan's annual GDP," he said.

Last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a Rs 20 lakh crore economic stimulus package for various key sectors to deal with the adverse impact of the pandemic.

In his tweets, Khan said his government has successfully transferred Rs 120 billion in



in view of the coronavirus lockdown.

"Pakistan is better known for making cash transfers to bank accounts outside the country rather than giving to its own people. Clearly, Imran Khan needs a new set of advisers and better information," MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said dur-

nine weeks to over 10 million families in a "transparent manner" to deal with the fall-out of COVID-19 on the poor.

"I am ready to offer help and share our successful cash transfer programme, lauded internationally for its reach and transparency, with India," the Pakistan prime minister added. PTI

## "Not The India Of 1962": Union Minister Attacks Congress On China



**NEW DELHI:** It is no longer the India of 1962 and the country is led by a "courageous" leader like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, not by the Congress, the BJP said on Wednesday, seeking to fend off the attack by the opposition party on the government's handling of the Sino-India border standoff.

BJP leader and Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad also hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for raising questions about the border situation, saying he should have at least this much understanding as to not raise queries on Twitter about strategic issues involving China.

Speaking at a "virtual rally" for Himachal Pradesh, Mr Prasad said when India works to become self-reliant, it will also do so in matters of security and referred to surgical and air strikes targeting terrorists inside Pakistan during the first term of the Modi government.

"We (India) want disputes

to be resolved peacefully. We will say one thing very humbly that today India is the India of 2020 and not 1962. Today's India is of a courageous leader like Narendra Modi and not of Congress leaders. This must be understood," he said, without making any direct comment on the standoff.

Taking potshots at Rahul Gandhi, the BJP leader said that how much the Congress leader understands the country's economic policy or strategic affairs is a matter of debate.

Mr Prasad asked if it is proper for him to raise such questions openly about crucial matters related to external affairs, and said the Congress leader had also sought "evidence" following Indian surgical and air strikes inside Pakistan.

Targeting the Congress, he said when the matter involving China is discussed, then the party's handling of the country, a reference to 1962, will also be debated.



## COVID-19 Tests May Yield False Negative If Used Too Early On Infected People: Study

**T**esting people for COVID-19 too early in the course of infection may result in a false negative diagnosis, even though they may eventually test positive for the virus, according to a study which says it is best performed three days after the symptoms appear.

The review research, published in the journal Annals of Internal Medicine, assessed data on RT-PCR tests -- which detect viral genetic material in samples -- from seven prior studies.

In the analysis, the researchers from Johns Hopkins University in the US analysed a total of 1,330 respiratory swab samples from a variety of subjects including hospitalised patients.

"A negative test, whether or not a person has symptoms, doesn't guarantee that they aren't infected by the virus," said Lauren Kucirka, a co-author of the study from Johns Hopkins University.

"How we respond to, and interpret, a negative test is very important because we place others at risk when we assume the test is perfect. However, those infected with the virus are still able to potentially spread the virus," Kucirka explained.

According to the scientists, patients who have a high-risk exposure should be treated as if they are infected, par-

ticularly if they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

They believe that patients must be informed about the tests' shortcomings.

Explaining how RT-PCR tests may yield a false negative results, the scientists said, when a swab misses collecting cells infected with the virus, or if virus levels are very low early during the infection, some tests can produce negative results.

However, they said the tests return relatively rapid results, due to which they have been widely used among high-risk populations such as nursing home residents, hospitalised patients, and health care workers.

Based on previous studies, the scientists cautioned that there could be false negatives in these populations.

In the current research, using RT-PCR test results, along with reported time of exposure to the virus or time of onset of measurable symptoms such as fever and breathing problems, the researchers calculated the probability that someone infected with SARS-CoV-2 would have a negative test result at the time of infection.

In the assessed studies, they said health care providers also collected nasal and throat samples from patients and noted the time of virus exposure or symptom-onset and sample collection.

From this data, the researchers estimated that those tested with SARS-CoV-2 in the four days after infection were 67 per cent more likely to test negative, even if they had the virus.

When the average patient began displaying symptoms of the virus, the false-negative rate was 38 per cent, the study noted.

According to the researchers, the test performed best eight days after infection, which on average is three days after symptom onset.

But even then, they said the test had a false negative rate of 20 per cent, meaning one in five people who had the virus had a negative test result.

"We are using these tests to rule out COVID-19, and basing decisions about what steps we take to prevent onward transmission, such as selection of personal protective equipment for health care workers," says Kucirka.

"As we develop strategies to reopen services, businesses and other venues that rely on testing and contact tracing, it is important to understand the limitations of these tests," she added.

The sooner people can be accurately tested and isolated from others, the better we can control the spread of the virus, the scientists said.

## Petrol, Diesel Prices Hiked By 60 Paise; 5Th Straight Daily Increase



**NEW DELHI:** Petrol and diesel prices on Thursday were hiked by 60 paise per litre each - the fifth straight daily increase in rates since oil PSUs ended an 82-day hiatus in rate revision.

Petrol price in Delhi was hiked to Rs 74 per litre from Rs 73.40 while

diesel rates were increased to Rs 72.22 a litre from Rs 71.62, according to a price notification of state oil marketing companies.

Rates have been increased across the country and vary from state to state depending on the incidence of local sales tax or VAT.

This is the fifth daily increase in rates in a row since oil companies on Sunday restarted revising prices in line with costs, after ending an 82-day hiatus. In five hikes, petrol price has gone up by Rs 2.74 per litre and diesel by Rs 2.83. PTI

## Nepal Will Get Back Land From India Through Dialogue: PM Oli

**KATHMANDU:** Nepal's Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has said that his government will seek a solution to the Kalapani issue through diplomatic efforts and dialogue on the basis of historical facts and documents.

"We will get back the land occupied by India through holding a dialogue," Oli said while responding to questions in Parliament on Wednesday.

He claimed that India built a Kali temple, created "an artificial Kali river" and "encroached the Nepalese territory through deploying the Army" at Kalapani. The river defines the border between the two countries.

through Nepalese territory. India rejected the claim asserting that the road lies completely within its territory.

Nepalese officials say that Nepal had control over the area before 1962 when the India-China war took place. At that time India stationed its army seeking permission from then Nepalese rulers for a temporary purpose, but it never removed its forces, they claim.

Although there are border issues in other areas such as Susta but the government has given priority to Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura as Nepali territories have not been captured by deploying army in other



Oli's claim comes in midst of a raging boundary row between the two countries with India sternly asking Nepal not to resort to any "artificial enlargement" of territorial claims after Kathmandu released a new political map laying claim over Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura.

The ties between India and Nepal came under strain after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated an 80-km-long strategically crucial road connecting the Lipulekh pass with Dharchula in Uttarakhand on May 8.

Nepal reacted sharply to the inauguration of the road claiming that it passed

parts of its international border, Oli said in response to a question in Parliament.

Earlier this week, the Nepalese Parliament unanimously endorsed a proposal to consider a constitution amendment bill to pave way for putting the new political map that includes Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura in Nepal's national emblem.

A discussion on the issue started in the Parliament since Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Shivamaya Tumbahangte tabled a bill for the second amendment to the Nepalese Constitution to incorporate the new political map of Nepal on May 31.

## NIRF Rankings 2020: IIT Madras Ranked Best Institution In Country; 7 IITs In Top 10

**NEW DELHI:** IIT Madras, IISc Bangalore and IIT Delhi bagged the top three positions among educational institutions in the country in the HRD Ministry's National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) announced on Thursday.

The top 10 higher education institutions in the country included seven Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

As per the annual rankings, the top three universities are IISc Bangalore, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Banaras Hindu University.

IIM Ahmedabad has been ranked as the top B-School in the country, followed by IIM Bangalore and Calcutta.

Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank" announced that Miranda College bagged the top rank among colleges, followed by Lady Sri Ram College for Women, Hindu College and St Stephen's College.

As per the rankings, the top three engineering colleges in the country are IIT

Madras, IIT Delhi and IIT Bombay.

In the pharmacy category, the top institute is Jamia Hamdard in Delhi, followed by Panjab University, Chandigarh. The National Institute of Pharmaceutical Research, Mohali, stood third.

In the medical colleges category, AIIMS Delhi bagged the top spot, followed by PGI, Chandigarh, and CMC, Vellore.

The annual rankings are usually announced in April but had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"These rankings act as a guide to students for selection of universities based on a set criteria and helps universities to improve their performance on various ranking parameters and identify gaps in research and areas of improvement. This exercise has also created a habit of organising data by the institutions and most of all these institutions attempt themselves to become more competitive," Mr Nishank said.

### NEWS MAKER

## Wedding Night Turns Tragic As Tamil Nadu Groom Kills Bride, Hangs Self

Chennai: What was supposed to have been a blissful first night for a newlywed couple finally turned out to be tragic.

The newly married husband on his first night killed his wife and later committed suicide by hanging himself from a tree in Tiruvallur district.

According to police, Neethivasan and Sandhya—both related to each other—got married on Wednesday morning.

During the night, the couple's relatives heard Sandhya screaming and on entering the room they saw the girl lying in a pool of blood.

She was attacked by a crowbar on the head.

Neethivasan had run away from the house. Later he was found hanging from a tree nearby.

The police are probing the reason for the murder and suicide. IANS



## Man Killed In Delhi After Argument Over Spitting, One Held

**NEW DELHI:** A 26-year-old man was killed in Delhi after a fight with another person following an argument over spitting in public, police said on Thursday.

The deceased has been identified as Ankit, a resident of Bhai Veer Singh Marg, Karnataka Sangeet Sabha. He used to work as a driver, they said.

On Tuesday, Ankit objected to spitting by one Praveen in Mandir Marg area and an argument broke out between them over the issue, according to police.

Later on Wednesday, they fought at Shaheed Bhagat Singh Complex in central Delhi. Police received infor-

mation about the incident at 8.30 pm, a senior officer said.

"It was found that Ankit and 29-year-old network engineer Praveen, a resident of Raja Bazar, fought over the issue of spitting. During the fight, they both got injured and were rushed to RML Hospital," Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Eish Singhal said.

While Praveen sustained injuries on his left arm and lower and upper back, Ankit received injuries on his left arm and chest. Later, Ankit died due to excessive bleeding, the DCP said.

A case of murder has been registered and Praveen arrested, Singhal said. PTI

