



Maximum : 28°C
Minimum : 15°C
Humidity : 47%

SUNSET
Today 07:45 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 05:20 AM



News Digest

Govt Orders Roster Of Admin Secretaries

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Friday issued a roster of administrative secretaries during Annual Darbar Move of offices from Jammu to Srinagar for the Summer Session-2020. According to an order issued by the General Administration Department (GAD), Financial Commissioner, Arun Kumar Mehta ; Principal Secretaries, Bipul Pathak, Dr Asgar Hassan Samoon, Navin Kumar Choudhary, Rohit Kansal and Shailendra Kumar; Commissioner/ Secretaries, Manoj Kumar Dwivedi, Saurabh Bhagat, Sheikh Fayaz Ahmed ● P-02

6 Feared Dead In Kishtwar Mishap

Srinagar: At least six people are feared dead after the vehicle they were travelling in skidded off the road and plunged into the river Chenab in Kishtwar district, reports said Friday. A tipper with five labourers and the driver on board skidded off the road Slipor Morh in Paddar area of district Kishtwar on Wednesday evening and plunged into the river Chenab, reports said. The persons on board in the vehicle were identified as Driver Sandeep Kumar, Rajesh Kumar and Rakesh Kumar of Kadhail, Ravinder Kumar and Jabar Singh of Jar and Manjeet Kumar of Sazar. ● P-02

Ex- Chief Planning Officer Arrested

Srinagar: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Friday arrested former Chief Planning Officer Budgam in a case regarding disproportionate assets. In a statement issued here, an ACB spokesperson said that Noor Mohammad Wani, the then Chief Planning Officer Budgam was arrested today in a case under FIR number 18/2019 registered at Police Station ACB Kashmir. "The instant case was registered for accumulation of assets disproportionate to ● P-02

Army Porter Injured In Landmine Blast

Srinagar: An Army porter on Friday was injured in a landmine blast along the Line of Control (LoC) in Uri area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district. 30-year-old Bashir Ahmad sustained injuries in his foot when he accidentally stepped upon a landmine near Raino post at the Hajipier sector in border town Uri, reports said. The injured porter was removed to sub-district Hospital Uri for treatment. However, the doctors there referred him to GMC Baramulla for advanced ● P-02

Couple Among 3 Injured In Bear Attack

Srinagar: A couple were among three persons attacked and injured on Friday by a bear in Dooru area of South Kashmir's Anantnag district. The three persons were injured after they were attacked by a bear who ventured from nearby forests in their villages at Gundinowroz Larkipora on Friday afternoon, reports said. The injured have been identified as Ghulam Mohideen Lone, his wife Haleema Bano and Arif Ahmad Wani, all residents of Gundinowroz. A police officer also confirmed the incident and said the ● P-02

NC Breaks Silence, Demands Restoration Of Special Status

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR- The National Conference (NC) on Friday welcomed the apparent shift in the BJP's stand from belligerence to amity and peace", while demanding restoration of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

In a joint statement by party president and MP Farooq Abdullah, his colleagues in the Lok Sabha — Mohammad Akbar Lone and Hasnain Masoodi — and some senior party leaders, the NC said the change in the BJP's stand was discernible from the recent statements of union ministers Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari.

The party leaders also welcomed the statement of Gadkari that India is not interested in expansion in

land either from Pakistan or China and that India only wanted peace and amity, the statement said.

The statement also welcomes the bold admission made by the leader of Mr Gadkari's stature that while he and his colleagues want to make India strong 'the strength does not come from expansion' and that they want 'peace not violence' and to work together, it said.

The party also noted with satisfaction the change from a hostile and aggressive posture that would day in and day out call for armed adventure across the Line of Control (LoC), to a conciliatory posture advocated by the Union Defence Minister in his Jan Samvad address to party cadres.

However, it said mere ● PAGE 02

PAGE 1 Anchor

Mrinal Pathak

SRINAGAR: Akin to speculative masses currently watching Sino-India standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in their living rooms, senior defence journalist and co-author of 'Dragon On Our Doorstep', Ghazala Wahab, is wondering: "What's going to happen now?"

The thought, she said, troubling everybody is—"what'll be the cost of de-escalation?"

However, she said, there's no possibility of any further escalation.

"It has reached its peak," Wahab,

Executive Editor of Force Magazine, told Kashmir Observer. "The situation will further de-escalate, because neither side wants a war."

Wahab is hopeful that the future concourse of de-escalations will emerge from a trilateral meet between India, Russia and China later this month.

Despite this sanguine defense view, many military veterans are throwing their weight behind the martial solution to keep the dragon at bay.

After he hung his military boots, Ashok Pathak, former Indian army brigadier, has been taking a keen interest in geo-politics of South

After 'A Bad Moon Rising', LAC De-Escalation Becoming Battle Of Wits



An Army convoy on way to Ladakh. File Photo, Abid Bhat

Asia. The country which became epicenter of the COVID pandemic, he said, is on the warpath now to manage global perceptions.

Based on his expertise, the military veteran asserts that India won't back down this time. He sees the "looming" international pressure mounting on Beijing anytime soon now.

"It's certain," Brig. Pathak told Kashmir Observer, "that China is likely to face more international pressure after what it did."

But New Delhi, he said, needs to be self-dependent.

"We're very strong at LAC," the

ex-military officer continued. "We've possibly inflicted more casualties on that side than what has been reported."

In the night of June 15, Indian Army and People's Liberation Army of China entered into the deadly clash. The attack left 20 Indian Army men dead, while some source-based "intercepts put the Chinese casualties at around 43.

Brig. Pathak said India will give a befitting reply to the Chinese, and China will back off.

"That is certain," he said. "And it won't be for the first time. In 1967 also, we gave a bloody nose ● PAGE 02

No Indian Territory Intruded, No Post Occupied: PM Modi

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Neither is anyone inside our territory nor has any Indian post been captured, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday on the six-week border standoff with China as he briefed prominent political leaders about the killing of 20 soldiers in the Galwan Valley that triggered a massive escalation in tensions between the two countries.

At an all-party meeting, he said the soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice taught a "lesson" to those who had dared to look towards India and that the army has been given "freedom" to take necessary steps.

"At the outset, prime minister clarified that neither is ● PAGE 02



Fighter Jets, Choppers Seen Over Leh

IAF Chief Visits Srinagar, Ladakh

Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria paid a two-day visit to Leh and Srinagar to oversee preparedness of the Indian Air Force (IAF) in view of the massive escalation in tension with China following the violent Galwan Valley clash that left 20 Indian Army personnel dead and 76 injured, military sources said on Friday (June 19). The IAF has put all its frontline bases along the 3,500-km ● P-02

6 More Militants Killed In Shopian, Pulwama



A GROUP OF SOLDIERS walking towards the encounter spot in Meej area of Pampore on Friday. Pic, Abid BHAT

Observer New Service

SRINAGAR- Six more militants were killed in two separate gunfight with state forces in Pulwama and Shopian districts of south Kashmir, taking the number of militants killed in the overnight operations to eight, officials said.

While two militants were killed in the Pulwama gunfight, four were killed in Shopian operation on Friday, the officials said.

State forces launched a cordon and search operation at Meej in Pampore area of Pulwama, in South Kashmir, on Thursday morning after receiving specific information

about the presence of militants there, a police official said.

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

One militant was killed in the gunfight on Thursday, but two more militants entered a nearby mosque to take refuge inside it, the official said.

He said the cordon around the mosque was maintained throughout the night.

On Friday morning, state forces used tear smoke shells to force the holed up militants out of the mosque, the officials said, ● PAGE 02

PATIENCE AND PROFESSIONALISM worked. No use of firing and IED. Used tear smoke shells only. Maintained sanctity of the mosque. Both militants hiding inside mosque neutralised,"

Sonia Grills Govt Over Galwan Deaths

'Was There Intelligence Failure On LAC Situation'

NEW DELHI: Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Friday asked the government whether there was any intelligence failure on the situation along the LAC where 20 army personnel were killed in a violent face-off with Chinese troops, and sought an assurance from the prime minister that status quo ante would be restored at

the border and China will revert to its original position.

In her introductory remarks at an all-party meeting convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Gandhi said even at this stage they were in the dark about many crucial aspects of the crisis as she posed a set ● PAGE 02

China Releases Captive Indian Soldiers, Including Lt Col

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: The Chinese army on Thursday released ten Indian soldiers, including four officers, hours after an army spokesperson claimed that none of the Indian troops were "missing in action" following the deadly clash in the Galwan Valley of Ladakh, the Hin-

du reported Friday.

According to the report, ten captive Indian soldiers, including a Lieutenant Colonel and three Majors were released by the China's People's Liberation Army on Thursday evening after an agreement was reached at the Major General-level talks a day earlier.

During talks on Thursday, ● PAGE

Newborn, 2 Others Die Of Covid-19 In Kashmir, Toll Reaches 75

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR- A 15-day-old baby was among three COVID-19 patients who died at a hospital here, taking the number of fatalities due to the novel coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir to 75, officials said on Friday.

The baby is the youngest COVID-19 victim in J&K, the officials said, adding all the deaths took place at SKIMS hospital in Soura area of the city here.

The baby from Bemina area had tested positive for the virus and was admitted to the hospital on Wednesday as a case of aortic ste-

Covid-19 Victim's 2 Relatives Die During Funeral, Probe Ordered

Two family members accompanying the body of a COVID-19 victim for his last rites fell unconscious and died in Jammu, following which the district administration ordered a magisterial probe into it, officials said. ● P-02

10 Soldiers, 4 Cops Among 125 Fresh Positives

Jammu and Kashmir on Friday reported 125 fresh cases of Covid-19, including ten soldiers, four policemen and three expecting mothers, raising the number of infected people across the Union Territory to 5680, officials said. ● P-02

nosis with Congestive Cardiac Failure (CCF). The newborn ● PAGE 02

Ladakh Stand-Off, Pak Ceasefire Violations Not Connected: Army

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: The Army on Friday said there is no connection between the ceasefire violations along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir and the situation on the Line of Actual Control with China in the Ladakh region.

It, however, asserted that no "misadventure" would be allowed along the borders in the union territory.

"The ceasefire violations by Pakistan along the Line of Control (LoC) are happening as per the old strategy in which it wants to push in more militants into the valley. If there is one entity in the world which is not happy with the peace in the valley, it is Pakistan," ● PAGE 02

Pak Breached Truce In Tangdhar Sector: Army

Pakistani troops violated ceasefire along the Line of Control in Tangdhar sector of Jammu and Kashmir by firing mortar shells towards Indian positions on Friday, Army officials said.

"On 19 June 2020, in the evening hours, Pakistan initiated an unprovoked ceasefire violation (CFV) along the LoC in Tangdhar sector by firing ● P-02

Forest Fire Triggers Landmine Blasts Along LoC

A massive forest fire broke out along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district triggering some landmine blasts on Friday, sources said.

There was a forest fire which spread along the LoC in the Mankote sector. Few landmines exploded due to it, they said.

Forest officials and the army are working to douse ● P-02

Jailed DySP Davinder Singh Granted Bail

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Suspended Jammu and Kashmir DySP Davinder Singh, arrested while ferrying two Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militants in a vehicle on the Srinagar-Jammu Highway earlier this year, was granted bail by a Delhi court on Friday, his lawyer said.

Singh and another accused in the case Irfan Shafi Mir were granted the relief by the court in a case filed by special cell of Delhi Police, noting that the probe agency failed to file charge sheet within 90 days from his arrest, as prescribed under law, their lawyer M S Khan said.

The bail was granted on a per-



File Pic

Will File Charge Sheet In Due Course: NIA

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday said it had "adequate evidence" against tainted Deputy Superintendent of Police of Jammu and Kashmir Davinder Singh, arrested in a terror case, and a charge sheet would be filed against him in due course. In a brief statement, a spokesperson ● P-02

Withdraw New Media Policy For Kashmir: RSF To Delhi

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls for the immediate withdrawal of the "New Media Policy" under which it says New Delhi assumes the right to harass journalists and media judicially and economically if they publish content it doesn't like.

"It amounts to prior censorship," RSF said in an emailed statement to Kashmir Observer.

Issued last week and openly declaring that it aims to "foster a genuinely positive image of the government," the 53-page policy statement gives Jammu and Kashmir's Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) the de facto right to exercise pre- and post-publication



control over all journalism in the territory for the next five years.

It says the DIPR will conduct a "background check" of every publisher, editor and reporter before their media outlet is granted "empanelment" – its term for official approval. And it adds: "Any individual or group indulging in fake news, unethical or anti-national activities or in plagiarism shall be de-empaneled besides being proceeded against ● PAGE 02

From Front page...

After ‘A Bad Moon Rising’,...

to the Chinese at Nathu La.”
Nathu La, along with Cho La, in northeastern part of India was the last clash site between the two forces that left hundreds of soldiers from both sides dead. Since then, the two sides have always resolved border disputes through diplomatic dialogues.

But Beijing now claims its sovereignty over the entire Galwan Valley—the site of the recent deadly nocturnal clash—named after a Ladakhi explorer, Chulam Rasool Galwan. The ongoing faceoff flared up despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi having an iconic swing ride at Sabarmati River Front in Ahmedabad with Chinese President Xi Jinping in recent past. Since then, there’ve been multiple formal and informal summits between the two leaders. But now, some Beijing-based think tank have linked New Delhi’s “unilateral move” of scrapping the special status of the former state of Jammu and Kashmir with the LAC standoff. Standing eyeball to eyeball at multiple locations in eastern Ladakh for the past couple of months, the two most populous nations of the world have already fed war stores to an otherwise “unarmed” LAC. The three major points of the faceoff between India and China are patrolling points 14-15 in the Galwan Valley, Hot Springs, and Finger-4 of Pangong Tso in Ladakh. This time around, said Ajai Shukla, senior defence analyst and retired army colonel, the Chinese have intruded into new areas like Galwan, for the first time after 1962. “The numbers of intruders are unprecedented,” he said. The faceoff started in early April when a scuffle broke out between the Indian and Chinese soldiers in Pangong Tso. According to various reports, few Indian soldiers were taken by surprise when they spotted some Chinese soldiers patrolling the strategic Finger areas in Pangong Tso. The violent clash between the two sides left scores of soldiers heavily injured. Ajai Shukla labelled the recent ambush as the brutality of Chinese soldiers and requested the government to come clean on the current situation. In the last week of May, the two sides agreed on resolving the current dispute through dialogue. On June 6, 2020, both sides held talks at high military levels, but the talks could not result in any fruitful results.

While the talks were going on through military and diplomatic channels, the brutal clash on the night of June 15, 2020, further escalated the situation and led to many casualties on both sides. According to the official statement released by the Indian Army, 3 Indian soldiers, including a commanding officer were killed during the violent faceoff and 17 succumbed to death, leading the total number of fatalities to 20. Neither the army nor the government gave any number on Chinese casualties.

New Delhi in a statement said that India has always resolved to maintain peace and tranquility with China along the Line of Actual Control, which stretches from Ladakh in the west, to Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern part of India. The three Indian soldiers who recently lost their lives include Colonel Babu Santosh from Telangana who recently took control of the Army’s 16 Bihar unit. A day before the vicious incident, Army Chief General Mukund Naravane told media that troops on both sides were disengaging and the process of de-escalation had begun. While the army has not released any updated figure regarding the casualties, many experts suggest that the number of casualties can be significantly higher. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 17, 2020 said that India had never provoked anyone and will protect its sovereignty. The statement came after the opposition demanded the government to come clean on the current situation. Minister of External Affairs, S Jaishankar talked to his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, and conveyed, “What happened in Galwan was premeditated and planned action by China which was responsible for the sequence of events.” Yi hit back saying Indian forces crossed the LAC and provoked the attack. Calling it a “risky act” of Indian Army, he asked India “to thoroughly investigate and punish those responsible”. Later, MEA released a statement which stated that the clash with China would have a “serious impact” on the bilateral relationship. The recent nocturnal attack was the first such incident in 45 years, where the loss of lives has been reported. The last time when casualties were reported was in 1975.

After 1975, there have been incidents of minor scuffles between the Indian and Chinese soldiers, but none of the incidents was fatal. Since the Galwan Valley escalation, both sides have been trying to de-escalate the tension and ease off the already volatile situation. The two sides have been now engaged in the highest military level talks. Earlier, the Chinese government said that Indian forces provoked PLA soldiers by crossing the LAC. India refuted the claim immediately, saying China was unilaterally trying to change the status quo. For over decades, the border dispute has marred the bilateral ties between the two Asian giants. The two neighbours have maintained two different maps for the cold desert frontier. Analysts blame the India-China repeated talk failures for this cartographic conflict. Meanwhile, while terming the current situation as “a bad moon rising” on Sino-India relations, former Indian Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to China, Nirupama Menon Rao, said, “Chinese always present themselves as injured party and blame opposite side for the consequences.”

A dark hour like this with all the blood that has been shed is such a dreadful tragedy, Rao said. “Efforts made for normalization since 1976 have come to naught.”

No Indian Territory Intruded

anyone inside our territory nor is any of our post captured,” the government said in a statement, adding he assured the leaders that the armed forces are leaving no stone unturned to protect the country. The categorical statement by the prime minister came in the wake of reports that Chinese military has transgressed into the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the de-facto border, in several areas of eastern Ladakh including Pangong Tso and Galwan Valley. The prime minister’s assertion came even as Congress president Sonia Gandhi questioned the government’s handling of the situation, asking if there was any intelligence failure and seeking assurance that China will “revert” to its original position. While the Congress and the Left sought to corner the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government, most other parties, including the ruling alliance’s bitter critics like West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and DMK’s M K Stalin, extended their support over the issue. Assuring all the leaders that armed forces were fully capable of protecting the country’s borders, Modi said, “While on the one hand, the army has been given freedom to take necessary steps, India has also conveyed its position clearly to China through diplomatic means.” he said. He added that India today has such capability that no one can even dare to look towards “an inch of our land”. Modi said the entire country is hurt and angry at the steps taken by China at the LAC and underscored that India wants peace and friendship, but upholding sovereignty is “foremost”. The nearly four-hour meeting through video conference was attended by top leaders including BJP president J P Nadda, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, BSP’s Mayawati, CPI(M)’s Sitaram Yechury, DMK’s M K Stalin, Shiv Sena’s Uddhav Thackeray besides Gandhi and Banerjee among others. The government said the leaders of the political parties hailed the bravery displayed by the armed forces in Ladakh and reposed faith in the leadership of the prime minister in this hour of need. They expressed commitment to stand united with the government. In the meeting, Gandhi asked some tough questions to the government like whether there was any intelligence failure on the situation along the LAC, and sought an assurance from Modi that status quo ante would be restored at the border. In her introductory remarks, she said even at this stage they were in the dark about many crucial aspects of the crisis as she posed a set of questions to the government and sought specifics about when Chinese troops intruded into the Indian territory. “In the government’s considered view, was there a failure of intelligence,” she asked.

efence Minister Rajnath Singh said that the nation will never forget the sacrifice of the martyrs while External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar gave an overview of agreements between India and China on border management, besides sharing details of recent developments. Several leaders, including BJP ally and LoJanshakti Party president ChiragPaswan and Banerjee, asked the government to work to curb trade, especially import, with China and said investment from Chinese firms in infrastructure sector in India should be desisted. The clash in Galwan Valley was the worst cross border confrontation between the two sides in 45 years. While India lost 20 soldiers, China’s People’s Liberation Army has not yet talked about the number of casualties it suffered.

The prime minister’s comment that Indian soldiers taught a “lesson” to those who dared to look towards India is seen as reference to casualties on the Chinese side. The Chinese soldiers used stones,

nail-studded sticks, iron rods and clubs in carrying out brutal attacks on Indian soldiers after they protested the erection of a surveillance post by China on the Indian side of the LAC in Galwan. Pawar, a former defence minister said diplomatic channels should be used to defuse the tension, adding Chinese troops must be “evacuated” from the high ground in the Galwan valley.

He said that the Chinese army is occupying the high ground in the Galwan valley with a “specific objective of dominating the Dubruk-DBO road on the Indian side”. Chinese troops can at any time decide to enforce closure of this road and India will have to pay a heavy military cost if that happened, the NCP chief said in the meeting. Trinamool Congress supreme Banerjee said her party stands firmly behind the Union government in this hour of crisis and urged the Centre not to allow Chinese investments in strategically important infrastructure sectors. The West Bengal chief minister said India “should and will” unitedly tide over the crisis, sources in her party said. “We stand with the government in this hour of crisis. We will win. We will put up a united fight as one nation,” Banerjee was quoted as having told the meeting by a source in the TMC. Opposition parties like the RJD, AAP and AIMIM reacted angrily over not being invited to the meeting and raised questions over the criteria for the invitation. The two armies were engaged in a standoff in Galwan and several other areas of eastern Ladakh since May 5 when the two sides clashed on the banks of the Pangong Tso. The situation in the area deteriorated after around 250 Chinese and Indian soldiers were engaged in a violent face-off on May 5 and 6. The incident in Pangong Tso was followed by a similar incident in north Sikkim on May 9. The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long LAC. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet, while India contests it. Prior to the clashes, both sides have been asserting that pending the final resolution of the boundary issue, it is necessary to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

Fighter Jets, Choppers Seen

de-facto border with China on high alert and moved in additional assets like fighter jets and attack helicopters as part of heightened state of preparedness following the clashes. Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria was at the Leh IAF base on Wednesday (June 17) where he reviewed operational preparedness of the force in effectively guarding the sensitive border areas in eastern Ladakh where Indian and Chinese armies have been on a nearly six-week standoff. From Leh, he traveled to Srinagar on a day-long visit on Wednesday where he held a series of meetings with senior IAF officers. The IAF has already moved a sizable number of its frontline Sukhoi 30 MKI, Jaguar, Mirage 2000 aircraft and Apache attack helicopters to several key air bases including Leh and Srinagar in the last three days, sources said. According a report in NDTV, on several IAF fighter jets and attack helicopters such as the Apache chopper were spotted over Leh. It is learnt that IAF jets have increased their sorties in the eastern Ladakh region in the last few days after Chinese military increased its aerial activities in the area following the Monday evening clash in Galwan. Even as the IAF is yet to confirm the details of the activities by the Chinese Air Force, via an independent investigation conducted by the NDTV, through satellite imagery, a fast-growing infrastructural build-up has been confirmed at the Ngari Air Force base in Tibet near the Pangong Lake where several large scale Chinese incursions have taken place. The report also mentions that there are several Chinese Air Force bases in Tibet which could pose a threat to India. The IAF is also closely monitoring the situation in Pakistan’s air base of Skardu, in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, which could also how Chinese fighters. However, the IAF has not yet confirmed the presence of the same. Bhadauria travelled to Leh on Wednesday afternoon after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reviewed the overall security scenario with him, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat, and the other two service chiefs. In the meeting it was decided that all the frontline bases of the Indian Army and the IAF along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China will be put on high alert in view of the border clash in Galwan Valley. The Indian Navy has also been asked to raise its alert level in the Indian Ocean Region where Chinese Navy has been making regular forays. The Army has already rushed in additional troops and weaponry to all its key frontline bases and formations along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh, sources said. The IAF has also sent additional platforms to its bases in Sikkim, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. With most of the Chinese air bases built at high-altitudes, the neighbouring troops may face many operational glitches, including weight and fuel load restrictions, forcing them to cut down on the weaponry they carry. However, India does not face such problems due to it’s air bases mostly operating from plains such as Bareilly, Adampur and Jammu and Kashmir bases.

The clash in Galwan Valley is the biggest confrontation between the two militaries after their 1967 clashes in Nathu La when India lost around 80 soldiers while the death toll on the Chinese side was over 300. The Chinese soldiers used stones, nail-studded sticks, iron rods and clubs in carrying out brutal attacks on Indian soldiers after they protested the erection of a surveillance post by China on the Indian side of the LAC in Galwan. The two armies were engaged in a stand-off in Galwan and several other areas of eastern Ladakh since May 5 when the two sides clashed on the banks of the Pangong Tso. After the standoff began, the Indian military leadership decided that Indian troops will adopt a firm approach in dealing with the aggressive posturing by the Chinese troops in all disputed areas of Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldie.

The trigger for the face-off was Chinass stiff opposition to India laying a key road in the Finger area around the Pangong Tso Lake besides construction of another road connecting the Darbuk-Shayok-Daulat Beg Oldie road in Galwan Valley. The road in the Finger area in Pangong Tso is considered crucial for India to carry out patrols. India has already decided not to stall any border infrastructure projects in eastern Ladakh despite Chinese protests. The situation in the area deteriorated after around 250 Chinese and Indian soldiers were engaged in a violent face-off on May 5 and 6. The incident in Pangong Tso was followed by a similar incident in north Sikkim on May 9. Prior to the clashes, both sides have been asserting that pending the final resolution of the boundary issue, it is necessary to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

Sonia Grills Govt Over ...

of questions to the government.

Gandhi asked specifics about when Chinese troops intruded into the Indian territory in Ladakh and whether the country’s external intelligence agencies did not report any unusual activity there. She also asked if the government had not received satellite pictures of the border area and the Military Intelligence did not alert it about the intrusion and the build-up of massive forces along the LAC. “In the government’s considered view, was there a failure of intelligence,” she asked. “The question is, what next? What is the way forward? The entire country would like an assurance that the status quo ante would be restored and China will revert to the original position on the Line of Actual Control,” she said. Gandhi alleged that valuable time was lost between May 5 and June 6 and the government failed to use all avenues of talks to ease the situation and the result was the loss of 20 lives as well as injury to dozens of personnel. “We in the Congress party believe that valuable time was lost between May 5 and June 6, the date on which the Corps Commanders meeting took place,” she said, adding that even after the June 6 meeting, efforts should have been made to talk directly to the leadership of China, both at political and diplomatic levels. “We failed to use all avenues, and the result is the loss of 20 lives as well as dozens injured. I would urge the Prime Minister to kindly share with us all the facts and the sequence of events beginning April this year till date,” she said.

Gandhi also asked about the current status of the Mountain Strike Corps, with two mountain infantry divisions, that was sanctioned in 2013. “Should the government not treat it with utmost priority,” she asked. She demanded that the government briefs the opposition on the preparedness of the defence forces to meet any threat. The Congress chief also said that her party and the entire opposition unitedly stood by the defence forces and were prepared to make any sacrifice to ensure they were battle ready. The meeting, she said, should have been convened sooner and immediately after the government was informed about the Chinese intrusion on May 5. The entire nation expects that the government will take all opposition parties and the country into confidence and brief them

regularly so that “we may present to the world a picture of unity and solidarity”, she said. Twenty Indian Army personnel including a colonel were killed in a fierce clash with Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on Monday night, the biggest military confrontation in over five decades that has significantly escalated the already volatile border standoff in the region.

China Releases Captive...

the Indian officers were reportedly assured of the safety of soldiers. The report says that Indian delegation was also shown pictures of soldiers held captive by the Chinese. All the soldiers were released unharmed by the PLA troops at Patrol Point 14 on Thursday at 5.30 pm, the report quotes sources as saying. The soldiers, according to the report were taken captive after a deadly brawl broke out on the intervening night of June 14-15, leaving at least 20 Indian soldiers dead. Many Chinese soldiers were also killed in the clash increasing tensions between the two nuclear countries. The Indian Army on Thursday said all Indian soldiers involved in the deadly clashes with the Chinese army at the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on Monday night had been “accounted for”. “It is clarified that there are no Indian troops missing in action,” the Army had said in a brief statement without elaborating. Following the release of the 10 Indian Army soldiers, situation has comparatively calmed down. The next round of talks between India and China over the weekend will revert to disengagement issues. Quoting military sources, the report further says that 76 Army personnel were brutally assaulted by the Chinese army on Monday out of which 18 were seriously injured while 58 of them sustained minor injuries. They said 18 personnel are undergoing treatment at a hospital in Leh while 58 are admitted to various other hospitals.

6 More Militants Killed...

adding the two were then killed by the forces while maintaining the sanctity of the religious place. In total, three militants were killed in the operation. Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar said no firing or IED was used to force the militants out of the Mosque. “Patience and professionalism worked. No use of firing and IED. Used tear smoke shells only. Maintained sanctity of the mosque. Both militants hiding inside mosque neutralised,” the IGP said. In another anti-militancy operation at Munand-Bandpava area of Shopian, which also began on Thursday, four more militants were killed on Friday morning, defence spokesman Col Rajesh Kalia said. The forces had launched the operation there after receiving intelligence inputs about the presence of militants there. While one militant was killed in the operation there on Thursday, four more were killed on Friday, Col Kalia said, taking the number of militants killed in the gunfight to five. In total, eight militants were killed in these two overnight operations in the last 24 hours. The IGP Kashmir has congratulated the state forces in Kashmir for killing 100 militants in the valley this year so far. “IGP Kashmir Shri Vijay Kumar #congratulates Team Kashmir” for completing a #century on the front of #AntiTerrorist operations. @JmuKmrPolice,” Kashmir Zone Police said in a tweet. (with PTI inputs)

Newborn, 2 Others Die...

died this morning.

In second death at the hospital, an 80-year-old man from Sopore area of north Kashmir’s Baramulla district passed away at 9 am in Friday, the officials said. They said the patient suffering from hypertension and cardiac failure was admitted to the hospital on June 17. His sampling was done that day only and the report returned as positive the next day, they added. Earlier, a 79-year-old man from Nowshera area of Srinagar, who had tested positive for COVID-19, died at 11:15 pm on Thursday night, the officials said. They said the patient was admitted to the hospital on June 8 and was suffering from hypertension, hypothyroidism, with bilateral chest infiltrate. He had contact history with a positive patient, they said. With these fatalities, the death toll due to the pathogen has risen in Jammu and Kashmir to 75— 66 in Valley and 9 in Jammu division. So far Srinagar district with eighteen deaths due to the virus has the highest fatalities, followed by thirteen in Baramulla, nine in Shopian, eight in Kulgam, six in Jammu, five each in Anantnag, Kupwara & Budgam, two in Pulwama while one death each has been reported in Bandipora, Doda, Rajouri & Udhampur.

Covid-19 Victim’s 2 ...

The kin of the deceased duo alleged that they died due to dehydration. According to them, their family member died of COVID-19 on Wednesday night and they were told to conduct the last rites in the morning but it got delayed. “Four of us were dressed up in PPE kits and taken to Sidhra for the cremation. As we travelled through the sandy banks of a river, the wheels of the ambulance got stuck and we had to carry the body for some distance. We all were dehydrated,” a cousin of the deceased told reporters. “Three of our family members parched because of the high temperature asked for water. But the officials did not give water and instead scolded us. As the three fell unconscious, I carried one to GMC hospital and he was revived,” he said. According to sources, the other two persons died on the spot. One of the body was carried to GMC hospital in an ambulance and another was ferried in the evening by the police, they said. Officials said that Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Girish Chander Murmu has taken a serious note of the “negligence on the part of the administration and strict action will be taken against those responsible”. District Magistrate of Jammu Sushma Chauhan said, “During the cremation of a body on account of COVID-19 related death, two persons accompanying the body for the last rites became unconscious and subsequently passed away in mysterious circumstances. A magisterial probe into it has been ordered.” An additional district magistrate shall conduct a probe to ascertain the circumstances leading to the death of the two persons, she said, adding a special board of directors has been constituted to conduct autopsy and the ADM shall submit the report by June 22.

10 Soldiers, 4 Cops Among ...

“125 new Covid-19 cases were detected in J&K. While 102 of them are from Kashmir, 23 are from Jammu,” the officials said. Among fresh cases, 31 cases were reported from Srinagar, 18 from Pulwama, 11 from Kulgam, 10 from Baramulla, eight each from Anantnag & Jammu, seven each from Kupwara, Bandipora, Shopian & Kathua, four from Samba, two from Budgam & Udhampur and one each from Ganderbal, Poonch & Rajouri, they said. They said that 50 more patients recovered and were discharged from different hospitals. The number of confirmed cases has now reached 5,680 out of which 4,374 are in Kashmir, while 1,306 are in Jammu, the officials said. There are 2,411 active cases of the coronavirus disease in J&K — 1,772 in Kashmir and 639 in Jammu — and 3,194 (2,536 from Kashmir and 658 from Jammu) patients have recovered, according to officials. The J&K has witnessed 75 Covid-19 (66 from Kashmir, 9 from Jammu) deaths so far.

Ladakh Stand-Off, Pak...

Lt Gen B S Raju, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Srinagar-based Chinar Corps, said here. “The moment there is peace in the valley, it generates violence — both from across as ceasefire violation as well as sending instructions to entities or its proxies within the valley to generate violence,” he said. He was speaking at a joint press conference along with senior officers of Jammu and Kashmir Police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) here. Lt Gen Raju said he does not see any major connection between the situation in Ladakh and the ceasefire violations in Jammu and Kashmir as of now. “I do not see any such major connection as of now. The existing ceasefire violations have happened through a pattern and there has not been any great increase in the number of ceasefire violations, but, definitely, some of them have been intense in which the Pakistan-initiated ceasefire violations have inflicted some civilian casualties,” he said. He said the Army is taking proper measures to provide more security and safety to the civilian population in the areas near to the LoC. “Some action on the construction of civilian bunker has started, some

places it has been done, but I think there is more required to be done. We are fully prepared at the LoC to ensure that this particular phenomenon of ceasefire violations and infiltration is kept in check,” he said. Lt Gen Raju said while the situation on the LoC was stable, the Army would ensure there will be no misadventure from across. “I would like to assure everybody that the situation on the Line of Control and in the hinterland is stable. We will ensure that there will be no misadventure both from outside of the Line of Control and as well as within the valley. And, we will ensure that the situation is kept normal and the people of the valley will be able to go about their jobs in the most normal manner,” he said. Asked about the situation along the LAC in Ladakh, the GOC said, “The situation as far as I am aware is in control and whatever is required to be done in that area by the forces, which are required to operate, are capable of doing their job. “I must also say that this is one of the contingency that the Army is aware could happen and that particular contingency is being played out and whatever actions are required to be taken, are being done,” he said. Speaking about the situation on the border, Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police (DGP) Dilbag Singh said the security forces were conscious of the threats and were adequately responding to those. “We are conscious of the fact that our neighbour and the agencies which are there to perpetuate violence in this region, are making efforts to infiltrate and send in more numbers of militants for various sectors, we have been adequately responding to that threat. “Our highway grids, our border grids are fully alert. We are in a position to take care of any emergent challenge anywhere and we would definitely be on the side of our people. They have been very cooperative and they have extended all kinds of cooperation,” he said.

Pak Breached Truce In ...

mortars and other weapons,” the officials said. They said the Indian Army gave a befitting response to the violations. There were no reports of casualties in the incident.

Forest Fire Triggers ...

the fire, they said. Landmines are planted by the state forces to prevent infiltration from across the border.

NC Breaks Silence, Demands

statements to create an atmosphere of ‘peace, love and amity’ are of no meaning unless the Government of India respects the political aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the NC said. Referring to the Centre’s decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution which gave special status to the erstwhile state — the party leaders underscored the need to restore the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and the constitutional guarantees extended from time to time under binding covenants, unconstitutionally, arbitrarily and unilaterally taken away on 5th August 2019 . The signatories to the NC statement also expressed deep anguish over skirmishes along the LoC and the LAC and the consequent loss of life and property. The civilian population in the border areas, it is pointed out, is under huge economic stress and the border skirmishes are to further compound its problems,” it said.

Revocation of the 5th August 2019 decisions and unconditional dialogue with all the stakeholders is pivotal to the lasting peace and prosperity in the region, the joint statement said. The party demanded immediate annulment of all the August 5, 2019 decisions and restoration of the August 4 2019 constitutional position of Jammu and Kashmir. It also called for opening of all traditional routes including Kargil-Skardu, Jammu-Sialkot and Poonch-Rawalakot to allow free movement of the people across the LoC and the LAC and to promote people-to-people contact and strengthen inter-regional trade and cultural links.

Will File Charge Sheet In ...

of the NIA said Singh continued to be in judicial custody in the case filed by the agency. “We have adequate evidence against him and he will be charge-sheeted in due course,” the NIA said in the statement. Singh was on Friday granted bail in a separate case filed by the Delhi Police.

The NIA had taken over the terror case on January 18, a week after Singh was caught in south Kashmir while ferrying two militants out of the valley on January 11. Besides Singh, the others arrested were two militants —commander of Hizbul Mujahideen Syed Naveed Mushtaq Ahmed alias Naveed Babu and Rafi Ahmed Rather — and Irfan Shafi Mir, who claims to be an advocate. Later on January 23, Naveed’s brother, Syed Irfan Ahmed, was also arrested after he was brought from Punjab. He was in constant touch with his brother and had asked him to look for an accommodation in Chandigarh where they could stay to escape the harsh winter months of Kashmir.

Withdraw New Media Policy

under law.” According to the policy, any reporter who is “de-empaneled” will be denied official accreditation and, as a result, any rights normally accorded to journalists. And for media outlets, “de-empanelment” will mean the loss of almost all advertising income since state advertising is in practice controlled by the DIPR in Jammu and Kashmir. “As there is no definition of what constitutes fake news or anti-national content, the government has absolutely infinite interpretative leeway to censor any journalism it does not like and to impose its own narrative,” said Daniel Bastard, the head of RSF’s Asia-Pacific desk. “By means of this totally Orwellian regulation, the Jammu and Kashmir administration becomes plaintiff against the free press, judge and executioner all in one. We therefore call for the withdrawal of this directive, which is unworthy of India’s democracy and will have the immediate effect of inducing a profound self-censorship that in practice amounts to prior censorship.” India is ranked 142nd out of 180 countries and territories in RSF’s 2020 World Press Freedom Index, two places lower than in 2019. “The fall is due in part to the crackdown on press freedom in Kashmir since last summer,” RSF said.

Govt Orders Roster...

and Talat Parvez Rohella; Secretaries M.Raju, Simrandeep Singh, Sarmad Hafeez, Zubair Ahmed, and Achal Sethi will remain stationed at Srinagar Primary Headquarters for the summer session. For Jammu Primary Headquarters, the administrative secretaries who will remain available for the Summer Session are Financial Commissioner, Atal Dulloo; Principal Secretaries Shaleen Kabra, Dheeraj Gupta and Dr. Pawan Kotwal; Commissioner Secretaries Hirdesh Kumar, Sarita Chauhan, Ajeet Kumar Sahu, and Secretaries Sheetal Nanda and Reva Kumari. Further, the order added, that the Administrative Secretaries shall remain present in the Non-primary Headquarter for at least 10 days each month.

6 Feared Dead In Kishtwar...

Soon after the mishap, the local administration, Police and Army launched a rescue operation. However, no person has been traced from the spot by the rescue teams so far, as the deep gorge and fast flow of river is hampering the rescue operations, officials said.(KNO)

Ex- Chief Planning ...

known source of income by Noor Mohammad Wani. During the investigation, it was found that the suspect in his service has raised assets disproportionate to his known source of income which palatial house at Karipora Budgam, double storey school buildings at Haknipora Budgam, 03 Kanals of land at Aru Pahalgam, 02 Kanals of Land at Karipora Budgam, one TATA Indigo Marina Car, one Spark Chevrolet Car, Two TATA Star Buses etc.” it said. It added that during investigation, searches were conducted at his residence and various incriminating documents related to the assets and other properties were seized. The investigation of the case is going on, the statement added

Army Porter Injured In ...

treatment, reports said. The condition of the porter was said to be stable, reports said.

Couple Among 3 Injured ...

condition of all the injured persons is said to be stable. (KNO)

'More than 17% Covid cases in Kashmir are children'

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, June 19: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Friday said more than 17 percent of Covid-19 positive cases in Kashmir valley are children.

"We have higher percentage of children with Covid infection than the global average," said DAK President Dr Nisar ul Hassan.

"While children make up fewer than 2 percent of reported Covid-19 cases globally, in Kashmir valley 17.29 percent of Covid cases are in the age group of 0-19," he said.

Dr Nisar said based on our analysis from the data of 989 lab confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus, 171 cases (17.29 percent) were under 19 years of age. "Majority of the children



who tested positive for the novel virus had history of contact with adults," he said.

"Most of the children with Covid infection had no symptoms or had mild disease," he added.

Dr Nisar said no Covid infected child became seriously ill. "However, today we had the first infant death in the valley due to Covid infection. A 15-day-old infant who had underlying serious heart ailment died due to

the novel virus," he said.

Dr Nisar said research shows that children are less susceptible to the virus than adults.

"School closure and a comparatively lower rate of testing for the novel virus among children could contribute to the low number of reported cases among the group," he said.

"It is also possible that due to some quirk of biology, children are less susceptible than adults," he added.

Dr Nisar said studies on whether children are also less likely to spread the infection to others have shown mixed results. "A French study found that a nine year old child who attended three different schools while showing symptoms of Co-

vid-19 didn't infect anyone," he said. "But a German study concluded that children could be as infectious as adults," Dr Nisar said.

"In view of mixed results, we should wait for more research results before reopening schools and easing social distancing for children," he said.

"Most children find it difficult to follow social distancing norms and given the large number of students in one classroom and crowded transport, schools can easily turn into infection clusters if children infect teachers or take the infection to the family and neighbourhood, even if they don't get severe disease themselves," said Dr Nisar said.

MHRD directs Edu Secretaries to furnish feasibility report of holding pending board exams

Agencies

Srinagar: The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has asked the Education secretaries to furnish the urgent report with regard to feasibility of holding regular and pending board examinations of secondary and higher secondary classes.

Under Secretary to the Government of India (GoI), Rajesh Samplay in this regard said that he has been directed to ask edu-

cation secretaries of all States and Union Territories (UT's) to give inputs about board examinations of 10th and 12th standard in the States and UT's

The order issued by MHRD, department of school education and literacy, a copy of which is in possession with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), reads that the education secretaries have been asked to furnish the report on urgent basis.

Former Chief Planning Officer Budgam arrested

Srinagar: Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Friday said that it has arrested former Chief Planning Officer Budgam in a case regarding disproportionate assets.

In a statement issued, ACB said that it arrested Noor Mohammad Wani, the then Chief Planning Officer Budgam, in case under FIR number 18/2019 registered at Police Station ACB Kashmir.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR NOTICE

Whereas an application has been recieved from one. Shri : Ghulam Mohammad Rather S/o: Gh Ahmad Rather R/o: Pethpora Narbal Budgam owner of vehicle bearing Registration No: JK04E-8532 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S Mahindra & Mahindra Fin Co. B/U Srinagar.

Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed cancellation of hire purchase Agreement shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper.

Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.1043
Dated 17-06-2020




Government of Jammu and Kashmir,
Office of the Executive Engineer,
R&B Sub-Division Magam / GDA Tangmarg.
Short Term Quotation

For and on behalf of Governor of Jammu and Kashmir State, the Executive B) Sub division Magam invites sealed quotation for below mentioned item affixed with Rupees revenue Stamps from various registered dealers which should reach the office of the Executive Engineer Gulmarg Dev Authority Tangmarg on 22 to 2 PM. The quotation will be opened on the same date or any other date convenient to the quotation opening Authority in presence of the quotationers or their authorised representatives who wish to be present there.

	150 Measurement Books (50 pages).	Rate to be quoted
	Supply of 80 Measurement Books (30 pages).	Rate to be quoted
	Supply of 20 Measurement Books (150 pages).	Rate to be quoted

Terms and conditions:
The supply shall to be delivered at Divisional within five days, as per the simple available in the division office at Tangmarg.
The rates should be inclusive of all carriages taxes etc.
The payment shall be made as on after availability of funds.
The supply shall be accepted against the manufacturers test.
Penalty upto the extent of 10% shall be imposed upon the supplier in case of

DIPK-1879/20


OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
MECHANICAL IRRIGATION DIVISION BARAMULLA

Short-term-Tender
NIT No: E-21 of 2020-21

Governor of Jammu & Kashmir tenders in two covers, affixed with 6.00 revenue stamps, experienced, reputed and registered firms/ genuine manufacturer/authorized

S.No	Description of Work	Quantity	Unit	Rate	Total
1	Urgent mechanical repair works to be carried out at various lift Irrigation				
2	Mechanical works at WaduraBalaLIS of				
3	Mechanical works at various LISs of				
4	work to be carried out at Various lift Irrigation schemes (Gantamulla and Kitchama)				
5	Urgent electrical work to be carried out at Lift Irrigation scheme				
6	Complete rewinding of 40Hp motor of II of Haritar Branch of Haritar TarzoolIS of MISD Sopore and Canvas pipe for KhushiporaLIS.				
7	Repairs to the Starters of MISD Sopore				
8	Repairs to 10 cusec Vertical Turbine pumping unit at Lift Irrigation Scheme SheerNarwah Stage				
9	Urgent electrical work to be carried at various lift Irrigation schemes.				
10	Repairs to 400 HP ATS starter of Lift Irrigation Scheme Seer.				
11	restoring of leakages in rising main at Irrigation scheme Flood Channel 1st.				

The tenders consisting of qualifying/eligibility criteria, technical specifications, general and commercial terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the website <https://jktenders.gov.in>

The bids shall be submitted in electronic format on the website <https://jktenders.gov.in>

The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on the time and date, in the office of the _____ in presence of the bidders who wish to attend. In case offices happen to be closed due to holiday, or any other reason, on the schedule date of opening, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the scheduled time and venue.

The complete bidding shall be online.

Prequalification bids shall be opened online in the office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical bids of qualifying bidders shall be opened on the same day.

_____ regarding clarification shall be held in the office of the Executive Engineer Mechanical

The bids for the work shall be valid for a period of 180 days from the date of opening of bids.

DIPK

Office address:Padpawan Shopian| Phone/ Fax No:01933-260958 | email-Id: dfoshopian@gmail.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER SHOPIAN FOREST DIVISION, SHOPIAN
SHORT TERM AUCTION NOTICE

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory, an open auction for removal & disposal of Guchies (Morels) from the reserved forests of Shopian Forest Division for the 21 shall be held as per the following schedule.

Name of the Division	auction to be held
	Forest Complex Padpawan (DFO Office Padpawan Shopian)

avoidable/ untoward situation or holiday, the auction shall be conducted on the next working day at the same as per same terms & conditions

Only Firms/ Contractor(s) registered with the Department duly renewed registration card for the current year can participate in the auction to be held by the auction committee under nservator of Forests Kashmir South Circle Bijbehara

Before starting the auction the prospective bidders shall have to deposit an earnest money of Rs. Ten thousands only the shape of CDR of any recognized bank branch of J&K (UT) should be pledged to Divisional Forest Officer Shopian or can be deposited in cash with the auctioning authorities prior to the participation in the auction.

The successful bidder has to pay 50% of bid amount at the time of closing of bid & 50% at the time signing the agreement.

The prospective bidders shall have to quote their offer as lump sum royalty for extraction and disposal from the reserved forests of the Shopian Forest Division.

The successful bidders shall have to deposit a security in addition to contract value not less than 10% of the contract value at the time of the agreement, which shall be refundable on completing the work and on production of No Damage Certificate/ NOC issued by the concerned Range Officer.

authority reserve the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason

The successful bidder(s) shall have to enter into an agreement with the forest department within a week from the date of the sanction of the contract communicated to him/ them, failing which the contract shall be quashed and the earnest money shall be forfeited in favour of the department, any loss sustained as a result of re-auction of the produce or by allotting it to second highest bidder shall be on blacked-out party as arrears of land revenue besides blacklisting the party.

The successful bidder shall be bound to issue proper pass affixed with passport size photograph to his/their agents/ collectors duly sealed and signed by the undersigned on Form 7, authorizing him/ them to collect the Guchies (Morels) from the forests.

The successful bidder shall store the extracted Guchies at recognized transit depots, which shall be registered by the undersigned, any other stocks stored at any other place shall be deemed as illegal collection and the same shall be seized and will vest in favour of the department on the directions of the

The successful bidder/ contractor shall be bound to return used and unused copies of Form 7 at the expiry of the contract period, failing which the security money shall not be refunded.

The stuff thus collected by the successful bidders and dumped at the registered transit depots shall be released upto Srinagar or outside the after obtaining proper permission from the Forests Kashmir South Circle Bijbehara on the recommendation of

The successful bidder shall be entitled to start the work of extraction from the date the work order is issued and shall be required to complete the work by the end of December 2020. The entire produce collected shall have to transport outside the forest upto transit depots or upto final destination by the end of the February 2021. No extension shall be accorded in the working period or for transportation.

In the events of the damage of the forest growth through the successful bidders or his/ their agents/ collectors with or without consent of the contract, the same shall be charged from his/ them at the undersigned.

All the taxed including other charges as may be vogue and fixed by the government for the produce shed shall be payable by the concerned contractor in addition to lump sum bid amount

Any dispute which shall arise between the contract and leaser, the decisions of the Conservator of Forests Kashmir South Circle Bijbehara (Controlling Officer) shall be final and binding on both the

In case of any natural calamity, which may hamper or damage the prospects of the Guchies, the department shall not be responsible for the payment of any compensation or refund of the royalty amount of the successful bidder.

The successful bidder and his/ their agents/ labour shall have no right to extract or remove any other minor forest produce from the forests. Any such instance, which comes to the notice of the department, the p shall be dealt under rules.

No telegraphic communication or application received by post or otherwise for increasing or withdrawing any bid offer after close of the auction shall be entertained.

Any other information that may be required by the bidder can be had from the concerned Range Officers on any working day during the office hours.

Any other condition that the department may like to impose on the contract shall be announced before starting the auction.

debtors/ Blacklisted person cannot participate in the auction.

Divisional Forest Officer,
Shopian Forest Division

DIPK-1880/20

DIAL-EMMA



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS

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



HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI
CALENDAR
28 Shawwal
1441

PRAYERS

FAJR	3: 34
ZUHR	12: 32
ASR	5:32
Magrib	7:48
ISHA	9:30

This Day In History

- 451 - Battle of the Catalaunian Plains: Roman and Visigoths forces defeat Attila the Hun in north east France
- 1212 - French and Spanish crusaders unite against the Almohaden at Toledo
- 1214 - The University of Oxford receives its charter
- 1530 - German Parliament joins to Augsburg together
- 1547 - Count Philip van Hessen captured
- 1567 - Jews are expelled from Brazil by order of regent Don Henrique
- 1582 - Bishop Domingo de Salazar of Manila suppresses the Philippines
- 1591 - Mauritius and Willem van Nassau occupy Deventre
- 1631 - The sack of Baltimore: the Irish village of Baltimore is attacked by Algerian pirates
- 1656 - Polish King Jan II Casimir recaptures Warsaw
- 1756 - Siraj ud-Daulah Nawab of Bengal takes Calcutta from the British
- 1779 - Battle of Stono Ferry fought near Charleston, South Carolina (American Revolutionary War)
- 1866 - Italy declares war on Austria beginning the Third Italian War of Independence
- 1919 - Treaty of Versailles: Germany ends incorporation of Austria
- 1944 - Soviet forces conquer Wiborg
- 1960 - Federation of Mali and Senegal become independent of France
- 1981 - Mujahedeen uprisings against Iran regime
- 1983 - Iran moves into northern Iraq (casualties top 13,800 in ten days)
- 1994 - Bomb attack on Islamic centre in Mashad Iran (70 killed)
- 1995 - Space probe Ulysses begins 2nd passage behind the Sun
- 1996 - Space Shuttle STS 78 (Columbia 20), launches into space
- 2012 - Western Libyan tribal clashes kill 105 people and injure 500
- 2015 - Heat wave peaks in southern Pakistan, goes on to kill about 2,000 people from dehydration and heat stroke
- 2015 - 1000 humanoid robots named "Pepper" sell out in under a minute (\$1,600 each) in Japan, according to its creator SoftBank Robotics Corp.
- 2016 - China's super computer tally overtakes the US; Chinese 93 petaflop Sunway TaihuLight is world's No. 1
- 2018 - US President Trump signs Executive Order ending family separation at the border for illegal immigrants.

From KO Archives

Group of 4 lashes out at Hurriyat (A), Jama'at

Observer News Service

SSRINAGAR Shortly after the return of Hurriyat and other separatist leaders from their trip from across the LoC, a union of four militant groups today launched a scathing attack targeting a broad spectrum of leaders including the moderate faction of the Hurriyat. UJC chairman Syed Salahuddin and the Jama'at-e-Islami.

"The designs of all groups, individuals and authorities who dream of ending the armed struggle will be foiled," Samiullah, the joint spokesman for the Al Nasireen. Farzandaan-e-Millat. Save Kashmir Movement and 'Al Aarafeen, said in statement faxed to the KNS.

He said that the UJC chairman Syed Salahuddin had committed a "historic blunder in meeting with leaders of the Hurriyat (A)."

"This meeting reflects Syed Salahuddin's ideological bankruptcy and philosophical decline," he said.

"Syed Salahuddin should make it clear as to who between the Hurriyat (A) and Syed Ali Shah Geelani he recognises as the political leader," he said adding that certain other "shortsighted" militant commanders "had tried to harm the movement in meeting with the leaders of the Hurriyat (A)."

The spokesman hit out at the Jama'at-e-Islami describing "people like" its chief. Nazeer Ahmad Kashani as "nothing but Jaffar's and Sadiq's of Kashmir"

He said that the organisation's attempts to distance itself from Geelani was clear evidence of its discord and disenchantment with Jehad.

The alliance lashed out at the moderate faction of the Hurriyat, saying it had returned from across the LoC after learning new tricks of the trade.

"It was foolish of them to have got Syed Ali Shah Geelani cased out of the chairmanship of the APHC," the alliance said, adding that it would have no effect on Geelani's association with the movement.

The alliance said that it was incumbent on Geelani not to repeat the mistake he committed in propping up Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Muhammad Yaseen Malik and Molvi Abbas Ansari.

Geelani should take care not to project such people who will emerge as vet-another Abbas group or a "sellout cartel"

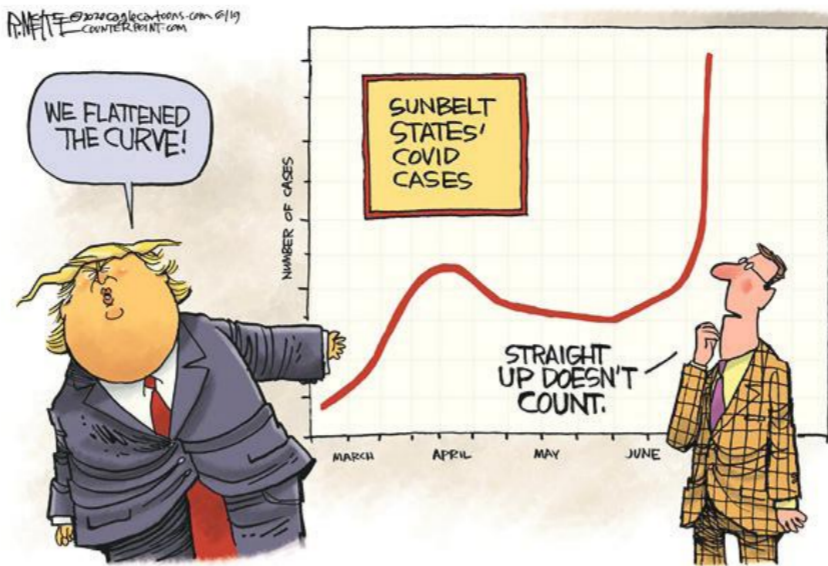
The spokesman said that "final certificate of chairmanship obtained from Musharraf carried no weight with the alliance." "We have rejected them. This group is not a representative of the sacrifices of the Kashmiri people but a soul male of Mufti Muhammad Sayeed and Farooq Abdullah," the alliance said.

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NO HOLDS BARRED



“The rising political rhetoric in the aftermath of the “surgical strikes” in 2016 to “avenge” the killing of 19 soldiers in Uri and the air strike on Balakot, Pakistan in February 2019, as a response to the death of 40 Indian policemen in Pulwama, has pushed India into a tight corner. While political rhetoric is good for winning elections, it is not smart strategy.”

Chinese Intrusions And India's Limited Options

India’s military, starved of crucial funds for the last six years, has limited war fighting capabilities

SAIKAT DATTA

In October last year a senior Indian security official on a visit to Ladakh met the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Indian Army’s 14 Corps. The Corps was raised in the aftermath of the Kargil war between India and Pakistan in 1999 and has its headquarters in Leh.

Today, 14 Corps under the India’s Northern Army Command is primarily tasked with maintaining the sanctity of the Line of Actual Control that divides Aksai Chin between India and China.

Aksai Chin went under Chinese occupation after 1962 war that dealt India a crushing blow and forced it to vacate large tracts of land and allowing the Chinese to hook up with its all-weather ally Pakistan through the illegally ceded territory of Shaksgam Valley in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK).

The Indian security official gave a detailed briefing to the Lieutenant General Harinder Singh, a former Director General of Military Intelligence, who took over as the GOC of 14 Corps late last year.

The Indian security official explained that the change of the status of Jammu & Kashmir had irked the Chinese. In the coming months they would up the ante and try and capture more land and shift the LAC deeper into Indian-held territory.

Several Indian security officials have confirmed that there was adequate credible intelligence of China’s intentions to up the ante in the Ladakh sector. The heights of the Galwan Valley overlooks a key road that winds its way to Daulet Beg Oldie, a strategic outpost that serves as a key military base for India.

By November/December 2019 the world was waking up to news of a spread of a deadly virus in Wuhan, China and all talk about the Chinese preparation to take over the Galwan Valley in Ladakh was forgotten. As winter set in, Indian troops settled in for business as usual.

But the events that unfolded on the night of June 15 raises several key questions.

Why did India’s top political, strategic and military leadership fail to anticipate and counter Chinese intentions to challenge and occupy Indian claims in Ladakh? How should India now counter a clear and present danger on its northern borders?

Did the newly-appointed Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, mislead the government? How did the plethora of official agencies set up to study China fail to predict a clear change in its India policy? **Rising Hostilities**

The brutal killing of Colonel Santosh Babu, the Commanding Officer of the 18th battalion of the Bihar Regiment and his men by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has now brought home the reality of Chinese intentions in Ladakh.

Reliable military and intelligence sources now say that the death toll of Indian soldiers is considerably

higher and could be more than 40 soldiers. A Lieutenant Colonel and a Major are still missing and could be in Chinese captivity.

What is inexplicable is why Colonel Babu and his men went unarmed to remove a temporary Chinese structure that was being set up in a place known as Patrolling Point 14.

The standard procedure is to carry assault rifles slung at the back, pointing downwards, to signal peace-

dustries. It led to a major stand-off between India and China in 2016 at the tri-junction with Bhutan, in the area known as Doklam.

In August last year when India abrogated Article 370, a constitutional provision that gave a special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, China responded with fury.

The Chinese claim large parts of Ladakh, eastern part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir,

“In August last year when India abrogated Article 370, a constitutional provision that gave a special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, China responded with fury. The Chinese claim large parts of Ladakh, eastern part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, and any change in status was bound to be viewed as a threat to China’s claims.”

ful intent, but to also serve as a deterrent to Chinese troops from taking any sudden hostile moves. Why was Colonel Babu and his men sent in unarmed to remove the Chinese infrastructure?

The Chinese plans that the Indian security official had briefed Lieutenant General Harinder Singh late last year continued to be implemented even as the world turned its attention to an emerging pandemic threat from China.

The Chinese build up was confirmed by other Indian intelligence agencies and reports were sent to Delhi. However, they were either missed or ignored allowing the Chinese to build up in the Galwan Valley through the winter.

The Chinese were upset with India’s position on rejecting its ambitious Belt Road Initiative (BRI) to connect global markets to China’s manufacturing in-

and any change in status was bound to be viewed as a threat to China’s claims.

What is inexplicable is why did India fail to read tea leaves and China’s intentions to change status quo?

Crumbling Defences

The rising political rhetoric in the aftermath of the “surgical strikes” in 2016 to “avenge” the killing of 19 soldiers in Uri and the air strike on Balakot, Pakistan in February 2019, as a response to the death of 40 Indian policemen in Pulwama, has pushed India into a tight corner. While political rhetoric is good for winning elections, it is not smart strategy.

Soon after the Kargil war, the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee government instituted a committee to look into lapses and reform India’s security apparatus. A Group of Ministers went through the

recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee and set in motion an ambitious plan to reform India’s security apparatus.

A key recommendation was to appoint a lead agency for every border to ensure better coordination between different security agencies and accountability. For the Ladakh sector the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) was chosen as the lead agency.

It reports to the union Ministry of Home Affairs, which also commands the Intelligence Bureau and was the lead on abrogating Article 370 within months of Prime Minister Modi winning a historic landslide electoral victory in May 2019.

A 700 km border and Line of Actual Control that stretches from the Karakorum ranges to Himachal Pradesh is now manned jointly by the ITBP and the Indian Army. The local ITBP sector headquarters holds a meeting every month with representatives from the intelligence agencies, army, air force, customs and the state police to review any intelligence on China relevant to their sector.

So why did this elaborate Indian security apparatus miss China moving troops nearly two army Divisions (about 9000-12000 men) into the area to occupy the Galwan Valley heights?

Why did they miss China building a road up to a key strategic feature known as Finger 4 considered Indian territory? And how did they miss Chinese troops building semi-permanent bunkers in the Galwan Valley heights?

Compounding Failures

Every year the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Home Affairs sit and jointly plan the patrolling schedule for the Ladakh sector. Decisions are taken on how many patrols will be sent by the army and ITBP separately and jointly. Each patrol carries GPS units to collect waypoints and record the areas that have been covered. Clearly, this mechanism failed to anticipate China’s moves to consolidate its position in the Galwan Valley. India’s political and strategic leadership also failed to anticipate that the Chinese would violate bilateral agreements from 1993, 1996 and 2013 that specifically bars any change in status of the LAC by either side.

India’s military, starved of crucial funds for the last six years, has limited war fighting capabilities. At best, it is in a position to sustain a full-scale war for only 12 days after factoring in its current war wastage reserves. India will also have to keep in mind the possibility of a two-front war if Pakistan steps in, if things escalate quickly with China.

The failure to anticipate China’s intentions has already proved costly. However, years of bad planning and abysmal budgets, rapidly spreading Covid19 infections and a broken economy severely restricts India’s options. *Deccan Chronicle*

Covid-19: Virus Will Be Defeated When All Succumb To It

According to experts, herd immunity against coronavirus will be developed only when about 70-90 percent of the population is infected

DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH,

“When an epidemic strikes, people either become infected and die, or become immune when they recover. As the number of people recovering increases, so does the number of people resistant to the disease.”

As the spread of the novel coronavirus is accelerating in India, the discussion on herd immunity is gaining momentum. Herd immunity means that about 70-90 percent of people develop immunity to the disease, and then the rest will also survive. Now the question is, will herd immunity be able to work in the absence of a coronavirus vaccine?

At the beginning of the pandemic, Britain tried to use the concept of herd immunity. However, more than three hundred scientists there opposed the government’s move, saying that the government should think of stricter sanctions, not alternatives such as ‘herd immunity’, which would unnecessarily endanger the lives of many people. But, the British government continued its experiments for a few days and the virus wreaked havoc there.

According to experts, coronavirus will develop herd immunity among people only when about 60 percent of the population is infected. However, not all experts have a consensus on this figure. Sweden is currently the only country in the world that is working on the experiment. Herd immunity was also mentioned in Britain when coronavirus spread in March, but the government had to back down after severe criticism.

When Britain started using herd immunity in their country, around the same time Sweden also started using it in their country. Initially, Sweden seemed to have some success in that, but now the cases of Coronavirus are soaring there as well. The essential condition of herd immunity is vaccination, which develops immunity in people. The head of the World Health Organization’s emergency service, Dr. Mike Ryan says that it is

not yet certain whether the antibodies formed in the body of new coronavirus patients after their recovery will be able to protect them from this virus infection again or not.

According to the scientific idea of herd immunity, if a disease spreads to a large part of a group, then the human immune system helps the infected people to fight that disease. People who fight the disease and recover completely become immune to the disease, which means they develop immune properties. Immunity means that a person becomes infected and then their immune system develops antibodies capable of fighting the virus. As more people become immune, the risk of spreading the infection decreases.

Today, not only China but India is also witnessing reverse attacks of the coronavirus, but the truth is that the lack of collective immunity only exacerbates the epidemic. According to epidemiology, the spread of a disease depends on the lethality of the virus or bacteria and the immunity of human beings. The proportion of those who have received the vaccine or medicine and the proportion of infected people and the cleanliness of the environment are the decisive aspects of the spread of the disease. If the lethality of viruses or bacteria is weaker than the immunity of human beings, then the disease does not occur. If the power of both is the same, then nothing happens.

The conflict begins when the power of one side is relatively increased. The lethality of a germ depends on its number, aggression, fertility, and potency. The immunity of the masses depends on the collective immunity formed by combining the immunity of each individual. When an epidemic strikes, people either become infected and die, or become immune when

they recover. As the number of people recovering increases, so does the number of people resistant to the disease. As a result, one day the number of people resistant to the disease exceeds the number of patients, and the epidemic subsides.

So far, Coronavirus cases have been steadily rising, but recently there have been reports of four million people recovering from about 79 million cases worldwide. India is giving a recovery rate of 50 percent through its data, while the US is giving 41 percent, China 90 percent, Germany 91 percent, Italy 74 percent and France 46 percent. But these figures are also compared to the total number of infected people, not to the total population, while the herd immunity works on the concept of the total population.

According to Johns Hopkins University, 70 to 90 percent of the population needs to be immune to reach herd immunity; still, scientists hope that if the epidemic reaches the community level, herd immunity may come in handy. But, they have no answer as to how this will work in the absence of a vaccine.

The number of people infected with the coronavirus worldwide has crossed six million, but so far no exact cure or vaccine for this virus has been developed. A report in The New York Times states that the number of people infected with the coronavirus may be much higher than the figures actually shown. Due to the lack of drugs and vaccines, it is believed that the coronavirus will remain with humans, for some time at least. The threat of a second wave remains in many countries, but despite this, the world is still far from herd immunity.

Is this possible in India? Dr. Raman Laxminarayan, director of the Washington-based Center for Disease

Dynamics, Economics and Policy, and a senior research scholar at Princeton University in the United States, has tried to explain this in the Indian context. He says, “Instead of waiting for a vaccine, we can move towards controlling Covid-19, which is possible through a scientific concept called Herd Immunity. If they have mild or no symptoms at all, Dr. Laxminarayan continues, then the remaining 35% of the population will also get protection from COVID-19.”

The growth rate of the virus has decreased and the time it takes for the infection to double has also increased, but a closer look reveals that cases are on the rise in more affected cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmedabad and hospitalization and mortality are also on the rise. A physician treating COVID-19 patients says, “if the infection continues like this, the condition of these cities will be like New York.” In many cities, patients are not being admitted to hospitals and they are dying, in one case, a patient died in a toilet. Labs are receiving more samples than the actual capacity, which is delaying the tests.

Ashish Jha, Director, Harvard Global Health Institute, says, “I am concerned about the growing number of cases in India. It is not that the coronavirus will automatically decrease once it reaches the peak, you have to take steps for that.” He says that India cannot wait for 60 percent of the population to be infected to develop herd immunity; it will kill millions and is not an acceptable solution. Bhramar Mukherjee, a professor of biostatistics at the University of Michigan, says the corona’s curve in India has not declined yet. He adds, “We should worry, but this worry should not turn into panic.”

(The writer is a Research Scholar in Political Science, Delhi University)

‘Hello, Please Help Me’: Why Distress Calls Ring This Kashmiri Lawyer

HIRRA SULTAN

IT was still wee hours of the morning when Mehreen Zafar's phone started ringing. As she received the call, a lady was on the other side started crying and beseeching her for help.

She told Mehreen that her name was Sania. In order to celebrate Nauroz, she had visited her parent's place for a couple of days in March this year but got stuck there due to the sudden implementation of COVID lockdown.

Somehow she managed to travel back to her husband's place but her in-laws vehemently denied her entry, on the grounds of her being infected with the virus.

This was not the first time she faced harassment at her in-laws. She, along with her children, has been facing domestic violence at the hands of her husband for many years now.

Mehreen is a lawyer at district court Budgam and has been nominated by the court to handle cases for women in distress and at the receiving end of domestic violence.

Since the pandemic hit, there has been significant increase in the domestic violence cases worldwide with Kashmir being no exception to it.

The lady lawyer told Kashmir Observer that the situation in many places is quite grim.

"Things are getting out of our hands," she said. "It's beyond all reason why women should suffer even inside the safety of their homes. All the associated lawyers have been receiving a lot of calls and queries. Our phones remain engaged all the day long. There're harrowing tales of what is happening with people out there. From physical to mental abuse, to denying maintenance and custody of children, people are putting women through a lot."

Another call, just a minute later, was from Shairil. Shairil has been married for six years and has two kids. Since her marriage, her in-laws have been harassing her, to the point that they even tried to strangle her to death.

Even though she survived, she had to listen to abuses and corrosive remarks against her.

Her husband along with her in-laws continuously subjects her to domestic violence which even caused her a miscarriage during her first pregnancy.

He's "involved in an extramarital affair" and in order to hide it, her in-laws have defamed her in society, saying she's characterless.

In order to escape from the everyday ordeal of violence and humiliation, she left to live with her sister but is being denied the custody of her children.

Shairil has lodged a police complaint against the accused, but there has been no action so far. She wants justice for herself and her children but due to the official apathy, her pain persists.

To add to the miseries, her husband wants to divorce her and her in-laws have also filed a case against her. She's so distressed that she wants to commit suicide and end everything in a single go.

As the call ended, advocate Mehreen looked lost in some thoughts.

"What you're noticing is just the tip of the iceberg," she said. "Every day we listen to stories of abuse and ill treatment."

She went on to narrate the case of Ambooj. Ambooj had complained that she's staying at her maternal home for the last one year. She was married on September 25, 2017 and soon after her husband started torturing her for one reason or the other, even threatening her with suicide if she didn't comply.

Also, during her pregnancy, he would harass her



Advocate Mehreen Zafar

It's beyond all reason why women should suffer even inside the safety of their homes. All the associated lawyers have been receiving a lot of calls and queries. Our phones remain engaged all the day long. There're harrowing tales of what is happening with people out there. From physical to mental abuse, to denying maintenance and custody of children, people are putting women through a lot

the gold she was gifted at the time of marriage so that he may marry someone else and indulge in drugs.

Caught in bad marriage, Ambooj only wants the rights of her son safeguarded.

Even more disturbing case is that of Abida.

Abida was married in February last year. Within a couple of days, her husband and mother-in-law started torturing her for land as dowry. Her husband even spent all the money in her bank account.

The case gets even more interesting as the family had lied that the groom is a jeweller by profession but was actually a salesman at someone's shop and had even quit that job.

Abida had called the lady lawyer because her husband and mother-in-law were threatening her with divorce. She's facing social, mental and emotional harassment at her in-laws and is disturbed by this thought and even has her doubts that her husband is involved in an extramarital affair with her sister-in-law, brother's wife.

Her husband intends to marry this lady, so is forcing Abida for a divorce and has stopped having any kind of physical relationship with her for past six months.

Abida's husband tried to beat her the previous

day with her parents, neither allowing her to visit nor letting them come over. She's not even allowed a phone.

Her husband constantly tells her that this marriage was not with his consent and on this pretext, talks to other ladies.

Isha has two children and yet is not provided any kind of financial support by her husband. Her needs are catered to by her parents. She has had family counselling many times but that didn't improve her husband's behaviour.

When she confronted him about the ladies he talks to, he slapped her. She has previously complained against him and now wants to file for a domestic violence case.

Advocate Mehreen talked about Mehak, a blind woman who lives with her mother and two sisters. Her sisters are also blind.

"She said that her brother and sister-in-law beat her and use abusive language against her, owing to her blindness," the advocate said. "Her father has passed away and her brother wants to own their house. Mehak's mother has already handed over their land to him but now he wants ownership of the house too."

Mehak's sister-in-law was related to them before marriage hence they agreed to the match but after marriage the behaviour of their sister-in-law changed. Her brother lives separately but sometimes he comes over and starts beating everyone.

"Mehak told me that her brother beat her yesterday after which she complained in PS Kupwara but till now no action has been taken," the lady lawyer said. "They're helpless and in dire need of help."

However, Iteba has an altogether different story.

She's a maiden and is facing domestic violence—verbal, mental as well as physical abuse—at the hands of her parents and brothers from March 2019.

Her parents want her to marry at the earliest, even without considering whether the match is worth and hence leave the household. This has caused Iteba tremendous mental trauma.

On March 19, 2020, a family was coming to see her but due to the sudden COVID lockdown the programme was postponed which became a new reason for the domestic violence against her.

"She said she's being maltreated by her parents, the reason being her younger brother who instigates her parents and the youngest brother (a drug addict)," advocate Mehreen said.

Iteba, she said, is being insulted on everything she does and has absolutely no idea what to do about it.

"Due to being confined in homes together and not allowed to venture out, people are feeling cornered," the lady lawyer continued.

"After a few days of rest and relaxation it becomes difficult for a huge majority to come to terms with this confinement. It often leads to anger and frustration, which is quite normal. What's unfortunate in this scenario is that women are becoming targets of these anger bouts and suffering at the hands of their companions."

Insha's case is a typical representation of this lockdown anger.

Her husband harasses her for trivial issues and matters, and keeps shouting at her. He mostly remains irritated and angry with her and would not let her make calls even though she works in a hospital and has to remain available on call.

She has been married for 14 years out of which she spent 9 years with her parents. Her husband refuses to contribute anything towards household expenditures and in turn misbehaves with her.

Insha shifted back with her husband in 2018 with

hopes that the distance and the presence of a child would change the scenario but is facing the same issues.

Since her husband is a government-employed teacher, she does not want any form of police action but is in dire need of family counselling.

Sabina has a similar story to tell.

She got married in December 2019 and within a week her husband started fighting with her. He blatantly told her that he does not love her and keeps talking to some woman over phone and internet. This has led her to believe he might be involved with someone.

Some home investigation revealed that he claims to love the woman after they started talking over social media platforms. He had even hidden the fact that he is married.

He does not provide Sabina with any financial support either. Even though she is four months pregnant, she's constantly subjected to mental harassment since her marriage and now has been sent to her parents in March. No one has either come to take her back or asked her to come back on her own even though she wants to.

Even though there has been no physical violence against her, Sabina wants her rightful place at her in-laws and a constant maintenance.

Lawyer Mehreen also mentioned that all cases are not related to marriage and in-laws.

"In many cases it's the victim's own kin and kith that violates the sanctity of their relationship," she said. "Like Mehak and Iteba, Rehana is also facing violence and harassment at the hands of her own maternal grandfather."

Rehana's father shifted to her wife's home instead of following the tradition of a lady relocating to her husband's home.

For a good many years they lived together and now they've even constructed their own house. Rehana has 4 more sisters and the eldest one was kept at her grandparents so she may take care of them in their old age.

"Rehana's grandfather used to beat and harass all of them and now that they live separately, he hasn't left bossing around them and keeps interfering, making sure he controls all strings of their life," the lawyer informed. "He would not let them decide for themselves either. They've never complained before as they didn't know whom to turn to for help."

Mehreen is not merely concerned with receiving the distressed calls. Before she can initiate any action, she has to cross-verify all the claims and with the lockdown it becomes difficult.

Another lawyer, Nausheen Bhat, however, shared that a lot of domestic violence cases are false allegations.

"Women are not as naïve as they used to be a century ago," she said. "Not only men, but women also have extra-marital affairs and sometimes have married only under parental pressure. These women later falsely accuse their husbands of domestic violence so they can attain a divorce along with some monetary benefits after which they marry their boyfriends."

In many other cases, Nausheen said, the women are merely playing power games so that their husbands would do whatever they say.

"This whole issue has become a nasty business," she continued. "Nobody can be trusted without proper background verification."

In a case, she faced a couple where the lady claimed that she's being tortured by her mother-in-law. After some tantrums and a lot of drama they started living separately.

Everyone felt things are improving and everything is settled when the lady fought with her husband, mid-road and spewed venom. She alleged a lot of things, which even her husband was ashamed to retell. Her husband is shocked that after everything that he sacrificed to be with her, she would repay him this way and not even care to keep things private.

In a similar case, another lady is headed for divorce because of her extra-marital affairs.

Her husband was quite generous and forgave her mistake, and was ready to live with her normally when the family got to know that she has other relations. That was the deal breaker.

Mehreen had to face this difficulty quite early in the lockdown phase.

"I was approached by an NGO working for children," she recalled. "They claimed that they needed to bail out a child from custody as he has been falsely accused. As I put out appeals and everything, I came to know that the child has been held under charges of rape, which the NGO hid from me. A lot of people hide such information and cause us a lot of embarrassment. I had to write back to them and refuse any association or assistance in the case."

The sad part is that this is not merely something triggered by the lockdown. This is something that goes on even when things are normal.

A lot of people suffer either because they're too naïve to understand what is happening, have been fed patriarchy so badly that they do not even think about raising their voices or seeking help, or think that they themselves are to blame for these circumstances, Mehreen said.

"The cases mentioned are like a needle in hay," the lawyer said.

"There're numerous cases of violence, slander, cheating and neglect, enough to fill up a whole room. Just by mentioning a few might bring them justice or might show hope to someone in need but this is not how things will improve. We, as a society, have to raise our voices against the wrongdoers, irrespective of their gender. Till we remain in denial, call ourselves a pious society and turn our eyes away, people will continue to suffer one way or the other. We also need to reinstate the Women Commission as lawyers cannot attend to every query and concern of women suffering from everyday life."



and force himself on her, and would even forcefully feed her certain drugs so her pregnancy might be terminated prematurely.

All this caused her tremendous mental stress, making her bleed even during her pregnancy. Her husband did not bother to take care of any expenses, neither during, nor after, her pregnancy.

Ambooj delivered the child in consultation with a private doctor as she had multiple complications.

As she went to her maternal home after the delivery, her husband does not want her to come back home and constantly threatens her to hand over all

day as well but she's scared to talk to anyone about her issues and apprehensions.

Even her parents do not listen to her as they're being influenced by her sister-in-law and hence she's facing this trauma all alone. Her husband has even retorted to threatening her about being sent to a mental asylum in order to get rid of her.

Inside the lady lawyer's chamber, the phone kept ringing. Next on line was Isha.

Isha has been married for eight years. Her husband began harassing her within a couple of months after their marriage and does not even let her be in contact

INDIA-CHINA HIMALAYAN Standoff Deadly For Cashmere Herds



DENIAL OF PASTURELAND HAS LED to high mortality of goat babies. It's so scary, it has never been like this," said Sonam Tsering, the general secretary of All Changtang Pashmina Growers Cooperative Marketing Society.

Agencies

Antagonisms between Indian and Chinese troops high in the Himalayas are taking a dire toll on traditional goat herds that supply the world's finest, most expensive cashmere. This week, a deadly brawl between Indian and Chinese soldiers caused the deaths of at least 20 Indian soldiers in the Galwan Valley, an achingly beautiful landscape that is part of a border region that has been disputed for decades because of its strategic importance as the world's highest landing ground. The months-long military standoff between the Asian giants is hurting local communities due to the loss of tens of thousands of Himalayan goat kids died because they couldn't reach traditional winter grazing lands, officials and residents said. Nomads have roamed these lands atop the roof of the world,

around the undemarcated borders with China and Tibet, for centuries, herding the famed and hardy goats that produce the ultrasoft wool known as Pashmina, the finest of cashmeres. Cashmere takes its name from the disputed Kashmir valley, where artisans weave the wool into fine yarn and exquisite shawls that cost up to \$1,000 apiece in world fashion capitals in a major handicraft export industry that employs thousands. This latest bout of friction between the rival nuclear powers is adding to pressures from climate change and longer-term losses of grazing land for the Changpa, the nomadic herders who rear the Pashmina goats. With access to the usual breeding and birthing grounds blocked by militaries on either side, newborn goats are perishing in the extreme cold of higher elevations, herders say. "Denial of pastureland has led

to high mortality of goat babies. It's so scary, it has never been like this," said Sonam Tsering, the general secretary of All Changtang Pashmina Growers Cooperative Marketing Society. He said thousands of newborns died this year because most of the 300,000-strong herd of goats, which yields around 45 tons of fine feather-like wool each year, remained trapped in the extreme cold. Authorities in Leh, the capital of Indian-controlled Ladakh, would not give any information, saying they were still collecting data. But two officials with Ladakh's animal husbandry department said that according to field staff, the deaths were much higher than the usual 5 to 10% mortality rate among some 60,000 to 80,000 kids each year. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they said the Ladakh administration has barred them from speaking to reporters. Demand for the cashmere,

which is painstakingly combed from the goats, sorted, cleaned and hand woven, has always outstripped supply, so shortages are a certainty, said several people working in the trade. "It's going to be catastrophic for wool production," said Namgyal Durbuk, a village official in the region. India and China fought a border war in 1962 that also spilled into Ladakh. The two countries have been trying to settle their border dispute since the early 1990s without success, as their soldiers face off along a thousands-of-miles-long, undemarcated frontier that stretches from Ladakh in the north to the Indian state of Sikkim in the northeast. For most of the year the Changpa raise their herds in the vast cold desert of the Changtang plateau of Ladakh, which straddles Tibet at over 5,000 meters (16,404 feet) above sea level. The harsh, windy climate is

what causes the goats to grow their super-soft wool. But the region becomes inhospitable from December to February, when temperatures can fall to minus 50 Celsius (-58 Fahrenheit). That's when the Changpas bring their livestock to slightly lower elevations and warmer grazing lands in the Demchok, Hanle, Korzok, Chumar and Chushul areas near the disputed border with China. This year, Indian authorities barred their passage for months, several people involved with herding said. The two sides blame each other for Monday night's clash, their deadliest conflict in 45 years. Tensions have surged since August, when India unilaterally declared the region a federal territory while separating it from disputed Kashmir. China is among a handful of countries that strongly condemned the move, raising it at international forums including the

U.N. Security Council. Indian officials have kept a near-total silence on issues related to the confrontation with China. However, a security official in Ladakh, speaking on condition of anonymity in keeping with government regulations, said the grazing lands are close to the contested frontier and the restrictions in place in the area are to protect herders from Chinese soldiers. Around 1,200 Changpa families have lost access to grazing lands even in the areas that are controlled by the Indian military due to the confrontation, Tsering said. But the Chinese side also is interfering, he and other herders said. "Our nomads in recent years have increasingly faced difficulty in accessing pastures in these places. Chinese soldiers have blocked them while bringing herders from Tibet into our lands," said Tsering. Phuntsog, a local farmer who

uses only one name, said local elders have been complaining to the Indian government about Chinese incursions for years. "They would ignore every time. Now see where the Chinese are. Worst, these hapless, beautiful creatures which sustain our livelihood are becoming victim of this political and military game," he said. China's foreign ministry said Thursday that such allegations are "sheer fiction." "Chinese border troops have always only patrolled Chinese territories," the ministry said. Tsering said herders began losing terrain years ago, when Chinese began "snatching our pasturelands in a concerted way over the years, like inch by inch." He cited an example of a vast winter pastureland known as Kakjung, close to the Indus river. "For the past four years it's a no-go-zone for us. They (Chinese) have taken full control of it," he said.

Covid-19 Patients With High Stress Hormone Levels At Greater Death Risk: Lancet Study

Press Trust Of India

LONDON- Covid-19 patients with extremely high levels of the stress hormone cortisol in their blood are more likely to deteriorate quickly and die, according to study led by an Indian origin researcher in the UK. The study, published in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology on Thursday, provides the first data to show that cortisol levels are a marker of the severity of the illness. The researchers, led by Professor Waljit Dhillon from Imperial College London in the UK, suggest they can be used to identify those patients who are more likely to need intensive cover. Cortisol is produced by the body in response to stress such as illness, triggering changes in metabolism, heart function and the immune system to help our bodies cope, the researchers said. Our cortisol levels when healthy and resting are 100-200 nm/L and nearly zero when we sleep. When ill patients have low levels of cortisol, it can be life threatening, they said. According to the researchers, excessive levels of cortisol during illness can be equally dangerous, leading to increased risk of infection and poor outcomes. In the new observational study of 535 patients, of whom 403



were confirmed to have COVID-19, cortisol levels in patients with COVID-19 were significantly higher than in those without. The levels in the COVID-19 group ranged as high as 3241 --considerably higher even than after major surgery, when levels can reach up to 1000, the researchers said. Amongst the COVID-19 patients, those with a baseline cortisol level of 744 or less survived on average for 36 days. Patients with levels over 744 had an average survival of just 15 days. "From an endocrinologist's perspective, it makes sense that those COVID-19 patients who are the sickest will have higher levels of cortisol, but these levels are worryingly high," said Dhillon, Head of Division of Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolism at Imperial College London. "Having an early indicator of which patients may deteriorate more quickly will help us with providing the best level of care as quickly as possible, as well as helping manage the pressure on the NHS," he said.

Treating Covid-19 Patients With Blood Plasma From Those Recovered Is Safe, Says Study

Agencies

WASHINGTON DC: Treating patients suffering from coronavirus infection with transfusion of blood plasma from those who already recovered from the disease have been found to be safe and beneficial, a study suggested. The new study, conducted over 20,000 hospitalized COVID-19 patients, was based on a century-old idea in medicine that has been used against measles, influenza and Ebola. The treatment, also called convalescent plasma, found that people who recover from infection have virus-fighting antibodies floating in their blood, and transfusions of their plasma -- the clear liquid after blood cells are removed -- may give recipients' immune systems an assist in fighting off the virus, The Washington Post reported. The study, published in Mayo Clinic Proceedings on Thursday, is the largest analysis yet of an experimental treatment rapidly deployed in the early weeks of the pandemic through a grassroots effort by physicians. What started as a proposal in a medical journal rapidly drew more than 2,000 medical institutions into a collaborative effort to work out the logistics of collecting and deploying the plasma. "The actionable message here is that this is safe, inexpensive,



and the mortality rates in sick patients are quite low," said Michael Joyner, an anesthesiologist at the Mayo Clinic who led the study. But he acknowledged there is a "chicken and egg" conundrum in trying to conclusively determine the effectiveness of the treatment. The patients were given the treatment through an expanded access program created by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), not in a clinical trial in which patients are randomly assigned to receive the treatment or a placebo. The data, he pointed out, are consistent with the treatment being beneficial. Among the first 5,000 patients who received a plasma transfusion, the death rate in the week after the transfusion was 12 per cent. That first group of patients

received transfusions at a time when plasma was often in short supply and was administered to patients late in their illness. In the larger study, the mortality rate fell to less than 9 per cent. There is no comparison group of patients who did not receive plasma, but the researchers speculate the death rate may have dropped because plasma became more widely available and was given earlier in the disease, which is when doctors say it is more likely to work, based on use in other diseases. But other factors could also explain that drop in mortality -- as the pandemic went on, physicians might have gotten better at treating COVID-19 patients, or people with less severe illness may have begun to show up at the hospital and receive the treatment.

Depression Linked To Greater Risk Of Cardiovascular Disease

Agencies

TORONTO- Researchers have found that suffering from depression could be linked with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and even death. The research team from Simon Fraser University in Canada provides further evidence of the link between depressive symptoms and an increased risk of heart disease and early death. The global study, published in JAMA Psychiatry, tracked 145,862 middle-aged participants from 21 countries and found a 20 per cent increase in cardiovascular events and death in people with four or more depressive symptoms. The risks were twice as high in urban areas -- where the majority of the global population will be living by 2050 -- and more than double in men. The findings showed that one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem during their lifetime and eight per cent will experience

a major depressive event. According to the researchers, the results are timely as experts anticipate an increase in the number of people dealing with mental health issues as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The data suggests that depressive symptoms should be considered as important as traditional risk factors such as smoking, high blood pressure and high cholesterol when preventing heart disease and early death. The study result lends credibility to the existing World Health Organization (WHO) policies to integrate treatment and prevention of mental disorders into primary care. Researchers suggest that a comprehensive approach to tackling non-communicable diseases and mental disorders -- to achieve health-related UN Sustainable Development Goals -- needs to be a global priority. The study concluded that a greater awareness of the physical health risks associated with depression is needed.



US Supreme Court Blocks Donald Trump's Bid To End Immigrant Program

Agencies

Washington: The US Supreme Court on Thursday dealt President Donald Trump a major setback on his hardline immigration policies, blocking his bid to end a program that protects from deportation hundreds of thousands of immigrants - often called "Dreamers" - who entered the United States illegally as children.

The justices on a 5-4 vote upheld lower court rulings that found that Trump's 2017 move to rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, created in 2012 by

protected from deportation and eligible to obtain renewable two-year work permits.

The ruling does not prevent Trump from trying again to end the program. But his administration is unlikely to be able to end DACA before the Nov. 3 election in which Trump is seeking a second four-year term in office.

"We do not decide whether DACA or its rescission are sound policies. We address only whether the agency complied with the procedural requirement that it provide a reasoned explanation for its action," Roberts wrote.

The ruling marks the sec-



his Democratic predecessor Barack Obama, was unlawful.

Conservative Chief Justice John Roberts joined the court's four liberals in finding that the administration's actions were "arbitrary and capricious" under a federal law called the Administrative Procedure Act.

The ruling means that the roughly 6,49,000 immigrants, mostly young Hispanic adults born in Mexico and other Latin American countries, currently enrolled in DACA will remain

and time this week that Roberts has ruled against Trump in a major case following Monday's decision finding that gay and transgender workers are protected under federal employment law.

"These horrible & politically charged decisions coming out of the Supreme Court are shotgun blasts into the face of people that are proud to call themselves Republicans or Conservatives," Trump wrote on Twitter after the DACA ruling.

Traitor Bolton Spreading 'Outright Falsehoods': Pompeo

Agencies

Washington: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo late Thursday ripped into John Bolton for his explosive memoir about working for President Donald Trump, calling the former national security advisor a "traitor."

"John Bolton is spreading a number of lies, fully-spun half-truths and outright falsehoods," Pompeo said in a statement.

"It is both sad and dangerous that John Bolton's final public role is that of a traitor who damaged America by violating his sacred trust with its people."

"To our friends around the world: you know that President Trump's America is a force for good in the world."

Pompeo said he had not yet read the book, "The Room Where It Happened," which the Trump administration is trying to block from publication.

But according to excerpts published by major newspapers, Bolton said that Pompeo -- one of the rare aides never to clash publicly with Trump -- disparaged him in private.

According to The New York Times, Bolton writes that he received a note from Pompeo during Trump's historic first meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore, saying of the president, "He is so full of shit."

Pompeo traveled four times to North Korea in 2018 to jump-start diplomacy for Trump, who has hailed his own efforts as worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize.

But Bolton wrote that Pompeo, a month after the Singapore summit in June 2018, dismissed Trump's North Korea diplomacy, saying it had "zero probability of success," according to the Times report.

Bolton is well-known for his hawkish views on North Korea and left in September shortly after Trump, accompanied by Pompeo, again met Kim on the Demilitarized Zone in Korea.



China Conducts Military Drill In Tibet Amid Border Tensions With India

Agencies

BEIJING: China has recently conducted joint exercises keeping in mind the high-elevation mountainous region, The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Tibet Military Command said on Tuesday.

This revelation came after a violent clash broke in the Galwan Valley region out at the China-India border on Monday.

According to the Global Times, the exercise that featured multiple types of combat recently took place in the Nianqing Tanggula, or Nyenchen Tonglha mountains at an elevation of 4,700 meters.

Issuing a statement on the

We note the Indian military has announced that 20 soldiers have died, and we offer our condolences to their families. During their phone call on June 2, 2020, President Trump and Prime Minister Modi discussed the situation on the India-China border

clash, India has said that a violent face-off happened on late evening and night of June 15 in Ladakh's Galwan Valley as a result of an attempt by the Chinese troops to "unilaterally change" the status quo during

de-escalation and the situation could have been avoided if the agreement at the higher level been scrupulously followed by the Chinese side.

"We note the Indian military has announced that 20 soldiers have died, and we offer our condolences to their families. During their phone call on June 2, 2020, President Trump and Prime Minister Modi discussed the situation on the India-China border," the spokesperson further said.

During the faceoff, the External Affairs Ministry said, both sides suffered casualties and the Chinese side had departed from the consensus to respect the LAC in the Galway Valley.

'Sorry Not Enough': Uk Institutions Apologise For Role In Slavery

Agencies

LONDON: Two of the UK's biggest institutions - the Church of England and the Bank of England - have apologised for their historic links to slavery with the church calling it "a source of shame", prompting a reaction from the Caribbean countries.

The apologies, reported on Thursday by the Telegraph newspaper in the UK, came after an analysis of figures compiled by University College London (UCL) found that individual members of both institutions profited from slavery.

The UCL research found that nearly 100 clergymen and six governors plus four directors of the bank benefitted from slavery, the Telegraph reported.

In response, a Church of England spokesman told the newspaper: "While we recognise the leading role clergy and active members of the Church of England played in securing the abolition of slavery, it is a source of shame that others within the church actively perpetrated slavery and profited from it."

A Bank of England spokesman said: "As an institution, the Bank was never itself directly involved in the slave trade, but is aware of some inexcusable connections involving former governors and directors and apologises for them."



We are not asking for anything as mendicant as handing out cheques to people on street corners

The bank added it would remove any images on display of former executives who were involved with the slave trade.

The Lloyd's of London insurance company also apologised on Thursday for its "shameful" role in the 18th century slave trade and pledged to fund opportunities for Black and ethnic minority people.

The history of several other financial firms in the UK, including Barclays, is also under fresh scrutiny.

'Sorry is not enough'

A regional alliance of Caribbean countries reacted to the move, saying the institutions that benefitted from slavery should go further than saying sorry and atone for their role in the slave trade by fund-

ing Caribbean development.

"It is not enough to say sorry," said Hilary Beckles, chairman of the CARICOM Reparations Commission which was set up by Caribbean countries to seek reparations from former colonial powers such as the United Kingdom, France and Portugal.

"We are not asking for anything as mendicant as handing out cheques to people on street corners," Beckles told Reuters news agency from Jamaica.

The UK's institutions, he said, should sit down with Caribbean nations to fund development projects - or even consider a sort of "Marshall Plan" to give some of the plundered wealth back - a reference to the United States' aid given to Europe after the destruction of World War II.

Blast in southern Pakistan kills three

Agencies

Karachi: At least three people, including security personnel, were killed in a roadside blast in southern Pakistan Friday, police said.

Two members of the Rangers -- an elite paramilitary security force -- were killed after an improvised explosive device detonated near their vehicle in the city of Ghotki in Sindh province, senior police officer Hafiz Abdul Qadir told AFP.

A second security official who spoke on the condition of anonymity also confirmed the attack and toll.

Rural Sindh is home to some of Pakistan's most impoverished areas with powerful landowners holding vast sway over large populations of effectively indentured labourers, who have little in the way of access to education, health-

care or upward social mobility.

In 2017 the Islamic State claimed a suicide blast at a Sufi shrine in Sindh which killed 90 people, in one of the bloodiest attacks to hit the province in years.

Pakistan has slashed militant violence in the country since launching a series of offensives since 2007 against homegrown insurgents as well as Taliban and Al-Qaeda-linked militants -- often based near the lawless border with Afghanistan.

The offensives have also been coupled with operations by security agencies in urban areas, hitting militant networks hard and dramatically reducing violence across the country.

Militant groups however still retain the ability to launch periodic attacks in many rural areas of the country.

Self-driving bus services tested out in Estonia



Agencies

Tallinn: Two types of self-driving bus are being tested out in Estonia this week as part of initiatives that could revolutionise public transport in Europe.

One of the services in tech-savvy Estonia, which is often used as a testing ground for innovation, offers free rides around a park in the capital Tallinn.

The other is part of an EU-funded project and is ferrying people around Ulemiste City, a sprawling business campus near the city's main airport.

Dubbed "e-stonia", the EU member of 1.3 million people is known for being a trailblazer in technology, with Estonians having already helped pioneer the likes of Skype, Transferwise, e-voting and delivery robots.

The first project is a joint initiative being run by the Tallinn city authorities, the Tallinn University of Technology (Taltech) and French company Navya.

Andrei Novikov, deputy mayor of Tallinn, said in a statement he hoped it could lead to "even more eco-friendly and smarter public transport."

University students are present during the ride as bus operators and guides and the bus uses GPS to run on a pre-programmed route in the Kadriorg park.

It is equipped with cameras and lidars, devices for measuring distances by laser light.

In line with virus-related restrictions, no more than

four passengers are allowed on board, and there is a bottle of hand sanitizer by the door.

Nevertheless, the bus is proving very popular.

Bus operator and TalTech student Hagar Nakkurt, 21, said there were often queues to use it.

Karol and Jaan, a 40-year-old couple taking a ride, said the bus would be perfect for parks or on campuses.

"I think that it's a bit too slow to use as public trans-

It reacts to every little thing, that also makes the journey longer. But it's probably just a matter of time before it gets smarter

port," Jaan said.

Karol added: "It reacts to every little thing, that also makes the journey longer. But it's probably just a matter of time before it gets smarter."

The plan is ultimately for the buses to run without operators, although Nakkurt said an intermediate step could be to have operators directing them from home.

Nakkurt said the bus was not difficult to operate but reacted to the smallest objects -- even tree leaves or birds flying over the road -- as potential obstacles.

The second test is part of the EU-funded FABULOS (Future Automated Bus Urban Level Operation Systems). -- AFP

NEW SMAKERS

Malala Yousafzai, Who Was Shot For Going To School, Now Oxford Graduate

London: Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner who once took a bullet for campaigning for girls' education in Pakistan, was over the moon on Friday after completing her degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Britain's prestigious Oxford University.

Ms Yousafzai, 22, who attended Oxford's Lady Margaret Hall college, took to Twitter to share two pictures that show her celebrating the milestone with her family.

"Hard to express my joy and gratitude right now as I completed my Philosophy, Politics and Economics degree at Oxford," she said in the tweet, accompanied by two pictures - one showing her sitting with her family



in front of a cake that says, "Happy Graduation Malala", and the other in which she is covered with cake smiling for the camera.

Hard to express my joy and gratitude right now as I completed my Philosophy, Politics and Economics degree at Oxford. I don't know what's ahead. For now, it will be Netflix, reading and sleep. In the tweet, the famed human rights activist

also revealed her plans for the immediate future - Netflix, reading and sleeping.

"I don't know what's ahead. For now, it will be Netflix, reading and sleep," she wrote.

Ms Yousafzai was shot in the head by the Taliban terrorists in December 2012 for campaigning for female education in the Swat Valley in northeastern Pakistan.

Severely wounded, she was airlifted from one military hospital in Pakistan to another and later flown to the UK for treatment.

After the attack, the Taliban released a statement saying that they would target Malala Yousafzai again if she survived.

Shoppers In Japan Queue Up To Buy Masks Made From Underwear Fabric

TOKYO: Japanese shoppers queued at Uniqlo stores and crashed its website on Friday as the clothing chain began selling face masks with breathable fabric used in the brand's popular underwear, preparing for the coronavirus outbreak lasting through summer.

Scenes of people standing in the rain waiting for stores to open were seen throughout Japan and broadcast on Twitter, while Uniqlo's online store apologised for crashing and later selling out of the washable Airism masks.

The company said more will become available as it was stepping up production. The masks are sold in three-piece packs for 990 yen (\$9.26) plus tax, and are available in three sizes.

Prospects of a prolonged crisis have encouraged Japanese consumers to buy and make reusable, washable versions even as disposable masks, initially in short supply, have become more easily available.

Face masks are not mandatory in Japan,

but are usually worn in public, particularly in stores and on public transport. They were



a common sight even before the global pandemic during flu and pollen seasons.

The company has said it plans to eventually make the masks available in overseas markets.

Shares in Fast Retailing, which owns Uniqlo, rose around 1.9% on Friday.

Twitter flags Trump's tweet of doctored racist baby video

Twitter has slapped another label on a tweet by President Donald Trump, this time warning that a video he shared was doctored and escalating the social media company's crackdown on one of its most widely followed users.

After Trump tweeted the video late Thursday (June 19), Twitter took the rare step of adding a warning that it was "manipulated media" and linked to a page that said multiple journalists confirmed the clip was edited to make it look like a CNN broadcast. The video remains visible in Trump's timeline.

The doctored clip used footage from a video that went viral last year of two toddlers, one black, one white, which CNN used for a story it did on the boy's friendship.

Centre Was Fast Asleep When Chinese Troops Attacked: Rahul

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday accused senior ministers in the government of "lying" to protect the prime minister and that the Centre was "fast asleep" while martyred jawans paid the price in Ladakh.

"It's sad to see senior GOI ministers reduced to lying in order to protect the PM. Don't insult our martyrs with your lies," he tweeted using the hashtag #BJPBetraysOurJawans".

Gandhi also tagged a one-minute video of a jawan's father saying the Indian soldiers were unarmed when they were attacked by Chinese troops.

The Congress leader's attack on the Union ministers comes after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar rebutted him saying all Indian troops guarding the border with China carry arms.

Jaishankar was replying to Gandhi's poser on why Army personnel in Galwan Valley were sent "unarmed to martyrdom".

"It's now crystal clear that: The Chinese attack in Galwan was pre-planned. GOI was fast asleep and denied the problem. The price was paid by our martyred Jawans," Gandhi

Gandhi's remarks also come ahead of an all-party meeting convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday evening to discuss the situation along the India-China border.

Twenty Indian Army personnel, including a colonel, were killed in a clash with Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on Monday night, the biggest military confrontation in over five decades that has significantly escalated the already volatile border standoff in the region.

Gandhi has been questioning the government on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) stand off and asking how the Chinese occupied Indian territory and why Indian soldiers were sent "unarmed to martyrdom" in Ladakh.

The external affairs minister on Thursday said armies of the two sides do not use firearms as per provisions of bilateral agreements sealed in 1996 and 2005.

"Let us get the facts straight. All troops on border duty always carry arms, especially when leaving post. Those at Galwan on 15 June did so,"



earlier said on Twitter.

He had also tagged a report quoting Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik saying the attack was pre-planned by China and the Indian forces would give a befitting reply.

Jaishankar said on Twitter. He also said there was a long-standing practice between the two countries of not resorting to use of firearms in faceoffs in view of the two agreements of 1996 and 2005.

Why Are Majority Of Victims From Same Community? Telangana HC Asks Cops

The Telangana High Court has asked why majority of the victims of alleged police excesses during the lockdown were from a particular community, even as it observed that the counter affidavit filed by police in one of the pleas on their high-handedness lacked all relevant details.

A bench, comprising Chief Justice Raghuvendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B Vijaysen Reddy, asked in its observations whether a minority community was targeted. It was hearing a batch of public interest litigation petitions on the alleged police excesses on Wednesday.

The bench asked the city police and other respondents to submit a detailed report by June 29 in the particular petition.

In its order in the petition, the court said the counter-affidavit filed by the city police commissioner lacked the relevant details.

In one instance, according to the counter-affidavit, a departmental inquiry has been initiated against a sub-inspector of police, a SHO and an ACP, calling for explanation for failure to discharge their duties responsibly.



The order said the subsequent development or progress in the departmental inquiries need to be informed to the court.

The counter filed by the police said a person, who was allegedly assaulted by police, was not in fact assaulted by them.

According to the police, he fell down while he was running away after noticing the police personnel approaching his area. But surprisingly, his injury report has not been submitted along with the counter affidavit, the order said.

In another incident, the petitioner alleged that the police personnel of a particular police station damaged vehicles parked outside homes in a residential area.

The police affidavit claimsthe police had checked the vehicles "using police lathis in order to see whether coronavirus was present or not."

Expressing surprise over the police explanation, the court sought a complete report on the issue.



Fitch Lowers India's Outlook To Negative After 8 Years

NEW DELHI— Fitch Ratings on Thursday lowered India's outlook to negative from stable for the first time in eight years saying the coronavirus pandemic had significantly weakened the country's growth outlook for the year and exposed the challenges associated with a high public-debt burden.

The international rating agency, however, retained India's rating at 'BBB-', which is the lowest investment grade and a notch above junk, and said that there are considerable risks to growth.

Fitch expects economic activity to contract by 5 per cent in the fiscal year ending March 2021 (FY21) from the strict lockdown measures imposed since March 25, before rebounding by 9.5 per cent in 2021-22.

"The coronavirus pandemic has significantly weakened India's growth outlook for this year and exposed the challenges associated with a high public-debt burden. The rebound will mainly be driven by a low-base effect," it said, while revising the outlook on India's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating (IDR) to negative from stable.

Fitch had last in 2012 cut India's outlook to negative, from stable. In 2013, the agency had again upped the outlook to stable.

It projected general government debt to jump to 84.5 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in FY21 from an estimated 71 per cent of GDP in FY20.

Fitch said the geopolitical risk related to longstanding border issues with India's neighbours was highlighted again by recently intensified tensions with China.

Relations with Pakistan are, moreover, negatively affected by the repeal of the special status for Kashmir and recent changes to the status of illegal immigrants based on their religion.

"A stronger focus by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party on its Hindu-

nationalist agenda since the government's re-election in May 2019 risks becoming a distraction for economic reform implementation and could further raise social tensions," Fitch added.

The rating agency said the government has announced structural reforms as part of its response to the pandemic to strengthen GDP growth over the medium term, which, if successful, could improve India's fiscal position.

The reforms to improve the efficiency of agricultural supply chains could help reduce food prices and swings in inflation, while intention to privatise state-owned enterprises (SOE) could prove to be transformative, it added.

Fitch, however, said its growth forecasts are subject to considerable risks due to the continued acceleration in the number of new COVID-19 cases as the lockdown is eased gradually.

"It remains to be seen whether India can return to sustained growth rates of 6 to 7 per cent as we previously estimated, depending on the lasting impact of the pandemic, particularly in the financial sector," Fitch said.

Fitch's rating action comes after another rating agency Moody's earlier this month downgraded India's sovereign rating by a notch to lowest investment grade of 'Baa2' for the first time in 22 years.

US-based S&P, however, retained India's rating at 'BBB-', with a stable outlook saying that even though risks to growth are rising, the economy and fiscal position will stabilise and begin to recover from 2021 onwards.

While Moody's has projected GDP growth to shrink by 4 per cent, S&P pegged contraction at 5 per cent in current fiscal.

Fitch said the humanitarian and health needs have been pressing, but the government has shown expenditure restraint so far due to the already high public-debt burden going

into the crisis with additional relief spending representing only about 1 per cent of GDP.

"Most elements of an announced package totalling 10 per cent of GDP are non-fiscal in nature," it said.

Some further fiscal spending of up to 1 percentage point of GDP may still be announced in the next few months, which was indicated by a recent announcement of additional borrowing for FY21 of 2 per cent of GDP, although we do not expect a steep rise in spending, it added.

India's fiscal metrics, it said, has deteriorated significantly, notwithstanding the government's expenditure restraint, due to the impact of the severe growth slowdown on revenue, the fiscal deficit and public-sector debt ratios.

"India's medium-term GDP growth outlook may be negatively affected by renewed asset-quality challenges in banks and liquidity issues in non-banking financial companies. The financial sector was already facing weak business and consumer confidence before the crisis and authorities had to deal with some high-profile cases over lapses in governance," it said.

A renewed rise in non-performing loans and the need for further financial government support now seem inevitable despite regulatory measures announced by the Reserve Bank of India.

These measures include an extension of the 90-day moratorium on recognition of impaired loans to 180 days and several relaxations in bank lending limits such as allowing banks to fund interest on working-capital loans.

"These moves will put a heavy onus particularly on public-sector banks to bail out the affected sectors and extend impaired-loan recognition, heightening solvency risks if not met by adequate and timely capital support," it said.

Centre Revises Quarantine Period To 1 Week For Staff At Covid-19 Facilities

The Union health ministry on Thursday revised to one week the quarantine period for doctors, nursing officers and other health workers with high-risk exposure to confirmed COVID-19 cases or respiratory specimens. Earlier, the quarantine period for health workers was 14 days.

A decision on extending the quarantine period further by one week will be taken by the nodal officer or head of the department after taking into account the profile of such doctors and other health workers, according to an updated advisory issued on the management of healthcare professionals working in COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 areas of hospitals.

The earlier advisory, dated May 15, stated that high-risk contacts should be quarantined for 14 days, tested as per ICMR testing protocol, actively monitored for development of symptoms and

ministry source explained.

After a week, such high-risk contacts shall be tested as per ICMR testing protocol, actively monitored for development of symptoms and managed as per laid-down protocol.

If they test positive but remain asymptomatic they will follow protocol for very mild, mild and pre-symptomatic cases.

If they test negative and remain asymptomatic, they should complete the 14-day quarantine and return to work. Should symptoms develop, mild cases can opt for home isolation while moderate cases that require oxygen therapy should be managed at a dedicated COVID-19 health centre and severe cases should be managed in a dedicated COVID hospital.

As for low-risk contacts, they shall continue to work. They will self-monitor their health for development of



managed as per laid-down protocol.

"For doctors, nursing officers and other health workers with high-risk exposure, the quarantine period shall be initially for one week only," the updated advisory issued on Thursday read.

The profile of the healthcare professionals, which will be taken into account for extending the quarantine period includes the age, health condition, the extent of exposure and presence of any co-morbidities, a health

symptoms. In case symptoms develop, the guidance based on mild, moderate and severe cases should be followed, the advisory said.

"The advisory has been updated based on the evolving scenario and with more information regarding coronavirus infection coming to the fore," a health ministry official said.

The document underlines that healthcare personnel working in hospitals are at increased risk of contracting the COVID-19 disease if there is a breach in the per-

If Killing Of 20 Jawans Isn't Provocation, What Is, Asks Shiv Sena

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that India will give a befitting reply if provoked, the Shiv Sena said on Friday that the killing of 20 Indian jawans by the Chinese Army was itself a provocation.

The editorial in the Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana' also said those who used to blame Jawaharlal Nehru for defeat in the 1962 Sino-India war should now introspect.

"Modi says if provoked, we will respond. If killing of 20 jawans is not a provocation, then what is?

"Killing of 20 jawans is a provocation and attack on our self-respect and sovereignty," it added.

"Coffins of 20 soldiers is not a matter of pride," the editorial said.

"We spoke of retaliation then and even now. But we

can threaten only Pakistan. When will we leave behind the perception that we cannot take on China," it asked.

It also said the country has not learnt anything from the mistakes of 1962.

"Compared to 1962, we are stronger today. If people who blame (then prime minister) Nehru intro-



spected, the martyrdom of 20 soldiers will not go in vain," it said.

The h e M a r a t h i daily also

accused Modi of taking on China "for US President Donald Trump".

"It is being said that Trump is keeping a close watch on the India-China developments. What (good) will happen with that? In 1971, when USA sided with Pakistan, Russia sent its naval fleet for India's help. Will Modi's friend Trump send similar help to India?" the editorial asked.

NEWS MAKERS

Cong Leaders Wish Rahul Gandhi On His 50Th Birthday

Senior Congress leaders from Punjab and Haryana wished good health and long life to former party president Rahul Gandhi on his 50th birthday on Friday.

"Dear @Rahul Gandhi, warm wishes to you on your birthday. Take care of yourself and keep working for India," Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh tweeted.

On Gandhi's 49th birthday, Singh had said he was "proud of who you have become over the years; I see my dear friend (late) Rajiv (Gandhi) in you."

Former Haryana Chief Minister, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, and state Congress president, Kumari Selja, in their separate tweets, prayed for Gandhi's long life and good health. Con-



gress party chief spokesperson and former Haryana minister, Randeep Singh Surjewala, also wished Gandhi.

"Tough times are testing

times, Struggle is intrinsic to men of resolve. The temperament to handle it all with equanimity, fearlessness of spirit and an intense commitment to serve is test of a leader. Privileged to work with such a leader. Birthday wishes to Shri @rahulgandhi," he tweeted.

Former Union minister and sitting Congress MP from Anandpur Sahib in Punjab, Manish Tewari also wished Gandhi on his birthday. "Happy birthday @RahulGandhi. God Bless," he tweeted.

Gandhi has decided to not celebrate his birthday this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the death of 20 Army personnel in a stand-off with China in Galwan Valley of Ladakh.

After Drawing Flak, TN Withdraws Order On Replacing Anglicised Versions Of Tamil

The Tamil Nadu government has 'withdrawn' its order on replacing Anglicised versions of Tamil names of 1,000 plus localities in the state with precise vernacular ones, saying it was working on alignment of views by experts on transliteration standards.

DMK president M.K. Stalin hit out at the ruling dispensation on the matter, saying it has become a 'u-turn government.'

Minister for Tamil Official Language and Tamil Culture, K. Pandiarajan said the government will reissue the order shortly after making necessary changes. "We are working on alignment of views by experts

on Transliteration standards from Tamil to English. Hopefully, we should get this released in 2/3 days," he said in a tweet.

"The GO on the change of English names for Tamil names for places has been withdrawn. Will absorb all feedback & reissue (it) shortly," he added.

Though the move had earlier found resonance with Tamil lovers, it also drew flak from many including netizens, who had questioned its timing amid the raging COVID-19 pandemic. The government had earlier come up with new spellings in English for 1,000 plus localities in the state, including cities and villages, to precisely reflect

the Tamil spelling and pronunciation of such names.

Accordingly, the textile city of Coimbatore was proposed to have been called Koyampuththoor, Vellore as Veeloore and Dindigul as Thindukkal, among others with the issuance of the Government Order. As per the order dated April 1 and made available to the media last week, the names reflecting the new English spelling were picked after a high-level expert committee considered the suggestions of District Collectors who had recommended a list of Anglicised names that needed a Tamil makeover.

Air India Gives Permanent Staff Option To Work For Three Days A Week At 60 Pc Pay

NEW DELHI: Air India on Friday introduced a "shorter working week scheme" under which its permanent employees, except pilots and cabin crew members, can opt to work for three days a week at 60 per cent salary, said senior airline officials.

This measure has been introduced in order to improve the airline's cash flow position amid the coronavirus pandemic, they added. "The permanent employee who opts for such a scheme can avail this for a period of one year," the officials said. The pandemic has impacted the aviation industry significantly, and all airlines in India have taken steps like cutting salaries of employees, firing employees to improve their cash flow. The officials said that the employees opting for the "shorter working week scheme" would not have the option to take any other employment during the remaining days of the week. After a gap of two months due to the coronavirus-triggered lockdown, India resumed its domestic passenger flights from May 25 albeit in a curtailed manner. International passenger flights continue to remain suspended in the country.