



Maximum : 29°C
Minum : 15°C
Humidity : 42%

SUNSET
Today 07:45 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 05:19 AM

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.....PANORAMA

P5

Found Hanging: Secret Sorrows and MENTAL RESILIENCE IN KASHMIR

WHEN a girl with cold-pale face and bruised neck was rushed to Srinagar's SMHS hospital on May 20, 2020, it looked like any other trauma case before some relative cleared the air: "The 15-year-old from Srinagar's Bemina area was found hanging in her room." Six days later, as the question—what drove her to such an extreme path—was still a matter of investigation, some masked villagers in Apple Town Sopore started assembling in a neighbourhood after learning about a young man's shocking demise.....

News Digest

Sagar's Detention Under PSA Quashed

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has quashed the Public Safety Act against National Conference General Secretary Ali Mohammad Sagar who was detained after the abrogation of Article 370 provisions, his lawyer Shariq Reyaz and party leader Omar Abdullah said on Tuesday. "The J&K High Court has quashed the detention of my senior colleague @JKNC_General Secretary Ali Mohd Sagar. Thankfully, he challenged his detention" ● P-02

India, Pak Troops Trade Fire Along LoC

Srinagar: India and Pakistan troops Tuesday traded heavy gunfire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Tangdhar sector of north Kashmir's Kupwara district. In the wee hours Tuesday, Pakistani troops resorted to unprovoked ceasefire violation in Tangdhar Sector and targeted forward posts of Indian Army with mortars and other weapons, Defence spokesperson, Colonel Rajesh Kalia said. ● P-02

5.8 Magnitude Earthquake Jolts J&K

Jammu- An earthquake of magnitude 5.8 hit Jammu and Kashmir in the early hours of Tuesday, officials said, the third to hit J&K in three days. However, there were no reports of any damage, they said. The earthquake occurred at 7 AM and its epicenter was in Tajikistan, according to the officials. Strong tremors were felt in most parts of the Kashmir Valley, including Srinagar, Kishtwar and Doda districts. ● P-02

Leopard Mauls Minor In Kulgam

Srinagar: In a tragic incident of man-animal conflict, a minor was mauled to death by a leopard in Damhal Hanjipora area of south Kashmir's Kulgam district, reports said Tuesday. A leopard appeared in Gujrabasti Korial village of Damhal Hanjipora Monday night and pounced upon two-year-old Muhammad Sharief Dragad, reports said. On finding the boy missing, the family and authorities of Wildlife department searched for him and on Tuesday morning found the partly-eaten body of the ● P-02

Ladakh Records 94 New Covid-19 Cases

Leh: As many as 94 people tested positive for COVID-19 in Ladakh on Tuesday, taking the total number of virus cases in the union territory to 649, health department officials said. While 50 new coronavirus cases were reported from Kargil district, 44 samples returned positive for COVID-19 in Leh district, the officials said. Three patients recovered and were discharged from hospital in Kargil this morning, taking the total number of recoveries in the union territory to 85, they said. Ladakh had reported ● P-02

20 Indian Soldiers Killed In Clash With Chinese Troops In Ladakh



File Pic

Observer Monitoring Desk

NEW DELHI: In a massive escalation of border tension, at least twenty Indian soldiers, including the commanding officer of an infantry battalion, were killed during a violent confrontation with Chinese troops in Ladakh on Monday night. Indian Army has confirmed the number of casualties.

The incident took place following weeks of rising tensions and the deployment of thousands of extra troops from both sides.

At least 20 Indian soldiers were killed during a violent clash with Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on Monday night. The casualty number could further rise, according to news agency ANI.

The 20 dead soldiers included an Indian Army officer identified as Colonel Santosh Babu, Commanding Officer of the 16 Bihar regiment, officials said.

It is believed to be first such incident along the contested ● PAGE 02

Govt, Military Brass Go In Huddle, DM Briefs PM

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held two-back-to-back meetings with top military brass on Tuesday deliberating on the situation in eastern Ladakh after an Indian Army officer and two soldiers were killed in a violent clash with Chinese troops in Galwan Valley.

Singh also briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the killing of the three Indian Army personnel during Monday night's clash as well as on the overall situation in the region, government sources said.

The colonel and the two soldiers were killed in the violent face-off with Chinese troops in Galwan Valley where the

two sides have been on a bitter standoff for over five weeks.

The Indian Army said there have been casualties on the Chinese side as well.

The killing of the Indian Army personnel is the first such incident involving fatalities after a gap of 45 years. Four Indian soldiers were killed in an ambush at Tulung La in Arunachal Pradesh along the de-facto border between the two countries in 1975.

The first meeting Singh held was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat and the three service chiefs, and it carried out a comprehensive review of the ground situation in eastern Ladakh as well as deliberated on India's preparedness to deal with any ● PAGE 02

China Trying To Unilaterally Change Status Quo: MEA

India on Tuesday said the violent face-off between the armies of India and China in eastern Ladakh was the result of an attempt by the Chinese side to unilaterally change the status quo in the region. The Ministry of External Affairs said both sides suffered casualties that could have been avoided had the agreement arrived at earlier at the higher level been scrupulously followed by the Chinese side. "Given its responsible approach to border management, India is very clear that all its activities are always within the Indian side of the LAC. We expect the same of the Chinese side," MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said. An Indian Army colonel and two soldiers were killed during a violent clash with Chinese troops in eastern ● P-02

Beijing Lodges Protest With India

China on Tuesday lodged a protest with India over the June 15 violent face-off between the troops of two countries, which it claimed took place when the Indian personnel crossed the border line for "illegal activities and provoked and attacked Chinese personnel" leading to serious physical conflict. The protest was "mentioned" during a meeting with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui, Indian Ambassador here Vikram Misri said. "There was a meeting at the (Chinese) foreign ministry during which what happened at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on Monday was discussed, Misri said. When asked if China has lodged the protest, Misri told PTI "yes, it was mentioned in the meeting," but clarified ● P-02

Oppn Parties Train Guns At Modi Govt

Opposition parties on Tuesday questioned the "silence" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on the violent clash between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh and asked them to take the nation into confidence on the matter, while the ruling BJP asserted that India's borders will remain intact under Modi's leadership. At least 20 Indian soldiers were killed during a violent clash with Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley on Monday night, in the first such incident involving fatalities after a gap of 45 years and signalling a massive escalation in the five-week border standoff in the sensitive region. The Congress termed the death of the Indian Army officer and soldiers in the LAC face-off with China as " ● P-02

UN Chief Concerned Over Child Casualties In J&K

Press Trust Of India

UNITED NATIONS- UN chief Antonio Guterres has expressed concern over child casualties in Jammu and Kashmir and urged the government to take preventive measures to protect the children.

The Secretary-General's report on 'Children and Armed Conflict' said that the UN had verified over 25,000 grave violations against children globally from January to December 2019, stressing that the tragedy children face continued unabated throughout the year. On India, the report said

that the United Nations "verified" the killing of eight children and maiming of seven (13 boys, 2 girls), between the ages of 1 and 17, "by or during joint operations of the Central Reserve Police Force, the Indian Army (Rashtriya Rifles) and the Special Operations Group of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, unidentified armed elements, or during shelling across the Line of Control."

The UN also verified attacks on nine schools in Jammu and Kashmir by "unidentified elements", the report said.

"I remain concerned ● PAGE 02

PCI Seeks J&K Govt's Reply On New Media Policy

Says It Affects Functioning Of Free Press

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Press Council of India (PCI) on Tuesday sought a reply from the Jammu and Kashmir government over its new media policy, observing that provisions in it affect the free functioning of the press.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration had earlier this month approved the 'Media Policy-2020' for creating a sustained narrative on the functioning of

the government in the media.

Taking note of provisions regarding "fake news" mentioned in the policy, whereby the Jammu and Kashmir government authorises officers to decide on the content of print, electronic and other forms of media for "fake news" and proceed against journalists and media organisations, the PCI has moved suo motu as the matter affects the free functioning of the press. Comments on the matter have

also been called from the Jammu and Kashmir chief secretary and Secretary, Department of Information and Public Relations, a PCI statement said.

The policy attempts to thwart misinformation, fake news and tries to develop a mechanism that will raise alarm against any attempt to use the media to vitiate public peace, sovereignty and integrity of the country, an official spokesperson of the UT's administration had said earlier.

78 More Test Covid-19 Positive In J&K

SRINAGAR: 78 more people tested positive for COVID-19 in Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, taking the number of cases in J&K to 5,298, officials said.

"78 new COVID-19 cases were detected in J&K. While 62 are from Kashmir, 16 of them are from Jammu," the officials said.

The cases detected on Tuesday included 23 persons who had returned to Jammu and Kashmir recently.

Budgam district, in central Kashmir, had the highest number of cases at 14, followed by Srinagar and Anantnag districts at 10 cases each, the officials said.

They said five districts Jammu, Ramban, Doda, Reasi and Kishtwar had no fresh cases. The officials said that 177 more patients ● PAGE 02

Srinagar Mayor Defeated In A Dramatic Coup D'état

Junaid Azim Mattu Is Not The Srinagar Mayor Anymore. What's The Backstory Of His Rise And Fall?

Gowhar Geelani

SRINAGAR: The latest debacle in Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) where a 'No Confidence Motion' was 'successfully' passed against the incumbent Mayor Mattu of the J&K People's Conference (JKPC). Mattu himself believes that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the J&K National Conference (JKNC) jointly engineered his downfall, a charge denied by both the parties.

But it is reliably learnt that the dramatic removal of Srinagar Mayor from the office on June 16 was made possible with active support of the BJP. And what has added to the drama is the fact that JKNC on Tuesday expelled four SMC Corporators from basic membership of the party, "fol-



File Pic

lowing their refusal to comply with the party instructions and subsequently voting in the No Confidence Motion against SMC Mayor."

According to JKNC's spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar said in a statement that the party had "asked its Corporators to abstain from participating in No Confidence Motion and not be a part of any BJP-sponsored political move. In spite of the clear directions, four out of our 11 Corporators de-

cided to be a part of the BJP-initiated No Confidence Motion against SMC Mayor. Hence taking note of their incomplicity, the party leadership expelled them from the basic membership of party." Those expelled included G N Sofi, Danish Bhat, Neelofar and Majid Shulloo. Although the JKNC had boycotted the urban body polls these four Corporators along with seven others had joined the party in May 2019.

This action by the JKNC has cemented the existing perception in the Kashmir Valley that the BJP and NC jointly engineered the coup.

MAYOR CONCEDES DEFEAT

In a series of tweets, Junaid Azim Mattu described his ouster as Srinagar Mayor after a second floor test in less than six months ● PAGE 02

'I Lived Death At The Door of Hell': Kashmir's Chilling COVID Chronicles

Jyotsna Bharti

Throughout his stay in a woeful ward, a young father from Baramulla craved to touch his toddler's warm fingers with his trembling hands. On his possible deathbed, he wanted to see his home, "one last time", before the virus could choke him to death and sent his boxed body for a hush-hush burial.

Ever since he "came out alive" from the hospital ward where he saw his fellow COVID patient dying a lonely and miserable death, Shabir Khan (not his real name) has taken to secluded gardening. His family members say their 35-year-old headman has grown quiet and thoughtful after having a near-



KO-File Pic: Abid Bhat

death viral encounter.

Today, Khan restlessly talks about his state of numbness and hopelessness in the hospital ward.

"That feeling somewhat explains the uncertainty of life and death when this coronavirus infects you," Khan says in a low voice.

Since March this year, when the first COVID-19 positive case was detected in Kashmir, the virus has unleashed new horrors in the society: Some it killed, some it spared, many it scared.

While administration is still trying to figure out ways and means to address this novel situation, and medical professionals try to figure out how to stop it, it has already killed more than 60 persons in Jammu and Kashmir.

Despite a decent recovery rate, it equally has an alarming death rate.

"It seems like COVID is the only killer, as our hospitals have no place for cancer and other fatal diseases," Khan says. "God forbid, if anyone catches an infection or a disease, it is only your good ● PAGE 02

From Front page...

20 Indian Soldiers Killed...

border with China that Indian armed forces personnel have been killed after a gap of nearly 45 years. Four Indian soldiers had lost their lives in an ambush at Tulung La in Arunachal Pradesh in 1975.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the situation in eastern Ladakh after he held a high-level meeting with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat and the three service chiefs.

The violent face-off between Indian and Chinese military forces took place along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh region amid heightened tensions over the border dispute between the two countries. The Army said there were casualties on the Chinese side as well but the extent of it was not immediately clear. However New Delhi based TV channels reported that Chinese suffered 45 casualties during the clash. Official sources said there was no firing between the two sides. "During the de-escalation process underway in the Galwan Valley, a violent face-off took place on Monday night with casualties. Hindustan Times reported that rival soldiers exchanged blows, threw stones at each other and Chinese troops even attacked Indian soldiers with rods and nail-studded clubs during the brawl that went on for over six hours. However, this wasn't the first time the two armies engaged in fisticuffs or used stones and rods to attack each other in the area. Brawls and face-offs flare on a fairly regular basis between the two nuclear-armed neighbours over their 3,500-kilometre (2,200-mile) frontier, which has never been properly demarcated, but no one has been killed in decades. Beijing on Tuesday confirmed the incident and accused India of crossing the border and "attacking Chinese personnel".

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said Indian troops "crossed the border line twice... provoking and attacking Chinese personnel, resulting in serious physical confrontation between border forces on the two sides."

A large number of Indian and Chinese troops were engaged in an eyeball-to-eyeball situation in Galwan Valley and certain other areas of eastern Ladakh for the last five weeks. The incident comes days after Indian Army Chief Gen MM Naravane said both sides have begun disengaging from the Galwan Valley. The Indian and Chinese armies are engaged in a standoff in Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldie in eastern Ladakh. A sizeable number of Chinese Army personnel even transgressed into the Indian side of the de-facto border in several areas including Pangong Tso.

The Indian Army has been fiercely objecting to the transgressions, and demanded their immediate withdrawal for restoration of peace and tranquillity in the area. Both sides held a series of talks in the last few days to resolve the row.

Govt, Military Brass Go...

eventualities, the sources said.

It is learnt that the government decided to further ramp up India's military strength in areas like Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldie in eastern Ladakh. After the nearly one-hour meeting, Singh gave a briefing to Prime Minister Modi on the overall situation, they said . In the late afternoon, the defence minister held another meeting with Jaishankar, Army Chief Gen MM Naravane and Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat. The sources said Gen Naravane presented a detailed report to the defence minister covering various finer details of Monday night's clash in Galwan which continued for several hours. The Indian and Chinese armies are engaged in the standoff in Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldie in eastern Ladakh. A sizeable number of Chinese Army personnel even transgressed into the Indian side of the de-facto border in several areas including Pangong Tso. The Indian Army has been fiercely objecting to the transgressions, and demanded their immediate withdrawal for restoration of peace and tranquillity in the area. Both sides held a series of talks in the last few days to resolve the row. In their first serious efforts to end the row, Lt General Harinder Singh, the general officer commanding of the Leh-based 14 Corps, and Commander of the Tibet Military District Maj Gen Liu Lin held a nearly seven-hour meeting on June 6. The meeting was followed by two rounds of Major General-level talks. The Indian side has been pitching for restoration of status quo ante and immediate withdrawal of thousands of Chinese troops from the areas which India considers on its side of the LAC.

China Trying To Unilaterally

Ladakh's Galwan Valley on Monday night, the first such incident involving fatalities after a gap of 45 years.

"We remain firmly convinced of the need for the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas and the resolution of differences through dialogue," Srivastava said.

"At the same time, we are also strongly committed to ensuring India's sovereignty and territorial integrity," he added.

Beijing Lodges Protest ...

that he was not summoned.

"Summon is a wrong word, Misri said when asked whether he was summoned by the Chinese foreign ministry.

Asked whether there was any discussion or mention by the Chinese about the casualties on their side, he said our discussion was more about what had happened yesterday but we didn't get into any details about casualties," and added that the situation was still evolving.

Luo was the former Chinese Ambassador to India.

China has alleged that the Indian troops twice crossed the border line on June 15 for "illegal activities and provoked and attacked Chinese personnel" which led to serious physical conflict between the two sides, hours after the Indian Army said the violent face-off took place between the troops during the "de-escalation process" in the Galwan Valley. "I am not aware of the information you provided," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said in Beijing when asked about the reports of the Indian casualties at the contested borders. "Our border troops had a high-level meeting and reached important consensus on easing the border situation but astonishingly on June 15 the Indian troops seriously violated our consensus and twice crossed the border line for illegal activities and provoked and attacked Chinese personnel which led to serious physical conflict between the two sides and China has lodged strong protest and representation with the Indian side," Zhao said.

Oppn Parties Train Guns ...

deeply shocking, horrifying and unacceptable" and demanded answers from Prime Minister Modi on how this happened.

The party also demanded that the government take the nation into confidence and convene a meeting to brief the leadership of political parties about the ground situation.

Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said reports of brazen Chinese transgressions at three points in Ladakh into Indian territory since April or May have caused grave concerns as the Modi government remained a "mute spectator".

"To the distress and dismay of the entire nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh remain absolutely "mum"," Surjewala said. He said the prime minister and the defence minister must come forward and answer whether it is true that Chinese have killed an officer and soldiers of the Indian Army in the Galwan Valley and whether Indian soldiers have also been critically injured. "If so, why are PM Modi and Defence Minister maintaining absolute silence?" he asked. The Congress remains firm that the entire country stands as one to protect India's security and its territorial integrity at all costs, Surjewala said.

"Let Modi government remember that in our Parliamentary democracy, "secrecy or silence" are unacceptable on part of our government," he said. Punjab Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Amarinder Singh said it is time now for the Centre to take

some stringent measures as each sign of weakness makes China's reaction more "belligerent". Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said words cannot describe the pain he feels for the officers and men who sacrificed their lives for the country. "My condolences to all their loved ones. We stand with you in this difficult time," he tweeted.

Reacting to the border clash, BJP president Jagat Prakash Nadda asserted that the borders of India will remain intact under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

Addressing the "Kerala Jan-Samvad" virtual rally, he referred to the India-China face-off and said during the de-escalation process a violent clash took place with the Chinese army on Monday night.

"Indian Army gave a befitting reply, but unfortunately, we have lost our three army men. I pay homage to them for their sacrifice and I can assure you that under the leadership of PM Modi, India's territorial integrity will not be compromised," he said.

"We now have the political will and our Army is fully equipped to take (on) any adversary," he said. Earlier senior BJP leader B L Santhosh said Indian forces were resolute in forcing Chinese troops to "retreat" in a violent face-off in Ladakh, claiming that the loss on the adversary's side could be "still more huge". "Our forces were resolute in forcing Chinese troops to retreat. In the process yesterday we have lost 3 brave Deshbhakt soldiers. "Veer Sadgati" to the departed souls. The picture on the Chinese side is yet to emerge. It is still more huge," the BJP general secretary (organisation) tweeted.

In a guarded reaction to the border face-off, Left parties said India and China should initiate talks to defuse tensions between the two countries in eastern Ladakh. The CPI(M) called on the government to come out with an "authoritative statement" to explain what happened in eastern Ladakh's Galwan Valley, and said that high-level talks should be initiated between the two nations to defuse the situation. The CPI, in a separate statement, said that it is believed that the present standoff can be resolved through talks and established frame-works agreed by both the countries. "Any military confrontation between the two major Asian countries not only impacts the cooperation and friendship between the two countries but also can jeopardise the peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region," it said.

Former prime minister H D Deve Gowda termed as "disturbing" the violent clash between Indian and Chinese troops and said the government should offer a clearer picture to the nation on the border issue. The Janata Dal (Secular) leader sought to know as to how Indian soldiers lost their lives during a de-escalation process and said Prime Minister Modi and Defence Minister Singh should come out with a clearer picture.

Army Kills 3 Militants...

and Muneeb-ul-Haq of Sugan Zainapora Shopian.

Kamran Manhas had announced joining the Hizb ranks in January 2019 and a picture showing him holding an AK-47 rifle went viral on social media then. Reacting to it then, Zaffar Manhas said he was in "absolute disbelief" and that he and his family could never imagine such a thing even in dreams. Since then Zaffar Manhas left PDP and joined Jammu and Kashmir Apni party. Kamran was the first youth from the Sharaab village to join militancy in more than twenty years. It could not be ascertained immediately if any other youth has joined the militant ranks since then, news agency GNS reported.

78 More Test Covid-19 ...

recovered and were discharged from different hospitals.

The number of confirmed cases has now reached 5,298, out of which 4,091 are in Kashmir, while 1,207 are in Jammu, the officials said. There are 2,454 active cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in J&K – 1,760 in Kashmir and 694 in Jammu – and 2,781 (2,275 from Kashmir and 506 from Jammu) patients have recovered, according to officials. The J&K has witnessed 63 COVID-19 (56 from Kashmir, 7 from Jammu) deaths so far.

UN Chief Concerned...

by child casualties in Jammu and Kashmir and call upon the Government to take preventive measures to protect children, including by ending the use of pellets against children.

"I am concerned by the detention of children, including their arrest during night raids, internment at army camps, torture in detention and detention without charge or due process, and urge the Government to immediately end this practice. I note that the Government conducted age verification for some detainees and urge for its systematisation," he said. However, children's access to education and health services continues to be of concern owing to this insurgency, in particular in Chhat-tisgarh and Jharkhand, he said.

"I am concerned by attacks on schools, yet I am encouraged that the Government has commenced legal proceedings against the perpetrators," he said. Gutierrez reiterated his encouragement to the Indian government to put in place national preventive and accountability measures for all grave violations, as soon as possible. India has expressed disappointment over the UN chief's previous report on 'Children and Armed Conflict' in 2019, saying such an attempt to "expand mandate in a selective manner" to certain situations only politicises the agenda. "In spite of the clear mandate by the Council, we are disappointed that the Report of the Secretary-General includes situations which are not armed conflicts or of threat to maintenance of international peace and security," a senior Indian diplomat at the UN said in August last year. Launching the new report on Monday, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba said that boys and girls used and abused in armed conflict in the world have had their childhoods replaced by "pain, brutality and fear while the world watches."

The report said that the most shocking increase of more than 400 per cent is seen in the denial of humanitarian access to children, with 4,400 verified incidents. The report highlights violence against humanitarian workers and impediments to their work, the looting of supplies and restrictions of movement, among the many disruptions in the provision of basic assistance to children.

Yemen, Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), Israel and the State of Palestine and Syria are the most concerning situations, it said.

Overall, millions of children were deprived of education and health care as a direct result of attacks, misuses, or because of school closures and/or due to military use, the report said.

Boys and girls also continued to endure sexual violence with 735 cases verified, however, the violation is vastly underreported, it said. The largest verified numbers correspond to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia and the Central African Republic. Factors such as impunity for perpetrators and lack of access to justice, fear of stigma, and lack of services for survivors, are largely the cause of under-reporting, it said.

Human rights groups strongly criticised Gutierrez for removing the Saudi-led coalition, which was responsible for 222 child casualties and 4 attacks on schools and hospitals in Yemen in 2019, from his list of parties responsible for grave violations against children.

He also "ignored violations by other powerful countries", including Russia, the US, and Israel, by omitting them from his list, Human Rights Watch said in a statement.

"The Secretary-general has brought shame on the UN by removing the Saudi-led coalition from his 'list of shame' even as it continues to kill and injure children in Yemen," said Jo Becker, children's rights advocacy director at Human Rights Watch. "He has repeatedly and inexcusably left powerful countries off his list despite overwhelming UN evidence of grave violations against children," Becker said.

Srinagar Mayor Defeated ...

time as "the BJP-engineered, orchestrated and backed" in which he alleged that the J&K National Conference (JKNC) played a "facilitatory role." Junaid Mattu announced his defeat on Twitter, saying that "The vote of 'No Confidence Motion' against me, and

the @JKPC_ has been passed in the SMC with 42 votes out of 70. The @BJP4India, @JKNC_ and some independents have polled against the @JKPC_ and @INCIndia abstaining whip where 28 Corporators abstained."

Minutes after he was shown the exit door, Mattu edited his profile on Twitter from "Mayor of Srinagar and Minister of State" to "Former Mayor Of Srinagar". While respecting the verdict of the Corporation Mattu alleged that the JKNC and the BJP have come together to ensure his downfall. "I respect the verdict of the Corporation. The seemingly unthinkable seems to have happened as @JKNC_ and @BJP4India have come together in Srinagar. But more on that later. Time to spend some time with my family after nearly four months of our war against #COVID19." 'BJP's Blue-eyed Boy'

On its part, the JKNC refused to buy Mattu's argument. The party, in turn, is of the view that Mattu was himself a "proxy Mayor of the BJP" and now he stands "backstabbed" by the same party he had pinned his hopes on. Former cabinet minister, three-time legislator and chief spokesperson, JKNC, Ruhullah Mehdi alleged that Junaid Mattu had backstabbed his former party (JKNC) to side with the BJP at a critical juncture. "Mr. Mattu is the same person who resigned from the National Conference to join the People's Conference with the BJP's 'ashirvad' (blessings). He is the BJP's 'blue-eyed boy' and, even before the SMC elections in 2018, J&K's then Governor Satya Pal Malik had made it public that there will be a US-educated Mayor in Srinagar," Mehdi told this writer.

Mattu's mayoral victory had come against the backdrop of a contentious statement made by then Governor Satya Pal Malik, who had remarked during the SMC elections that the Srinagar city's next mayor would be "a foreign-educated young person". At the time it was public knowledge that the governor was referring to Mattu as the new Mayor of Srinagar.

The 35-year-old Junaid Azim Mattu who studied at Bishop Cotton School, Shimla, graduated from Michigan State University in 2009. The US-educated Mattu contested as an independent after formally resigning from the JKNC and got elected as Mayor of Srinagar city in 2018. He enjoyed the backing of the BJP and Sajad Lone-led People's Conference, a party which he joined almost immediately after leaving the JKNC. He had won 40 votes to beat Ghulam Rasool Hajam, the Congress candidate for Mayor's post who won 26 votes.

Ruhullah Mehdi further said that his party had nothing to do with the SMC elections or the no-confidence motion moved against Mattu. "In fact, it is Mr. Mattu who backstabbed us (JKNC) when we took a stand against revocation of Articles 370 and 35(A). His proximity with Mr. Ram Madhav, BJP's General Secretary, is no secret. Instead of crying foul, Mr. Mattu is well advised to curse the BJP which had earlier rewarded him and now shown him his place by kicking him out," he said, adding, "Mr. Mattu's rants are demonstrating his frustration. He is notorious for shifting loyalties. He joined the PC against the wishes of the people and is now talking about morality in politics." Mattu started his political inings by joining the JKPC led by Sajad Lone and later joined Omar Abdullah-led JKNC only to return to the JKPC-fold.

'BASELESS ALLEGATIONS'

Mattu also said that the 'No Confidence Motion' against him was "elaborately engineered by the BJP's State General Secretary and other office bearers", a charge denied by the BJP leader.

Rejecting Mr. Mattu's allegations, the BJP's general secretary Ashok Kaul said that a party with mere four seats in SMC cannot be in a position to bring about the Mayor's downfall. Kaul argued that Mattu "has failed to keep the flock of independent candidates at SMC together. We reject his baseless allegations. We have no role whatsoever in his downfall." However, the strong perception in the Kashmir Valley is that the BJP has engineered the coup de etat, won over the many independent candidates and is planning to soon elevate the former Deputy Mayor SMC, Sheikh Imran, to the status of new Mayor for Srinagar. 'Mujahid' Imran versus 'Anarkali' Mayor The story of businessman-turned-politician Sheikh Imran is an interesting one. In April 1919, Imran had urged all Kashmiris to include prefix 'Mujahid' (holy warrior) to their social media profiles and would routinely record some anger-filled videos with a sense of heroism.

In June last year, the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) registered a case against Srinagar's then Deputy Mayor Imran and officials of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank for allegedly misappropriating crores of rupees from the public exchequer. There are serious allegations against Imran, one of these that he allegedly owes J&K Bank over 100 crore rupee and is listed as an NPA (Non Performing Asset). He is also purported director of the Kehwa Group of Companies. His Kehwa Group had submitted a proposal to the J&K Bank to set up a storage facility under the name of Kehwa Square Pvt Ltd in south Kashmir's Pulwama district. The ACB spokesperson at the time had alleged that its team, which visited the site in Pulwama, said "the cost of the project pegged at Rs 33 crore was inflated". Furthermore, the ACB investigation had revealed that the Kehwa Group owned six more firms and that Sheikh Imran had allegedly raised loans and overdrafts for these units. "The liabilities on account of loan accumulated to Rs 138 crore," a spokesperson for the bureau had said. "Since, one of the companies Kehwa Square had turned non-performing asset, Imran sought one-time settlement with J&K Bank authorities." Imran, who describes himself as "former political captive" on Twitter, was briefly put under detention last year soon after J&K lost its semi-autonomous status and statehood. After engaging in verbal gymnastics with the JKPC he had joined hands with its leader Sajad Lone and Junaid Mattu. But in one of his recent statements he alleged that he was being followed by a white Santro vehicle which he said belonged to a close aide of 'Anarkali Mayor', a reference to Mattu. "A grey Santro car was following me, JK01S 6483, in which drugged brother of #tumulchor (rice thief) Corporator and close air (aide) of Anarkali mayor was driving along with 3 gonads (gundas) with an intention to hurt me. I have lodged the complaint with the Burzulla police station." Inside sources in SMC revealed that Sheikh Imran enjoys the full backing of the BJP and the saffron party has taken over 40 independent candidates on board not only to topple Mattu but also with the aim to move a resolution on Article 370 in the Corporation and get it approved by the independent candidates under Imran's leadership. Mattu was 'elected' Srinagar Mayor in the 2018 urban local body elections which were boycotted by two important regional parties, JKNC and JKPD. He faced a floor test on June 16 in a special session of the General Council on a no-confidence motion largely perceived to be engineered by the BJP and signed by over 40 members of a 70-member House.

Sources in the know also informed that several top leaders of the National Conference had "genuinely tried to prevent Mattu's debacle, but the BJP had already bought loyalty of several independent candidates." Others are seeing the quashing of senior NC leader Ali Sagar's Public Safety Act (PSA) by the J&K High Court on June 16 as quid pro quo moment in exchange of NC's alleged help to the BJP in toppling Mattu. Responding to the JKNC leader Ruhullah's strongly-worded remarks, the JKPC chief spokesperson Adnan Ashraf Mir said: "At least we had the courage to own up an alliance. It is the NC's turn to show some moral courage and own up their alliance. They had 14 members. Four had joined the BJP six months back. Of the remaining 10, seven voted with the BJP. And then they expelled those 4 Corporators who had left NC six months back. Is deputy mayor (Sheikh Imran) not their member? Who did he vote for? The NC should give us a break. They vote with BJP openly and now have the audacity to deny it. He (Ruhulla) would do well to check his own tweets about his own party just a few weeks back before he surrendered."

BACKGROUND

The story of SMC elections is a little complicated one.

Amid unprecedented boycott and unrest in Jammu and Kashmir the then 74-member body of SMC went to polls in October 2018, nearly four months after the BJP had bid adieu to its political coalition alliance with the J&K People's Democratic Party (JKPDP). The Congress party won 16 seats and the BJP bagged only four seats in SMC elections. Independents bagged the 53 seats in the 74-member body.

The SMC election was marred by an unprecedented boycott call by pro-independence amalgams and groups, coupled with non-participation of the JKNC and the PDP. All of this helped both the BJP and the Congress in a big way as most candidates from these parties were elected unopposed.

The four-phased urban local body elections in all districts of the restive region saw thin participation as, in the absence of the JK-PDP and JKNC, the Congress was ahead of the BJP in the Kashmir Valley by bagging 157 wards while the saffron party won in 100 wards. As many as 78 candidates of the Congress and 76 of the BJP were elected unopposed, courtesy the boycott call and non-participation of the two main regional unionist parties.

'I Lived Death At The Door ...

deeds that can save you!"

But as the valley has already lost many people in the COVID combat, many survivors share their moving journeys from their positive to negative test and trial. Case 1: 'I Wanted To See Birds' They came suddenly one day to take me away when my mother was tested positive. By then, I had shown what they now call COVID symptoms.

I thought I had just developed this constant cold after eating an ice-cream. I confused my cold and running nose with my poor immunity. So, yes, I was just hoping against the hope. But eventually, they said it. After tested positive for this vicious virus, I felt like world blurring from my eyesight. Constant coughing and burning lungs made me restless. In the hospital, I would feel like dying alone. Nights haunted me more. I had no comforting company of my mother around me. She was herself lying in serious condition! Even in that distress hour, where I was staring at my possible end, I wanted to go out and watch birds. I wanted to see them fly and free. Only a captive can value the true meaning of freedom.

Case 2: 'I Was at the Door of Hell'

After losing my husband to cancer and son to abroad, I live alone. I hadn't stepped much out of home since the time pandemic lockdown was announced. I would only go out to buy groceries.

One fine day, when I went out to buy essentials, I was exposed to a lot of people on street. That evening, I felt like inhaling more oxygen than I usually do. A quick test followed and I was declared COVID positive. On the third night in the hospital, I saw myself standing at the door of hell, mourning in pain. It was a terrifying nightmare. I didn't want to die. After that night, I became more faithful and fun-loving – entertaining COVID-depressed souls in the ward. Sharing, caring and storytelling felt like a healing. But at the same time, being COVID positive was no fun. There were days when I couldn't stop coughing. I was running out of breath. My vision turned blurry at days. I couldn't even swallow anything. It was a terrible time. You understand life when you are an iota close of death.

Case 3: 'I Felt An Excruciating Pain'

Burning joints, pounding headache and numbness made me feel like a living corpse in that COVID ward. Pain was excruciating, so was this feeling of dying alone in that apathetic space.

They keep a tab on your vital signs from distance there. Then, one day, one of them came and told me that my body wasn't absorbing the right level of oxygen. My lung power was falling, so was the hope of coming alive from that ward. It's terrifying to be in that situation. All of a sudden, you wondered about the futility of your dreams, goals and life plans. Nothing made sense. I was looking forward to this summer to attend my niece's wedding. But then, who knew that I would instead be fighting for my own life in that horror ward, where you're being dumped as some filthy person.

Case 4: 'You Do Not Want To Catch This!'

After nursing COVID symptoms for 10 days, I suddenly fainted one day, and vomited. I had to call for help and was under observation for one night. The long feared news finally came and sent me packing to a COVID-designated hospital. Soon as I breathed heavy, they put a device in my mouth. I started to panic. I had this sense of drowning and dying. I thought of my young kids and how they would be managing at my relative's place. I imagined myself falling from a cliff and going down in an abyss. You develop that sort of mindset when you realise that you are up against a formidable enemy—who was slowly leaving you breathless. Some days after, my situation started to improve. I moved on to another ward with four others.

After a few days, I was one of the lucky ones who made it through. I came home, but trust me, you do not want to catch this!

Case 5: 'I Lived Death'

I woke up one morning gasping for air, feeling that I was having a heart attack. An initial coronavirus test came back negative. But when the symptoms worsened, I got tested again. This time the results were positive.

In a ward full of COVID patients, I struggled with fever and heavy breathing. It felt like something was stuck there and not coming out.

Nights were more tormenting. I did not go to sleep for three days because I was scared that I wouldn't wake up.

I lived death and that too when there was hardly anyone to console you. Yet I made it alive from the hospital, where I saw the virus consuming a poor patient.

Sagar's Detention Under PSA

even when those around him were reluctant to. This once again highlights the unjust & indefensible nature of the 5th Aug detentions," Abdullah tweeted.

Sagar was detained in August last year after the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 was withdrawn. He is kept under detention in a Srinagar government guesthouse declared as a sub-jail.

"Extremely happy to let all of you know that the PSA against Sagar sb. has been quashed by the J&K High court after the court proceedings which took 6 hearings and finally the judgement has been delivered.

Thanks to entire @JKNC_ family and party leadership for being a great," Sagar's son, Salman Sagar tweeted.

Senior Sagar's lawyer Shariq Reyaz confirmed that the court had quashed the detention of the former minister but said the detailed order would be made available later.

The preventive detention order of Mr. Ali Mohammad Sagar quashed by HC. Had the pleasure of arguing his case along with Mr. Shuja UI Haq before the HC. Judgment to be uploaded soon, he tweeted Tuesday evening.

National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah also expressed hope that the legal team of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti will take heart from 'today's judgement in the J&K High Court' to pursue her case in the Supreme Court with increased determination and vigour.

"She deserves to be freed without further loss of time".

"Although (PDP leader) Nayeam Sb & (NC leader) Hilal haven't challenged their detentions in court, I hope the authorities see the writing on the wall & realise their continued PSA detention is indefensible.

India, Pak Troops Trade ...

He said that army gave a "befitting response" to the unprovoked ceasefire violation.

5.8 Magnitude Earthquake

Tremors were also felt in Jammu, they said.

Leopard Mauls Minor ...

boy from the bushes in a nearby forest area, reports added.

Ladakh Records 94 New ...

one coronavirus-related death.

The condition of 563 active cases in the union territory -- 453 in Kargil and 110 in Leh -- is stable, the officials said.

NTA Extends Last Date For Submission Of Various Online Entrance Forms Till June 30

Agencies

Srinagar: Amid Coronavirus crisis, the National Testing Agency (NTA) has yet again extended the last date for submission of various online application entrance forms till June-30.

Earlier, the last date for submission of online forms was June-15.

According to the NTA order, a copy of which is in possession with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the extension was made in view of the hardships faced by the various aspirants.

“In view of many requests and representations received from students and the hardships faced by them due to COVID-19 epidemic, the NTA has further extended the last dates of submission of online application forms for various examinations to be conducted by the Agency,” NTA Director General Vineet Joshi said in an order.

The entrance test application forms include Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Ph.D. and OPEN-MAT (MBA) Entrance Examination-2020, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) AIEEA 2020, Jawaharlal Nehru University Entrance Examination (JNUEE)-2020, University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) June 2020, Joint CSIR-UGC NET

examination (CSIR- UGC NET) June 2020 and All India AYUSH Post Graduate Entrance Test (AIAPGET)-2020.

“Submission of online application forms shall be accepted up to 05.00 PM and submission of fee up to 11.50 PM. The requisite fee can be paid through credit or debit card, net banking, UPI and PAY-TM,” NTA said.

“The detailed schedule mentioning revised dates of downloading of admit cards and of examination will be displayed separately on respective examination websites,” Joshi also said. He said that the NTA would keep students updated about the latest developments and would inform them about changes with ample time.

NTA advised the candidates and their parents to visit the respective examination websites for latest updates—(KNO)

COVID: Govt forms apex level panel to review protocol, guidelines for treatment of patients

DAK welcomes, suggests inclusion of epidemiologists in committee

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government has constituted ten-member high level advisory panel to review the protocol, guidelines and other related issues about the treatment of COVID-19 patients and their implementation.

The committee as per the order issued under number 647-JK GAD) of 2020, dated 15-06-2020 is headed by Dr. Muhammad Sultan Kharoo, former Director SKIMS, Soura, vice chairman, apex selection committee, SKIMS. However, none among the ten members of the panel is epidemiologist.

The eight members of the panel include Dr A G Ahangar, Director and Ex-Officio Secretary, SKIMS, Principal of Government Medical College (GMC) Jammu and Srinagar, Dr. Rajinder Singh, former professor and head, Chest Diseases and Principal GMC Jammu, Dr. Javid Malik, Head, Pulmonary Medicine, SKIMS Medical College, Bemina Srinagar, Dr. Anil Sharma, Professor & Head, Department of Medicine, GMC Jammu, Dr. Naveed Nazir, Professor and Head, Chest & Diseases, GMC Srinagar, Dr. Aijaz Nabi Koul, Additional Professor General Medicine & Head Infectious Disease Unit, SKIMS, Soura, Srinagar and Dr. Simriti Gulati, Prof & Head, Department of Anesthesiology, GMC Jammu.

According to the order, Dr. Rahul Gupta, Professor and Head, Chest Diseases, GMC Jammu has been appointed as the member secretary of the panel.

“The terms of reference of the Committee shall be to review the protocol/

guidelines and other related issues relating to the treatment of COVID Patients, measures to be taken to control the COVID pandemic and other related matters and advise the government on these issues,” the order reads.

Meanwhile, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) welcomed the constitution of an Apex Level Advisory Committee AND hoped that the committee will analyze and review authentic data pertaining to treatment of COVID-19 across the globe, which will help to mitigate and contain pandemic.

President DAK, Dr Suhail Naik in a statement hailed the government move, calling it “a step in the right direction for the coronavirus patients.” “It is due to the communication gap that the local people and activists have developed apprehensions due to lack of a clear understanding of the pandemic and its mass management,” he said.

The doctor’s body also said that it expects that the committee would examine the scientific, ethical, social and legal challenges associated with treatments and interventions. DAK suggested that the committee should be empowered by adding Director Health Services Kashmir and Jammu, epidemiologists and pharmacologists to it—(KNO)

Employees from J&K UT posted in Ladakh demand immediate repartition

‘By giving deaf ears to our demands, UT Govt is violating its own rules’

Ladakh: The employees recruited by J&K government posted in union territory of Ladakh for the past three years Tuesday demanded immediate repatriation stating that they can't bear the challenging conditions anymore. They said even after completion of stipulation period, administration has not initiated any step to transfer them back to Kashmir.

They said that over 100 employees of different departments of which the majority belong to the education department were deployed in Ladakh prior to the bifurcation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two different union territories and they are yet to be called back.

Talking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the employees said that the LG G C Murmu led administration has left them to suffer under immense challenging conditions.

“The government itself has flouted the norms by not transferring us after the completion of one year as third zone posting,” they said.

Basheer Ahmad, one of the lecturers, posted in union territory of Ladakh said that at least 64 lecturers and two Chief educational officers (CEOs) are posted in parts of UT who even after completion of stipulated period of one year are still craving for the attention from the authorities for the transfer.

He said three years have already passed but there seems to be no seriousness from the LG’s administration in union territory of Jammu and Kashmir despite a number of representations made from time to time to the concerned offices.

“We earlier met the Lt Governor of Ladakh who clearly told us that it’s not his domain to transfer any of the employees be it from education

or any other department and only the LG of UT J&K can do it,” Ahmed said.

The employees said that they are serving in good numbers in Ladakh UT that include Health Department (6), Education (64), PDD (12), finance and planning (10), Home department PO (2), PWD (R&B) (5) and PHE (2).

“Many employees of newly created UT of J&K have been rendering their services in Ladakh UT in compliance with transfer/posting orders issued by their respective departments from time to time before 31-October, 2019,” they told KNO.

The employees demanded personal intervention of Lt. Governor of J&K and said employees serving in Ladakh UT prior to the implementation of J&K Re-organisation Act 2019 be repatriated to their home UT of J&K at an earliest without any delay—(KNO)

No fresh appointment under SRO 202, Probation period of old SRO 202 appointees reduced to 2 yrs

JAMMU, JUNE 16: In a historic and employee friendly move to address the long standing demand of unemployed youth as well as nearly 10,000 old appointees, the Government has decided that no future appointments in the UT of J&K shall be made under SRO-202. Existing employees under SRO 202 will get a major relief as their five year period of probation shall be reduced to the normal probation period i.e. two years only. These decisions were taken in a meeting of the Administrative Council held under the Chairmanship of the Lieutenant Governor Girish Chander Murmu.

Speaking at a press conference here today, the Principal Secretary PDD & Information, Mr. Rohit Kansal, who is also the Government spokesperson, said that the decisions will benefit both existing employees and potential recruits as all future appointments including those in the pipeline will be out of the purview of this rule.

Recalling that the government had recently started a special recruitment drive involving 10,000

posts, Mr. Kansal said that for 7052 Class IV posts, a new set of rules call the Jammu and Kashmir Appointment to Class-IV (Special Recruitment) Rules, 2020 had been notified to fast track the recruitment process and make it transparent. These rules too have also been amended and SRO 202 will not be applicable to these appointments.

Regarding the vacancies already referred to recruitment agencies under SRO 202, the spokesperson stated that in all such cases the agencies shall be advised suitably to bring the recruitment out of the purview of SRO 202. This, he said will include all pending cases including those where only referrals to SSB/PSC have been made, where written test has been held but no interview has been conducted, where interview has already been conducted but the result has not been declared and where the selection has been completed but final appointment order has not been issued. Suitable orders and instructions shall be issued to the recruiting agencies by the GAD.

LAWDA resumes dredging of Brari Numbal Lagoon

SRINAGAR : Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA) resumes dredging of Brari Numbal Lagoon in Shahr-e-Khass after getting suspended due to the spread of Covid-19.

The Vice Chairman, LDA Tufail Matto flanked by engineering wing team today took stock of the works under execution on his visit to Lagoon.

He said around 20,000 Cums are expected to be dredged out in order to deepen the lagoon and restore water quality, besides this several developmental works are also in progress for its beautification vis-à-vis walk way around lagoon for walkers, tourists and additional facility of kiosks and jetties. Mattoo said to further beautify the lagoon, Footpath for pedestrian, Food Street, Ornamental Street lights, fountains and solid waste management by providing dustbins around the lagoon is being taken up under AMRUT and PMDD.

DAK aghast over suspension of doctor

“If people aren’t wearing masks, it is failure of district administration”

Srinagar: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) Tuesday strongly condemned the irresponsible behaviour of Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag as the latter has suspended one medico Dr Nisar Ahmed, currently posted PHC Sadiwara.

President DAK, Dr Suhail Naik said the said doctor has been relentlessly working during the Covid-19 crisis and by just objecting to not seeing a patient till he along with attendants aren't wearing a mask, he has been suspended.

He said wearing a mask is mandatory as per the guidelines of WHO, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Government of India, CDC and any violation is a criminal offence under Disaster

Management Act that the DC Anantnag should have taken note of.

DAK said Dr Nisar Ahmad has been suspended and humiliated by labelling him for not following unethical practice, which is unfortunate.

The order signed by DC Anantnag mentions that “either a doctor should have provided a mask or a cloth should have been kept in her mouth” amounts to mere mockery of the system.

“The health workers are struggling themselves to have masks being provided by the department and furthermore putting a cloth in the mouth has not been advised by any medical governing authority,” DAK said in a statement.

Rather to appreciate the doctor for trying to build a sense of awareness & safeguarding health care workers, other patients and himself from being affected by a coronavirus suspect, he has been suspended just to set the system right.

The doctors body said that people not wearing masks is a failure of the government and action should be taken against those who are not following rules not against those who are following the guidelines. "It is time to stop administrative medicine and interference in hospitals and let doctors to frame and implement hospital protocols."

DAK demanded that DC Anantnag should immediately revoke the order and focus

on enhancing wearing masks so that such uncanny episodes won't be repeated.

DAK said the health services are governed by guidelines & ethics in which safety of all healthcare workers is imperative upon the department & other stakeholders

“Unfortunately they have been left to suffer and when they try their bit to rectify some measures in the interest of the system they are penalised just to appease those who create unruly scenes,” it stated.

DAK stresses on Directorate of Health Services Kashmir to intervene in the matter and revoke the order otherwise the whole doctors fraternity will be compelled to go for strike.

DIAL-EMMA



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BJBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-224132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153



HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI
CALENDAR
25 Shawwal
1441

PRAYERS

FAJR	3: 34
ZUHR	12: 31
ASR	5:31
Magrib	7:46
ISHA	9:28

This Day In History

- 656 Ali ibn Abu Talib (RA) elected the 4th Caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate
- 1631 - Mumtaz Mahal dies during childbirth. Her husband, Mughal emperor Shah Jahan I, then spends more than 20 years building her tomb, the Taj Mahal
- 1861 - Battle of Boonville, MI-Brigadier General Lyon defeats Confederate forces
- 1863 - Battle at Middleburg, Virginia
- 1863 - Battle of Aldie, Confederates fail to drive back Union in Virginia
- 1877 - Indian Wars: Battle of White Bird Canyon - the Nez Perce defeat the US Cavalry at White Bird Canyon in the Idaho Territory
- 1885 - Statue of Liberty arrives in NYC aboard French ship 'Isere'
- 1896 - Polar explorers Fridtjof Nansen and Frederick Jackson meet by chance in Franz Josef Land, the Arctic
- 1916 - US troops under General Pershing march into Mexico
- 1938 - Japan declares war on China.
- 1940 - USSR occupies Estonia
- 1940 - World War II: sinking of the RMS Lancastria by the Luftwaffe near Saint-Nazaire, France
- 1947 - 1st round of the world civil air service leaves NYC
- 1950 - Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia & Syria sign security pact
- 1953 - Riots in East Germany for reunification
- 1970 - Edwin Land patents the Polaroid camera
- 1976 - Indonesia annexes Portuguese East-Timor
- 1982 - President Galtieri resigns after leading Argentina to defeat in the Falkland Islands
- 1984 - John Turner succeeds Pierre Trudeau as Prime Minister of Canada
- 1988 - Microsoft releases MS DOS 4.0
- 1988 - Soyuz TM-5 launches
- 1991 - The body of the 12th US President, Zachary Taylor, is exhumed to test how he died; rumors had persisted since his death in 1850 of arsenic poisoning - no evidence of this was found
- 2018 - Ivan Duque is elected President of Columbia
- 2018 - Historic deal signed between Greece and Macedonia to end dispute over Macedonia's name - changing to North Macedonia
- 2019- Activist Joshua Wong calls on Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam to resign after leaving prison amid street protests the day before of over 2 million people.

From KO Archives

Musharraf envisages rapid accord on Kashmir

KUALA LUMPUR - Stating that the Kashmir problem could be solved in “two weeks” if India and Pakistan show political will, President Pervez Musharraf said Musharraf today expressed optimism that it would be resolved in a “certain timeframe”.

“I think it can be resolved in two weeks if there is a will and we discuss the options and reach an agreement. Well, two weeks maybe...I have just said that.

“The most important thing for the leadership is to have the will to reach a conclusion. I see that at this moment, the leadership does have,” he told reporters here when asked if he shared the optimism of some that the Kashmir issue could be settled in a couple of years.

“Therefore,” Musharraf said “I am optimistic that it would be resolved in a certain timeframe”. The Pakistan President, who was on his way to Australia, said he would love to visit Kashmir. “I would love to go there” but he would not make a formal proposal as “the time was not ripe yet.”

About Siachen, he said talks were being held between the two countries on withdrawing troops and redeploy them to end the “eyeball to eyeball confrontation”. He expressed optimism that an agreement would be reached on the issue.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said yesterday that the two countries were exploring the possibility of putting their troops out of Siachen Glacier, the world's highest battlefield and turn it into a “mountain of peace”.

He also refused to affirm whether he would step down in 2007 and hand over power to a civilian leader, saying “we will cross the bridge when we come to it.”

(Kashmir Observer, 17 June, 2005)

GOVT. OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER SUB-TRANSMISSION DIVISION PULWAMA

CANCELLATION OF NIT 06/STD/PUL of 2020-21

Dated:-16/05/2020

Subject:-Cancellation of Tender due to poor response.

The NIT No 06/STD/Pul of 2020-21 Dated:-16/05/2020 vide e-NIT no: PDD_2020_97113_1.is hereby cancelled because of the poor response.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
STD Pulwama

No:- STD/Pul/510-16
Date:- 11/06/2020

DIPK-NB-698/20

GOVT. OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER SUB-TRANSMISSION DIVISION PULWAMA

CANCELLATION OF NIT 04/STD/PUL of 2020-21

Dated:-16/05/2020

Subject:-Cancellation of Tender due to poor response.

The NIT No 04/STD/Pul of 2020-21 Dated:-16/05/2020 vide e-NIT no: PDD_2020_97087_1.is hereby cancelled because of the poor response.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
STD Pulwama

No:- STD/Pul/517-23
Date:- 11/06/2020

DIPK-NB-699/20

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Let Economy Function

With three more Covid-19 patients dying on Monday, the number of fatalities due to the disease in J&K has risen to 63. One of the deceased was a teenager from Handwara, who had otherwise died of injuries. His test later on turned out to be Covid-19 positive. On the other hand, the number of positive cases is witnessing a steep rise over the past week taking the toll upwards of 5000. There's no indication that the curve will flatten anytime soon.

Meanwhile, Government has reluctantly decided to open up in line with the rest of the country. And which is good. Kashmir economy has been under a lockdown for far too long to sustain its indefinite extension. As the over two month long lockdown has made it clear, it hasn't proved an antidote to the spread of Coronavirus in the country.

True, it may have held the numbers in check, but the cost in terms of the crippling of our economy has been massive. More so, when the Covid lockdown has been a double whammy for us. It has been imposed after the six month long security lockdown that followed the revocation of Article 370 in August last year. The traders bodies in Kashmir have pegged the loss to economy at over Rs 30,000 crore. In practical terms this loss means thousands of people losing their jobs, some sectors like tourism going out of business and start-ups being wiped out.

But far from being sensitive to this reality, the administration put in place one of the most restrictive lockdowns in the Valley. In hindsight, it seems to have been an excessive and unnecessary response to the crisis. More so, when the Valley is a far smaller place than, say, the metropolises like Mumbai and New Delhi with their large and dense population. A far better way to manage the crisis would have been to strictly enforce the social distancing while the economy was largely allowed to function. A blend of legal action against the violators of the social distancing norms and an aggressive awareness campaign designed to make people responsible for their own health could have done wonders while taking care of the economy.

More than a full-fledged lockdown, fighting Covid-19 needed an all out encouragement to a people-led effort to arrest its spread. But, on the contrary, hammer was brought down on the economy. And more than two months on, here we are: the economy is on death bed while on the Covid-19 front, the community transmission seems to have already set in.

OTHER OPINION

India, Nepal Ties

After months of brinkmanship, India and Nepal have brought their relations to the edge of a precipice. The Oli government's decision to pass the constitutional amendment ratifying a change in its maps that include Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura, territories that India controls, marks a decidedly new phase in ties. While the issue is an old one, it resurfaced in 2019 when New Delhi published new political maps to reflect the changes following the decision on August 5 to reorganise the State of Jammu and Kashmir, and Nepal objected to the depiction of disputed territory. In 2000 and 2014, India and Nepal agreed to hold talks about Kalapani and Susta, without much success. Matters snowballed when India's Defence Minister inaugurated a surfaced road over the territory; when Nepal protested, Indian Army Chief, General Naravane, suggested it was at the "behest" of China. At the base of the rift is the lack of diplomatic manoeuvring to allow a step back from the brink. While New Delhi contends that it was willing to discuss matters "at a mutually convenient date", Kathmandu says the MEA has rejected two dates suggested by the Nepal MoFA, and has routinely dismissed requests from the Nepal Ambassador for a meet with the Foreign Secretary. That the MEA said Kalapani talks could wait until both countries had dealt with the coronavirus pandemic first, further enraged the Oli government, which has pointed out India's participation by videoconference in bilateral and multilateral meetings. Meanwhile, Mr. Oli's purposeful manner in pursuing the amendment at exactly the same time as the India-China border stand-off bolsters the belief among some in New Delhi that he is speaking with confidence borne from Beijing's backing.

Regardless of the truth of those accusations, or who is more responsible for the downside in ties, the speed with which the constitutional amendment was passed has left little space for diplomacy now. That the vote was unanimous should also inform New Delhi of the futility of casting Mr. Oli alone as the 'villain' of the piece. It is necessary the two nations resolve their issues through dialogue lest they face more serious consequences. The Modi government has in the past not flinched from taking tough measures, including the 2015 blockade that severely affected India's land-locked neighbour. The Oli government, which seeks to build its legacy by overturning what it calls "unequal" agreements made by the monarchy, could also cause a security nightmare for India if it opens up other parts of their long boundary, and reverses old commitments on open and unsecured border posts. Both sides moved quickly this week to manage the fallout of border firing by Nepali police on a group of Indians that left one dead. The same alacrity is needed to manage the fallout of Saturday's amendment vote, on the once celebrated "special" relationship between the two countries.

The Hindu

The Great Covid Disruption

The pandemic will accelerate a change that had already begun: a move away from US-centric globalization to the one centered around China

AANIQA QAYOOM

The economic system we construct after this pandemic will have to be less shortsighted, more resilient, and more sensitive to the fact that economic globalization has far outpaced political globalization

Covid-19 is a crisis like no other, and there is substantial ambiguity about its impact on people's lives and livelihoods. A lot depends on the epidemiology of the virus, the effectiveness of containment measures, and the development of therapeutics and vaccines, all of which are hard to predict at this point of time. In addition, many countries now face multiple crises—a health crisis, a financial crisis, and a collapse in commodity prices, which interact in complex ways. Policymakers are providing unprecedented support to households, firms, and financial markets, and, while this is crucial for a strong recovery, there is considerable uncertainty about what the economic landscape will look like when we emerge from this lockdown.

Under the assumption that the pandemic and required containment peaks in the second quarter for most countries in the world, and recedes in the second half of this year, in the April World Economic Outlook global growth in 2020 is projected to fall to -3 percent. This is a downgrade of 6.3 percentage points from January 2020, a major revision over a very short period. This makes the Great Lockdown the worst recession since the Great Depression, and far worse than the Global Financial Crisis.

Assuming the pandemic fades in the second half of 2020 and that policy actions taken around the world are effective in preventing widespread firm bankruptcies, extended job losses, and system-wide financial strains, we project global growth in 2021 to rebound to 5.8 percent.

This recovery in 2021 is only partial as the level of economic activity is projected to remain below the level it had been projected for 2021, before the virus hit. The cumulative loss to global GDP over 2020 and 2021 from the pandemic crisis could be around 9 trillion dollars, greater than the economies of Japan and Germany, combined.

The extreme uncertainty around the duration and intensity of the health crisis, we also explore alternative, more adverse scenarios. The pandemic may not recede in the second half of this year, leading to longer durations of containment, worsening financial conditions, and further breakdowns of global supply chains. In such cases, global GDP would fall even further: an additional 3 percent in 2020 if the pandemic is more protracted this year, while, if the pandemic continues into 2021, it may fall next year by an additional 8 percent compared to our baseline scenario.

The pandemic has led to more than a third of the world's population being placed on lockdown to stop the spread of COVID-19. It has caused severe repercussions for economies across the world, following soon after a global economic slowdown during 2019 that saw stagnation of stock markets and consumer activity worldwide.

The recession has seen unusually high and rapid increases in unemployment in many countries, and the inability in the United States for state-funded unemployment insurance computer systems and processes to keep up with applications.



The United Nations (UN) predicted in April 2020 that global unemployment will wipe out 6.7 per cent of working hours globally in the second quarter of 2020—equivalent to 195 million full-time workers. In western nations, unemployment is expected to be at around 10%, with more severely affected nations from the COVID-19 pandemic having higher unemployment rates. The developing world is also being affected by a drop in remittances. The UN warned in April of a famine "of biblical proportions", which could affect over 30 developing nations.

The recession also saw the collapse of the price of oil triggered by the 2020 Russia-Saudi Arabia oil price war, the collapse of tourism, the hospitality industry, the energy industry and a significant downturn in consumer activity in comparison to the previous decade. Global stock markets crashed around 20 to 30% during late February and March 2020, respectively. During the crash, global stock markets made unprecedented and volatile swings, mainly due to extreme uncertainty in the markets.

Approaching and understanding the economic impact of Post-COVID-19 in any given context usually begins with the measure of the final impact of epidemics on the economic performance such as the case of COVID-19 crisis, which provides the most basic explanation about the economic cost of COVID-19.

The economic system we construct after this pandemic will have to be less shortsighted, more resilient, and more sensitive to the fact that economic globalization has far outpaced political globalization. So long as this is the case, countries will have to strive for a better balance between taking advantage of globalization and a necessary degree of self-reliance.

The corona virus pandemic is the first crisis since the 1930s to engulf both advanced and developing economies. Their recessions may be deep and long. As in the 1930s, sovereign defaults will likely spike. Calls

to restrict trade and capital flows find fertile soil in bad times.

Doubts about pre-corona virus global supply chains, the safety of international travel, and, at the national level, concerns about self-sufficiency in necessities and resilience are all likely to persist—even after the pandemic is brought under control (which may itself prove a lengthy process). The post-corona virus financial architecture may not take us all the way back to the pre globalization era of Bretton Woods, but the damage to international trade and finance is likely to be extensive and lasting.

The pandemic will worsen four pre-existing conditions of the world economy. They will remain reversible through major surgery but turn chronic and damaging absent such interventions. The first of these conditions is secular stagnation—the combination of low productivity growth, a lack of private investment returns, and near-deflation. This will deepen as people stay risk-averse and save more following the pandemic, which will persistently weaken demand and innovation.

Second, the gap between rich countries (along with a few emerging markets) and the rest of the world in their resilience to crises is going to broaden further.

Finally, economic nationalism will increasingly lead governments to shut off their own economies from the rest of the world. This will never produce complete autarky, or anything close to it, but it will reinforce the first two trends and increase resentment of the third.

The COVID-19 pandemic will accelerate a change that had already begun: a move away from U.S.-centric globalization to a more China-centric globalization. In an evolving crisis, when no one is able to say for sure when it will be contained and what its long-term impact could be, the stress will be placed unequally on the individual and society, and on the government. And the structural risk, which affects everyone, is as economic as it is biological.



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Books transport us to new worlds

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies... The man who never reads lives only one."

— George R.R. Martin

You need not be a student or a teacher in order to be a reader. Reading has no specific age or profession. However, not many of us are into the habit of reading, yet it is one of the best hobby a person can inculcate. It not only makes us go through the lives and experiences of many people but it also becomes one of the best ways in which we can spend our time productively. We start looking at world from various perspectives which probably was fixed to a particular perspective earlier. New experiences enter our mind and we feel completely different after reading a particular book which touches us in different ways.

Hence, it depends on an individual and everyone has his own perspectives from which they read a particu-

lar book. Also, there are many reasons why an individual reads a book. Some read it as a mere hobby, some read to gain some knowledge, others read to improve their writing etc. Purposes can vary, yet the results are fruitful to all.

Even though it may seem boring and difficult in the beginning, especially if one isn't into the habit of reading, this habit can be acquired with time. Firstly, it's one of the best ways to deal with boredom. There are times when we do not feel like doing any other thing which would require some physical activity. We just yearn to spend some time in isolation and reading a good book is the best thing a person can do. It not only make a person feel better but it also shapes ones outlook.

Secondly, at times we are so much caught in our hectic lives and its problems that we seldom enjoy a moment of peace. At such times a good book can help one escape from the vicious cycle of problems that we usually encounter

in our lives. There are many such occasions where we find the character trapped in the problem similar to the one we are encountering in our lives.

When we read a book that deals with the same emotions that one is undergoing, it makes the person feel better as he can relate to it somehow. This further reduces the feelings of alienation that a particular individual might be experiencing.

Apart from the above mentioned benefits, reading also helps in improving emotional health. For example, Catherine Winter in her article '10 Benefits of Reading: Why You Should Read Every Day' mentions various benefits of reading such as it helps in stress reduction, vocabulary expansion, memory improvement, improved focus and concentration etc.

Therefore, it becomes very clear how beneficial is reading to a person.

It also becomes a medium of communication with the author. Someone who's lived or is living in some other part of the world, you get familiarized

with his way of thinking. Books connect us not only to the author but to other readers as well.

More importantly, the more you get into the habit of reading, the more you fall in love with it and a book provides you good company as well.

Reading books can also become a means to strengthen bonds within families. You may read out some chapters from a book to your elders or children who don't know how to read or who are too small to read book. Therefore, you can enjoy a good family time that'll keep all of you engrossed in something useful.

Thus, there are endless reasons that can be stated in order to emphasize the advantages of staying connected with books. So, when are you buying yours!

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Found Hanging: Secret Sorrows and Mental Resilience in Kashmir

SWATI JOSHI

WHEN a girl with cold-pale face and bruised neck was rushed to Srinagar's SMHS hospital on May 20, 2020, it looked like any other trauma case before some relative cleared the air: "The 15-year-old from Srinagar's Bemina area was found hanging in her room."

Six days later, as the question—what drove her to such an extreme path—was still a matter of investigation, some masked villagers in Apple Town Sopore started assembling in a neighbourhood after learning about a young man's shocking demise.

He was found hanging from the ceiling of his room. Sobbing and wringing their hands in pain, the villagers couldn't know immediately what forced the 30-year-old to take his own life.

Then, on June 11, 2020, a 35-year-old driver from Dooru village of South Kashmir's Anantnag district took his life by hanging himself at his home. As a matter of practice, police registered a case under section 174 CrPc and began investigation.

"In most of these suicide cases," an investigative cop told Kashmir Observer, "people harbor distressed mindsets, forcing them to do the unthinkable."

The cop detailed the case of a student who was pressurized by his parents to top the exam some years ago.

"When the boy couldn't take the regular pestering, he hung himself in his room one day," the officer continued.

"The boy took that extreme step after facing years of mental onslaught. More than demanding parenting, he needed a supporting family structure where he could've expressed himself freely. But instead he ended up succumbing to his fear and worry."

Besides stress, there's also a strong sense of stigma. Recalling his intern days, Dr. Arif Maghribi, a Srinagar-based mental specialist, says he once went to the Psychiatric Hospital in Srinagar's Badamwari area. After he couldn't locate it, he asked many people about the hospital but no one knew about it.

After half-an-hour, he enquired from a guard about the hospital. The guard was confused and told him there is no hospital in this area, but there is a Pagalkhana—mental asylum—nearby.

"It has been a stigma in the valley to talk about mental health for a long time," Dr. Maghribi told Kashmir Observer.

"It's imbibed in our mind since childhood and it'll take some time to change that perspective."

But at times, this sense of stigma escalates the mental trauma and forces a person to commit suicide.

"Since stigma doesn't encourage people to consult a doctor when in distress, it eventually forces them to take irreversible steps," Dr. Maghribi says.

"With the result, Kashmir has seen many suicide cases from peo-



ple of various age groups and occupations."

According to the National Crime Bureau Records (NCRB) 2018 report, the number of suicides in Jammu & Kashmir was 330 in 2018, as compared to 287 in 2017.

However, the number of suicides in the valley was far less as compared to Maharashtra (17,972), Tamil Nadu (13,896), West Bengal (13,255), Madhya Pradesh (11,775), and Karnataka (11,561).

"Psychiatrists in Kashmir generally receive two types of patients," Dr. Maghribi continues. "The first category are those who have some problems in their treatment, while the second category don't open up about depression."

Such patients, the mental specialist says, usually talk about weight problems, joint pain and headache.

"But when we diagnose them, we get to know that they are suffering from depression," he says.

The mental specialist recalls an incident when he organized a medical camp in Pulwama, where people were reluctant to come forward.



It's not immediately clear what forced a father of two kids to commit suicide in south Kashmir's Pulwama on the day when a famous Bollywood actor hung himself, but a detailed look at such extreme cases in the trauma-filled valley reveals a familiar pattern and response system.

He along with his team of interns tried to analyze people who came for a regular checkup for any mental problems.

Out of 60-70 people who came for a health checkup, 10-15 were suffering from stress, says the psychiatrist.

"We called up those patients and asked them to have counseling sessions but they were reluctant," admits Dr. Maghribi.

There's also a myth among people that if they take psychiatric medicines, they will have to continue them for a lifetime.

"Problem is, everyone is a doctor in Kashmir," complains Dr. Maghribi, who has to deal with patients whose relatives tell them to use home remedies instead of the medicines prescribed by the doctor.

But more than medicinal myths, mental specialists blame the uncertain situation in Kashmir as the reason behind the distressed mindset.

"Last summer's political lockdown created a lot of mental unease in Kashmir," Dr. Maghribi continues. "Business was zero, colleges were closed, people were not allowed to move freely. Due to which I received many patients who tried to do self-harm."

According to an editorial in the Indian Journal of Medical Ethics, after the abrogation of Article 370 when physical access and communication became difficult, a person had to walk to call an ambulance.

"Even if one had access to a vehicle, negotiating the numerous barriers put up by the army and answering their questions at each barrier meant delays in reaching a hospital," adds the editorial.

"A third of the population had entertained thoughts of ending their life. In such a situation, to have a prolonged communication blackout and restrictions on movement, when people cannot meet or speak with friends and family except those in the immediate neighborhood must only increase stress levels," mentions the editorial.

But despite so much of strife and stress, mental specialists say the suicide rate is low in the valley due to mental resilience in Kashmiris.

Seventy per cent of people die by suicide due to mental illness, says Hayat Kaiser, Counseling Psychologist at Childline Budgam.

"Although people die by suicide for reasons other than depression," admits the psychologist, adding, "but estimates are that about 50 per cent to 90 per cent of people who die by suicide, do so during a depressive episode."

People with mental illnesses should be accepted and prioritized and they should not be neglected because people with major depression are prone to die by suicide, emphasizes the psychologist.

Kaiser believes that Kashmiri people are psychologically resilient, as they are simultaneously suffering from the external as well as internal issues. But at the same time, they are suffering from stress, anxiety, and depression, informs the psychologist.

According to a Kashmir Mental Health Survey (KMHS) conducted in

2015, "Nearly 1.8 million adults (45% of the adult population) in the valley are experiencing symptoms of mental distress with 41% exhibiting signs of probable depression, 26% probable anxiety, and 19% probable PTSD." The subjects of the study reported that the gap between treatment need and the provision in Kashmir is multifaceted and complex.

Every person has a different level of stress endurance limit, says Ifra Amin, mental health counselor at Youth Development and Rehabilitation Centre, Srinagar.

When the threshold of stress endurance level is crossed, people attempt suicide, adds Amin.

"A person dying by suicide is not coward," says the counselor, adding, "they take such steps because they fail in finding solutions to their problems."

People dealing with mental issues should be handled empathetically, emphasizes Amin. She believes that though the stigma to talk about mental health is reduced but still it is a taboo in many societies.

Amin thinks that it is a myth that counselors can read a patient's mind. She explains that for patients to open up and trust the professionals they have to build a rapport with them and understand their viewpoint.

Speaking about how to deal with people having suicidal thoughts, Amin stresses that patients should have a strong support system. "Family and friends should listen empathetically without giving any judgment," adds the counselor.

If the family has a negative approach towards a person going through mental problems, it will create a negative impact on his mind, explains Amin.

She says that every person has some sort of anxiety or stress but people who die by suicide have a different level of severity.

"If I have an exam tomorrow, I will be anxious but it will be fine once the exam is over," says the counselor.

But if the anxiety is consistent then it is a problem, continues Amin.

Talking about the condition in Kashmir, Amin has the same opinion as Kaiser. "There are many mental health issues in the valley but people cope up very easily," says the counselor, adding, "it may be inherent or god-gifted."

Irshad Ahmad, a clinical psychologist at Government District Hospital, Kulgam believes that lots of programs organized at school and college level about suicide prevention has helped Kashmiris to maintain a low suicide rate in the valley.

"In Kashmir valley, district mental health programs are running under which counseling sessions are held and psychology education is given at college and school level," adds Ahmad.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 8,00,000 people die by suicide every year which means one person dies in every 40 seconds.

"There are indications that for each adult who died by suicide," the WHO states, "there may have been more than 20 others attempting suicide."

Suicide is a major public health concern and every year millions of people around the world attempt it, says Ahmad.

"And there are many causes for it," he says.

"It can be any mental health issues, subject abuse, loss of loved ones, job issues, marital problems and hopelessness. Negative events and prolonged stressors are more vulnerable to attempt suicide," stresses Ahmad.

The biggest problem with people is that they hide mental health issues which lead to people taking irreversible steps, says a psychologist counselor at District Hospital Pulwama on the condition of anonymity.

Many people think that rich people don't have any mental health problems but this is wrong, says the counselor. He believes that there is a lack of awareness about mental health amongst people.

Explaining the main reason of people attempting suicide, the counselor says that people lack Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR).

UPR is a psychological term defined as "the attitude of complete acceptance and love, whether for yourself or someone else."

When a person has UPR for someone, "nothing they can do could give you a reason to stop seeing them as inherently human and inherently lovable."

But despite all the lockdowns, communication blockades and raging strife, the low suicide rate in the valley highlights the resilient life-style in the valley.

"Kashmiris have been brought under a hardship since childhood," the counselor says.

"When they face any tough situation in adulthood, they know how to cope up with it. If there is a gunshot in America, people will panic. But Kashmiris have become so familiar with all these things that it doesn't affect them much."

Editor's Note: Pictures for this piece have been purely selected for their deserted life portrayal of Kashmir during lockdowns. They may not compliment the original storyline, but they depict the desolation distress — one of the reasons why the valley brave secret sorrows today.



Agencies

European countries reopened borders Monday after a three-month coronavirus shutdown, although international visitors are still being kept away and there was uncertainty over whether many Europeans will quickly embrace travel outside their home countries.

Reopening continued in Mexico and Brazil despite cases climbing in the two largest nations in Latin America, where authorities struggled to handle the pandemic's effect on already-weak medical systems. In the U.S., Vice President Mike Pence encouraged governors to highlight the "good news" around efforts to fight the virus despite several states reporting a rise in infections, which could intensify as people return to work and venture out during the summer.

The need for constant vigilance came into sharp focus as China, where COVID-19 first emerged in December, rushed to contain an outbreak in the capital of Beijing.

The head of the World Health Organization said more than 100,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus have been reported globally each day in the last two weeks, and countries that have curbed transmissions "must stay alert to the possibility of resurgence."

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted that it took over two months to reach 100,000 reported cases, now a daily norm. Each day, nearly three-fourths of the new cases come from 10 countries — mostly in South Asia and the Americas, he said.

Pence said in a private call with governors that except for a few places, the U.S. is seeing strong drops in virus-related hospitalization and mortality rates. In audio of the call obtained by The Associated Press, Pence urged governors to make it clear to residents that "there's a lot of really, really good news."

White House officials have played down the severity of the virus surge in places like Arizona and Texas. On Monday, the nation's second-most-populated state set a

one-day high in hospitalizations of coronavirus patients for the seventh time in eight days. Arizona's hospitals were at about 82% capacity.

Meanwhile, Germany and France dropped border checks nearly two weeks after Italy opened its frontiers. Greece welcomed visitors Monday with passengers on flights from other European countries not having to undergo compulsory coronavirus tests.

The European Union's 27 nations and other European states aren't expected to start reopening to visitors from outside the continent until at least the beginning of July and possibly later.

Spain allowed thousands of Germans to fly to its Balearic Islands without a 14-day quarantine in a pilot program designed to help authorities gauge what's needed against possible virus flare-ups.

Martin Hofman was delighted to board a flight from Dusseldorf to the island of Mallorca because he said his vacation couldn't be postponed.

"To stay in Germany was not an option for us," Hofman said. "We are totally happy that we can get out."

In Mexico City, residents were free to drive without restrictions, and subway and bus stations that had been closed resumed service Monday as the city of 9 million continued its gradual return.

The reopening is based on hospital occupancy levels. As of Saturday, the capital and the surrounding state had 74% of their hospital beds occupied.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador encouraged Mexicans to get out of the house and get the economy moving again.

"Health is the most important thing, but at the same time, the economy, well-being, the return to coexistence, harmony and freedom," López Obrador said as he began his second weeklong road trip, this time from the Gulf coast state of Veracruz. "We can't let fear overwhelm us."

In Beijing, where an outbreak was traced to a market that supplies much of the city's meat and vegetables,

thousands lined up for tests. Authorities confirmed 106 cases since Friday in what looks to be the largest outbreak since China largely stopped its spread at home more than two months ago.

Tests were administered to workers at the Xinfadi market, anyone who had visited it in the past two weeks, or anyone who had come in contact with either group. The market is Beijing's largest wholesale food market, prompting inspections of fresh meat and seafood in the city and elsewhere in China.

Authorities also locked down the neighborhood around a second market, where three cases were confirmed. In all, 90,000 people are affected in the two neighborhoods in the city of 20 million.

China had relaxed most of its controls after the ruling Communist Party declared victory over the virus in March.

"We must continue to take decisive measures to defend against outside cases and internal resurgences," said Xu Hejian, director of the Beijing government information office.

Beijing suspended Monday's planned restart of some primary schools and reversed the relaxation of some social isolation measures.

Inspectors found 40 samples of the virus in the closed market, including on a chopping board for imported salmon. That prompted some supermarket chains to take salmon off their shelves over the weekend and inspect markets, stores and restaurants.

Experts were doubtful the virus was being spread through salmon or other food.

"For my money, it is more likely to be a person who came into the area with lots of people and the virus has spread, as the virus does," said Ian MacKay, who studies viruses at the University of Queensland in Australia, adding there was no evidence to suggest a link between outbreaks and food.

South Korea is also among those countries seeking to prevent a resurgence, reporting 37 new cases of CO-

VID-19. Authorities said 25 of those came from the Seoul area, where health authorities are scrambling to trace infections linked to entertainment and leisure activities, church gatherings, warehouse workers and door-to-door salespeople.

In other countries still battling major outbreaks:

— Even as Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country was emerging from the health crisis, authorities reported 8,246 new cases in the last 24 hours, bringing its total to 537,210. Russia, which has recorded over 7,000 deaths from the virus, is behind only the U.S. and Brazil in the number of infections.

— India's home minister offered 500 train carriages for use as makeshift hospital wards as New Delhi struggled to contain a spike in cases. The Health Ministry reported a jump of more than 11,000 infections nationwide for a third straight day.

— Egypt reported its highest number of new COVID-19 cases and fatalities in one day, with 1,691 infections and 97 deaths. It has the highest death rate in the Arab world, at 1,672, but the government has resisted a full lockdown to keep the economy functioning. Even as caseloads multiply, authorities plan to reopen airports for tourism to less hard-hit destinations next month.

— Ukraine resumed flights to some countries, relaxing a ban in place since March 17. Authorities will still request those arriving from countries with high infection numbers to spend two weeks in quarantine. Ukraine's caseload has spiked recently, to nearly 32,000, following a decision in May to resume public transportation and reopen malls and gyms.

In the U.S., where reopenings continued, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo decried "rampant" violations of virus restrictions and said restaurants and bars could lose their liquor licenses if they don't enforce masks and social distancing.

"People are violating everything," Cuomo said Monday, adding, "to local governments, I say do your job."

Despite risks involved, several people across the world are volunteering for the trial of COVID-19 vaccine, allowing the researchers to inject potentially deadly microbes inside their nose.

Doctors first give the volunteers experimental vaccine, thereafter they are exposed to the deadly pathogen. If the dose works and prevents healthy volunteers from getting ill, then the study can move forward, The Washington Post reported.

Similar methods were used to work up malaria and cholera vaccines which are now being used to produce the coronavirus vaccine. Although similar methods are being employed to produce the COVID-19, there some doctors who don't agree with the approach as it raises some ethical points.

Question is being out on how right is the process to inject a person with a virus that killed over 435,000 people worldwide, with no cure available. Even in the past, trials were usually permitted only for an illness that isn't fatal or that have treatments available.

According to the US daily, large-scale trials of coronavirus vaccine candidates are scheduled to start this summer and fall with more conventional methods.

Lehua Gray, a 32-year-old product manager in Austin, who wants to be a volunteer said her interest in participating in a challenge trial, "it starts out being a conversation about FDA processes and ends up being a conversation about how I'm about to risk my life," she said.

Despite several risks, Gray is among 28,000 other volunteers, who have signed up for an online organization, 1Day Sooner, with the aim to combat the virus by placing themselves in the path of the deadly contagion.

Amid approaching Phase 3 trial, which is the lengthiest, Food and Drug Administration approval will be required, and thousands of participants will receive an inoculation, either an experimental vaccine or a placebo.

Experts say that this final process in vac-

Volunteers put their lives at risk for Covid-19 vaccine



ine creation can take six months or more.

Charles Weijer, a professor at Canada's Western University, said coronavirus challenge trials present the hardest question he has faced in 24 years of practice as a bioethicist.

"Most ethicists agree there is an upper limit of risk," said Seema Shah, an ethics professor at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. "It wouldn't be kay to sacrifice one individual for the benefit of many others."

In April, several of members of the House of Representatives urged Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn to consider implementing challenge trials. "If this went all wrong, and some healthy volunteer died as a result, that would be impossible to forgive ourselves," Collins, the NIH director, said.

In May, Collins and other experts from

US vaccine effort asked for an independent panel of specialists in ethics, clinical trials for ongoing vaccines experiments.

Johnson and Johnson chief scientist Paul Stoffels has that the company was focused on a traditional large-scale trial slated to begin in mid-September and not giving much consideration to challenge trials.

"We don't think, at the moment, it will help in the speed to results," Stoffels said, noting that important scientific work would have to be done to develop a model for challenge experiments.

According to the Post, if countries are successful at controlling their outbreaks, it will pose an obstacle to vaccine researchers who in traditional trials.

The obstacles are formidable. Infecting healthy people with a potentially lethal virus, with no treatment to save them from severe illness or death,

raises some of the most fraught ethical, scientific and philosophical issues in the history of medicine.

"If the disease gets to a very low level, maybe challenge studies will have to be considered," Pascal Soriot, chief executive of AstraZeneca, said at a briefing with other pharmaceutical executives.

Even Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, sponsors of influenza challenge trials, are worried that if the covid-19 challenge trials proceed and people die.

"People we are really worried about — the elderly and with chronic diseases — would not be volunteering," Collins said.

"And can you really extrapolate from saying this 22-year-old recruit from the military did fine, that 72-year-olds and people with [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease] would do well and be protected?"

"We've done them for malaria, influenza, shigella. What makes me personally cautious about doing them for SARS-CoV-2 is, at the moment, we don't have a rescue medication," Kathleen Neuzil, director of the Center for Vaccine Development and Global Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

If challenge trials were to proceed, she said, "this is going to take some very careful thought and very careful planning." As things stand, people are coming in great number to support the global effort at producing the COVID-19 vaccine at the earliest.

Combating COVID-19, sign-ups of "TheCovidChallenge.org" has surged dramatically and has garnered more than 28,000 volunteers so far.

The organization is collecting donations, which will be used to pay for a USD 50,000 research survey on volunteers.

Additionally, many people with backgrounds in various fields are signing up with the organization saying the trials "could provide a sense of purpose in a time of chaos and helplessness."

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Agencies

Quick high-intensity workouts good for people with spinal cord injuries

Agencies

Researchers have shed light on the practical advantages of high-intensity interval training (HIIT) or short bursts of all-out exercise for people who have experienced spinal cord injuries (SCI).

While many studies have proven the benefits of HIIT for the able-bodied, much less is known about its impact, for better or worse, on the SCI population.

Published online in the journal Spinal Cord, researchers from the Department of Kinesiology at McMaster University McMaster, the USA, and the UK have weighed the evidence regarding the overall health benefits, potential adverse effects, and feasibility of interval training for people with SCI.

Researchers found HIIT and sprint interval training (SIT) improve cardiorespiratory fitness in people with SCI to a degree that appears to match longer bouts of moderate-intensity exercise.

Importantly, the population is generally able to tolerate both HIIT and SIT, and there have been very few reports of harm from this type of training, the researchers have found. "This may be especially relevant in the inpatient rehabilitation environment, where newly injured people with SCI spend a number of weeks before being discharged to the community," said Audrey Hicks, a professor in the Department of Kinesiology and one of the lead authors of the study. "During this time, the patient's days are extremely full, with physiotherapy, occupational therapy, functional training, and exercise training, all with the goal of optimizing transition to the community. The time demands are enormous, so more efficient forms of exercise can be particularly attractive," she added.

Spinal cord injuries typically lead to reduced physical activity, which in turn leads to other health problems such as a decline in fitness, muscle atrophy, increased body fat, and increased risk for heart disease and diabetes.

Hicks and her team have shown in a previous study that a program of SIT three times a week for five weeks is as effective in improving indices of cardiorespiratory fitness as traditional moderate-intensity exercise and takes a fraction of the time to complete.

One year on: Hong Kong protesters change tactics

Agencies

Dave Cheung, 25, used to be a frequent protest-goer. He identifies himself as a “radical” – a protester that is usually dressed in black, wears a gas mask, sets up roadblocks and confronts police on the front lines.

He was arrested when the protests started in June of last year, for being involved in clashes with police outside government headquarters, following a peaceful protest that same day. He was later released on bail, but the arrest didn't stop him from participating in more demonstrations.

The street protests began in response to a now-vetted bill that would allow suspects

“There's no use in confronting the police now. It's obvious that they are so much more equipped than we are, and that they won't bear the consequences for the things they did,” Cheung told DW.

“We need to change our approach. It's obvious that the government doesn't care about how many people or how often we protest on the streets.”

Harsh police crackdown

Since June 2019, police have fired more than 16,000 rounds of teargas, over 7,000 rubber bullets and made nearly 9,000 arrests – almost 40% of which were of students.

Police were accused of exces-



to be extradited to China for trials. However, even after the bill was scrapped, protesters later raised other demands, including the resignation of Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam and universal suffrage.

The demonstrations were faced with heavy police crackdowns and mass arrests of protesters, particularly of the “radicals.”

However, Cheung believes that taking to the streets is no longer an effective way to continue their fight.

sive use of force and conducting arbitrary arrests, which led to one of the five demands that protesters touted – an independent investigation into the police department's use of force. Instead, however, the government commissioned a police watchdog to conduct an examination, which lawmakers and international experts said was not truly independent and had no investigative power. The resulting report claimed that police “acted within the guidelines.”

‘Iran plans monthly gasoline shipments to Venezuela’

Agencies

Tehran: Iran plans to follow its trailblazing shipment of fuel to sanctions-hit Venezuela with regular gasoline sales despite US threats to punish any facilitation of the cargoes, a report says.

Last month, Iran sternly warned the US to stay clear of its oil tankers as they set off for the Caribbean to deliver about 1.5 million barrels of gasoline to Venezuela which is under a virtual American economic siege.

On Saturday, an Iranian news agency said Iran's naval forces had prepared to target US commercial vessels in the Persian Gulf in case American forces interfered with Venezuela-bound Iranian oil tankers.

“According to reports received by Noor News, after increasing military threats against Iranian vessels headed for Venezuela, an order was issued to Iran's armed forces to identify and track several US merchant vessels in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman,” the agency said on its website.

“Options for reciprocal action were immediately identified and monitored for possible operations,” Noor News added.

US climbdown

Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s Aerospace Force Space Division has said the home-grown Noor satellite that was launched into space last month was used to track the oil tankers.

“In the Atlantic Ocean, where access to ships is normally more difficult, monitoring the position of the oil tankers and the situation in their surroundings was put on the agenda of the Noor satellite, and was accomplished,” Brigadier General Ali Jafarabadi said.

On the diplomatic front, Iran complained to the United Nations and summoned the Swiss ambassador in Tehran, who represents US interests in the Islamic Republic, over possible measures Washington could take against the Iranian tankers.

According to many observers, Iran's determination forced a climbdown in threatened “measures” by the US which had reportedly dispatched warships and a patrol aircraft to the Atlantic Ocean to possibly confront the Iranian vessels.



Dexamethasone – First Drug Proves Able To Improve Survival From Covid-19

Agencies

London : Researchers in England say they have the first evidence that a drug can improve COVID-19 survival: A cheap, widely available steroid called dexamethasone reduced deaths by up to one third in severely ill hospitalised patients.

Results were announced Tuesday and researchers said they would publish them soon. The study is a large, strict test that randomly assigned 2,104 patients to get the drug and compared them with 4,321 patients getting only usual care.

The drug was given either orally or through an IV. After 28 days, it had reduced deaths by 35% in patients who needed treatment with breathing machines and by 20% in those only needing supplemental oxygen. It did not appear to help less ill patients.

“This is an extremely welcome result,” one study leader, Peter Horby of the University of Oxford, said in a statement. “The survival benefit is clear and large in those patients who are sick enough to require oxy-

gen treatment, so dexamethasone should now become standard of care in these patients. Dexamethasone is inexpensive, on the shelf, and can be used immediately to save lives worldwide.”

“Even though the drug only helps in severe cases, “countless lives will be saved globally,” said Nick Cammack of Wellcome, a British charity that supports science research.

“Dexamethasone must now be rolled out and accessed by thousands of critically ill patients around the world,” said Cammack, who had no role in the study. “It is highly affordable, easy to make, can be scaled up quickly and only needs a small dosage.”

Steroid drugs reduce inflammation, which sometimes develops in COVID-19 patients as the immune system overreacts to fight the infection. This overreaction can prove fatal, so doctors have been testing steroids and other anti-inflammatory drugs in such patients. The World Health Organization advises against using steroids earlier in the course of illness

because they can slow the time until patients clear the virus.

Researchers estimated that the drug would prevent one death for every eight patients treated while on breathing machines and one for every 25 patients on extra oxygen alone.

This is the same study that earlier this month showed the malaria drug hydroxychloroquine was not working against the coronavirus. The study enrolled more than 11,000 patients in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who were given either standard of care or that plus one of several treatments: dexamethasone; the HIV combo drug lopinavir-ritonavir, the antibiotic azithromycin; the anti-inflammatory drug tocilizumab; or plasma from people who have recovered from COVID-19 that contains antibodies to fight the virus.

Research is continuing on the other treatments. The research is funded by government health agencies in the United Kingdom and private donors including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Rise In Infections Shows Need For Vigilance As World Reopens

Agencies

London: European countries reopened borders Monday after a three-month coronavirus shutdown, although international visitors are still being kept away and there was uncertainty over whether many Europeans will quickly embrace travel outside their home countries.

Reopening continued in Mexico and Brazil despite cases climbing in the two largest nations in Latin America, where authorities struggled to handle the pandemic's effect on already-weak medical systems. In the U.S., Vice President Mike Pence encouraged governors to highlight the “good news” around efforts to fight the virus despite several states reporting a rise in infections, which could intensify as people return to work and venture out during the summer.

The need for constant vigilance came into sharp focus as China, where COVID-19 first emerged in December, rushed to contain an outbreak in the capital of Beijing.



The head of the World Health Organization said more than 100,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus have been reported globally each day in the last two weeks, and countries that have curbed transmissions “must stay alert to the possibility of resurgence.”

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted that it took over two months to reach 100,000 reported cases, now a daily norm. Each day, nearly three-fourths of the new cases come from 10 countries — mostly in South Asia and the Americas, he said.

Pence said in a private call with governors that except for

a few places, the U.S. is seeing strong drops in virus-related hospitalization and mortality rates. In audio of the call obtained by The Associated Press, Pence urged governors to make it clear to residents that “there's a lot of really, really good news.”

White House officials have played down the severity of the virus surge in places like Arizona and Texas. On Monday, the nation's second-most-populated state set a one-day high in hospitalizations of coronavirus patients for the seventh time in eight days. Arizona's hospitals were at about 82% capacity.

Saudi Faces Perilous Haj Call As Virus Spikes

Agencies

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia is expected to scale back or call off this year's Haj pilgrimage for the first time in its modern history, observers say, a perilous decision as coronavirus cases spike.

Muslim nations are pressing Riyadh to give its much-delayed decision on whether the annual ritual will go ahead as scheduled in late July.

But as the kingdom negotiates a call fraught with political and economic risks in a tinderbox region, time is running out to organise logistics for one of the world's largest mass gatherings.

A full-scale Haj, which last year drew about 2.5 million pilgrims, appears increasingly unlikely after authorities advised Muslims in late March to defer preparations due to the fast-spreading disease.

lar announcements.

Many other countries with Muslim populations — from Egypt and Morocco to Turkey, Lebanon and Bulgaria — have said they are still awaiting Riyadh's decision.

In countries like France, faith leaders have urged Muslims to “postpone” their pilgrimage plans until next year due to the prevailing risks.

The Haj, a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lifetime, represents a major potential source of contagion as it packs millions of pilgrims into congested religious sites.

But any decision to limit or cancel the event risks annoying Muslim hardliners for whom religion trumps health concerns. It could also trigger renewed scrutiny of the Saudi custodianship of Islam's holiest sites — the kingdom's most powerful



“It's a toss-up between holding a nominal Haj and scrapping it entirely,” a South Asian official in contact with Saudi Haj authorities told AFP.

A Saudi official told AFP: “The decision will soon be made and announced.”

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, withdrew from the pilgrimage this month after pressing Riyadh for clarity, with a minister calling it a “very bitter and difficult decision”.

Malaysia, Senegal and Singapore followed suit with simi-

source of political legitimacy.

A series of deadly disasters over the years, including a 2015 stampede that killed up to 2,300 worshippers, has prompted criticism of the kingdom's management of the Haj.

“Saudi Arabia is caught between the devil and the deep blue sea,” Umar Karim, a visiting fellow at the Royal United Services Institute in London, told AFP.

“The delay in announcing its decision shows it understands the political consequences of cancelling the Haj or reducing its scale.”

Oscars 2021 Postponed By Two Months To April 25 Due To Pandemic

Agencies

Los Angeles, United States: The 93rd Oscars have been postponed by eight weeks to April 25 after the coronavirus pandemic shuttered movie theaters and desolate on Hollywood's release calendar, the Academy said Monday.

With many studio blockbusters and indie arthouse movies forced to push back their release dates until theaters reopen, the cut-off date for Oscar-eligible films has also been extended from December 31, 2020 to February 28, 2021.

“Our hope, in extending the eligibility period and our Awards date, is to provide the flexibility filmmakers need to finish and release their films without being penalized for something beyond anyone's control,” said Academy president David Rubin and CEO Dawn Hudson in a statement.

The movie industry's biggest night was originally sched-

uled for February 28, 2021.

No decision has yet been taken on whether it will remain a live, star-studded ceremony, or shift to a “virtual” presentation. Most US movie theaters remain closed, with fears of a second wave of COVID-19 cases growing.

The Academy -- seen as the top body of the Hollywood film industry -- had already eased some eligibility rules in April, allowing movies that skip the big screen and appear on streaming platforms to contend for Oscars this year.

Monday's move was prompted by concerns that a field consisting only of films released in 2020 would not be as broad or competitive as in previous years. The Academy Awards have been postponed before -- after Los Angeles flooded in 1938, Martin Luther King Jr's assassination in 1968 and the shooting of President Ronald Reagan in 1981 -- but never by more than a week.

NEWS MAKERS

Only US Agencies Couldn't Grasp Benefits Of Hydroxychloroquine: Trump

Washington: The US Food and Drug Administration on Monday revoked its emergency use authorization for hydroxychloroquine to treat COVID-19, but quickly came under fire from US President Donald Trump, who said only US agencies have failed to grasp its benefit in fighting the coronavirus.

Based on new evidence, the FDA said it was no longer reasonable to believe that hydroxychloroquine and the related drug chloroquine may be effective in treating the illness caused by the novel coronavirus.

The FDA also warned that the drugs have been shown in lab studies to interfere with Gilead Sciences Inc's antiviral drug remdesivir - the



only medicine so far to show a benefit against COVID-19 in formal clinical trials.

The move comes after several studies of the decades-old malaria pills suggested they were not effective either as a treatment for or to prevent COVID-19.

British scientists earlier this month halted a large trial after deciding that hydroxychloroquine was “useless” at treating COVID-19 patients.

The US Food and Drug Administration on Monday

revoked its emergency use authorization for hydroxychloroquine to treat COVID-19, the drug championed by Donald Trump to stave off the coronavirus. This report produced by Jillian Kitchen

Hydroxychloroquine's anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties suggested it might help COVID-19 patients, and the FDA authorized its emergency use in March at the height of a pandemic for which there were no approved treatments.

The early enthusiasm was partly based on laboratory experiments in which the drug appeared to neutralize the virus. Chloroquine, which is not approved for any use in the United States and has more side effects, has not fared any better in human clinical trials.

Russia hosts Zarif, promises to stand by Iran on nuclear deal

Russia has promised to stand by its ally, Iran, amid tensions over Tehran's nuclear programme as Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif in Moscow.

Lavrov said on Tuesday Russia would do “everything” to preserve a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers that started to unravel two years ago when the US renounced it and reimposed sanctions on Tehran.

“We will be doing everything so that no one can destroy these agreements,” Lavrov told reporters after face-to-face talks with Zarif. “Washington has no right to punish Iran.”

He said Russia would firmly oppose any “attempts to use this situation in order to manipulate the (United Nations) Security Council and to promote an anti-Iranian agenda”.

On his part, Zarif described developments around the Iranian nuclear deal - formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - as “very dangerous”.

Abandoned commitments

Iran committed under the deal to curb its nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief and other benefits.

But the Islamic Republic has slowly



abandoned its commitments after US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the deal.

Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium is currently almost eight times the limit fixed in the accord, according to an assessment by the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Pak IT minister tests covid positive

Karachi: Pakistan's Information Technology and Telecommunications Minister Syed Aminul Haq was tested positive for the coronavirus on Tuesday, joining a long list of politicians who have tested positive for the virus that has killed 2,839 people in the country.

Haq confirmed that he had been suffering from persistent fever for the past one week which had turned into typhoid, Geo News reported.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement leader, who was appointed as Minister for IT and Telecommunications on April 6, 2020, said that as soon as he became aware that he was infected with the coronavirus, he isolated himself.

The number of COVID-19 cases is increasing rapidly in the country and so far, several lawmakers have been infected with the virus. At least four lawmakers, including a provincial minister, have died due to coronavirus in Pakistan.

On Monday, Sindh's Minister For Women Development Syeda Shehla Raza was tested positive for the coronavirus.

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