



Maximum : 29°C Today 07:46 PM
Minimum : 15°C SUNRISE
Humidity : 43% TOMMOROW 05:20 AM

23rd year OF PUBLICATION KASHMIR OBSERVER



29 Shawwal-ul-Mukarram | 1441 Hijri | Vol: 23 | Issue: 132 | Pages: 08 | Price: ₹3

www.kashmirobserver.net • twitter.com / kashmirobserver • facebook.com/kashmirobserver • Postal Regn: L/159/KO/SK/2014-2016

News Digest

Burglars' Strike Srinagar Shrine

Srinagar: Unknown burglars struck a revered shrine in Old City of Srinagar and decamped with cash, triggering outrage among the people, reports said Saturday.

3 LeT Workers Held In Sopore

Srinagar: Police on Saturday arrested three alleged workers of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) during a search operation in Sopore town of Baramulla district.

3 Abducted Girls Rescued In Poonch

Jammu: Three abducted girls, including two minors, were rescued in separate operations in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, police said.

Senior Health Officer Suspended

Srinagar: Director Health Services Kashmir on Saturday placed under suspension incharge Medical Superintendent Sub District hospital Bijbehara, Dr. Shaikat Hussain Parray, following a report by an inquiry committee against him.

Newborn Found In Chadura Orchard

Srinagar: A day-old baby boy on Saturday was found abandoned in an orchard in Central Kashmir's Budgam district. The locals found a new born baby abandoned in the apple orchards of village Bonen of Chadura town, reports said.

Militant Killed In Ongoing Kulgam Encounter



State Forces on the encounter spot in Lakadpora village of Kulgam on Saturday. Pic, Shah Junaid

SRINAGAR: An unidentified militant on Saturday was killed in ongoing encounter with state forces

World In 'New & Dangerous Phase' Of Pandemic:

WHO GENEVA: The World Health Organization warned Friday of a "new and dangerous phase" of the coronavirus pandemic with people tiring of lockdowns despite the disease's accelerating spread.

The warning came as it emerged the virus was present in Italy in December, months before its first confirmed cases and about the same time as the disease was first reported in China.

The virus, which has now killed more than 454,000 people and infected 8.4 million



people worldwide, is surging in the Americas and parts of Asia even as Europe starts to ease restrictive measures.

Lockdowns imposed to halt the spread of the disease have caused crippling economic damage, but the WHO said the pandemic still posed a major threat. "The world is in a new and dangerous phase. Many people are understandably fed up with being at home... but the virus is still spreading fast," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference. >>PAGE 02

DAK Seeks Audit Of COVID-19 Deaths

SRINAGAR: Following the continuous spike in Covid-19 deaths, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) Saturday demanded Audit Committee for the deaths saying that people across J&K are confused about who died due to the coronavirus pandemic.

President DAK, Dr Suhail Naik in a statement issued here said it is very important that every death should be discussed by a committee to know what was underlying cause of death (UCOD), immediate cause of death, and factors leading to the immediate cause, and co-morbidities.

"There is lot of confusion among people that how buck-eting of deceased is >>PAGE 02

Kargil Councillor Held For Mocking PM In Audio Clip

LEH: A Kargil political activist was arrested early on Saturday after an audio clip surfaced on social media mocking Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Army in the wake of ongoing face-off between India and China.

The action against Zakir Hussain, councillor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) from Shakar constituency, followed registration of an FIR against him by police on Friday even as the councillor submitted a public apology over his remarks, the officials said.

Hussain, a long time Congress activist, was expelled by the par-

China Lays Claim To Galwan Valley

In An Official Statement On The Step-By-Step Account Of The Galwan Face-Off, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Claimed Galwan Valley Is Located On The Chinese Side Of The LAC

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said there were no foreign incursions into Ladakh, China once again claimed that the Galwan Valley is located on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

In an official statement on the step-by-step account of the Galwan face-off where 20 Indian soldiers were killed, China's foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the Galwan Valley is located on the Chinese side of the LAC in the west section of the China-India boundary.

In the first Tweet, Zhao claimed that the Galwan Valley is located on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control in the west section of the China-India boundary. For many years, he said the Chinese border troops have been patrolling and on duty in this region.

"Since April, the Indian border troops have unilaterally and continuously built roads, bridges and other facilities at the LAC in Galwan Valley. China lodged representations and protests on multiple occasions but India went even further to cross the LAC and made provocations," Zhao said in his second Tweet.

In another Tweet, the spokesperson alleged, "On May 6, Indian border troops crossed LAC, trespassed into China's territory, built fortification & barricades, which impeded the patrol of Chinese border troops. They deliberately made provocations in an attempt to unilaterally change the status quo of control & management."

Zhao said that the Chinese border troops were compelled to take necessary measures to respond to the situation on the ground and strengthen management & control in the border areas. "To ease the situation, China and India stayed in close communication through military and diplomatic channels,"

SHOCKINGLY, ON THE EVENING OF June 15, India's front-line troops, in violation of the agreement reached at the commander-level meeting, once again crossed the Line of Actual Control for deliberate provocation when the situation in the Galwan Valley was already easing,"



India Rejects China's Claim On Galwan Valley

India on Saturday strongly rejected China's claim of sovereignty over Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh, asserting that attempts by the Chinese side to "advance exaggerated and untenable" claims are not at all acceptable.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said China's claim over Galwan Valley was not in accordance with its own position in the >>P-02

PMO Clarifies Modi's Comments On LAC

The PMO on Saturday called as "mischievous interpretation" the criticism over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at an all-party meeting that no one has entered Indian territory or captured any military post while referring to the Galwan Valley clash in eastern Ladakh.

"The prime minister's observations that there was no Chinese presence on our side of the LAC (Line of Actual Control) pertained to the situation as a consequence >>P-02

Why Were Our Soldiers Killed? Asks Rahul

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his remark that neither is anyone inside India's territory nor has any of its posts been captured, alleging that the PM has "surrendered" Indian territory to Chinese aggression.

Tagging PM's remarks with his tweet, Gandhi said, >>P-02

Geared Up For Any Contingency: IAF Chief

The Air Force is determined to deliver and is well prepared and suitably deployed to respond to any contingency, IAF chief, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria said here on Saturday.

Addressing a Combined Graduation Parade (CGP) at Air Force Academy (AFA) Dundigal here he said the air force will never let the supreme sacrifice made by our brave soldiers at Galwan in Ladakh go in vain.

"...it should be very clear that we are well prepared and suitably deployed to respond to any contingency. >>P-02

LoC Flares Up In Uri, 5 Civilians Injured

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: At least five people, including a minor on Saturday were injured in Uri sector of Baramulla district as India and Pakistan continued to trade gunfire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir.

The exchange of fire between India and Pakistan troops started around 10am Saturday along the LoC in Hajipeer sector and continued for several hours, villagers told Kashmir Observer over phone. The cross-LoC shelling, they said created panic in Nambra, Mothla, Hathlanga and other villages prompting people to stay indoors.

"In the afternoon, cross-LoC

Cross-LoC Shelling Rattles Rajouri

Army on Saturday accused Pakistan troops of violating ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistani troops on Saturday shelled mortars along the LoC in Rajouri, drawing a strong retaliation by the Indian Army, a defence spokesperson said. >>P-02

Pak Drone Shot Down Along IB: BSF

A Pakistani drone, loaded with a sophisticated rifle and some grenades, was shot down by the Border Security Force along the International Border in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, officials said. This is the first such incident in Jammu region when a drone carrying arms >>P-02

shelling intensified. Shells exploded in Nabra village injuring five people and damaging several houses," Sarpanch Charduna, Lal Din Khatana told Kashmir Observer. All the five people, he >>PAGE 02

Nepal Lays Claim Over Bihar Land, Prevents Work



PATNA: Amid escalating border dispute between India and China in Ladakh's Galwan Valley, along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), yet another India neighbour, Nepal, has sought to stop the Bihar Government from carrying out embankment-related work on the border, claiming the area as part of its territory.

This comes barely two days after the Upper House of Nepal's parliament approved a new political map for the country, including the land controlled by India. In the new map, Indian territories such as Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura in the state of Uttarakhand in India have been shown as part of Nepalese territory - a move that has been strongly rejected by India, saying it was not based on historical facts or evidence.

Bihar shares a 729km-long international border with Nepal.

Officials from the Water Resources Department (WRD) were surprised when Nepalese authorities prevented them from carrying out fortification of an embankment on Lal Bakiy River in the Dhaka block of east Champaran district in Bihar. The area now being claimed by Nepal is some 45km from Motihari town, headquarters of the east Champaran district.

Fortification work Authorities said the WRD of Government of Bihar had constructed the embankment long back over the river, which originates from the Himalayan region of Nepal, and had been carrying out fortification work every year ahead of the monsoon, but they >>PAGE 02

THE DISTRICT MAGISTRATE has also apprised the Geological Survey of India of the entire situation, urging the latter to resolve the dispute at the earliest so that the pending embankment work can be completed soon.

Finding Ways To Reopen Schools: Govt

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Saturday said that the stakeholders have shown reluctance in reopening the educational institutions across the Union Territory amid the prevalent situation but the administration is finding ways to reopen the schools at earliest.

"All the stakeholders including parents, teachers, community Sarpanchs and Media showed reluctance in reopening the schools," Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Kewal Kumar Sharma said, adding "In Kashmir, the issue of reopening of schools was a matter of concern.

Sharma said that the reopening of schools in Kashmir division is the matter of concern for the government as the academic year is in the middle of the session, adding, "There is an urgency of reopening of >>PAGE 02

5 More Die Of Covid-19, Toll Jumps To 80 In J&K

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Five more COVID-19 patients died in Jammu and Kashmir, taking the number of fatalities due to the virus in the Union Territory to 80, officials said on Saturday.

A 55-year-old coronavirus positive woman from Tujan area of south Kashmir's Pulwama district died at SKIMS hospital at 6:45 am on Saturday, the officials said.

The patient was referred from SMHS as a case of meningioma with obstructive sleep apnea on Tuesday, they said.

They said the cause of the death was cardiopulmonary arrest.

A 40-year-old woman from Safa Kadal area of the city here passed

15 Paramilitary Men, 5 Cops Among 154 Test Positive

Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday reported 154 new cases of Covid-19, including 15 paramilitary personnel and five cops, raising the number of people infected by the deadly disease to 5834 in the Union Territory.

"154 new Covid-19 cases were detected in J&K. >>P-02

away at Chest Diseases hospital on Saturday, the officials said.

The woman with underlying heart ailment and diabetes was referred to the facility from SMHS hospital on June 14 after testing positive for the coronavirus, they said.

An 80-year-old man from Shopian who had tested positive for CO-

Govt Identifies 67 Spots In Valley To Open Liquor Stores

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: For the first time after the outbreak of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, the government has identified 183 places, including 67 spots in the Valley for opening up liquor outlets at a massive scale.

In an official communication sent to the Financial Commissioner, Finance department, Civil Secretariat, Excise commissioner J&K Rajesh Kumar Sharma says that his department has divided the J&K UT area into 27 zones. He further writes in the letter that as per the survey conducted and in exercise of the powers under rule 28 of J&K Liquor and License rules, 1984 and section 4 (B) of the excise Act, a total list of 183



locations including 116 in Jammu and 67 in the zones of Kashmir have been identified. The list of the places is enclosed with the official letter.

"It is request that the necessary approval may kindly be granted enabling to proceed further strictly under the rules by way of any transparent method, either e-auctioning zone wise or location wise as the government deems fit as a matter of policy," the letter reads. >>PAGE 02

From Front page...

Chinese Social Media Sites Delete PM's Speech, MEA Spokesman's Remarks On Border Crisis

Press Trust Of India

BEIJING: Indian embassy officials here have said the speech of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to chief ministers on June 18 as well as the comments by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been deleted from two Chinese social media accounts, including Weibo.

The move comes in the backdrop of the violent face-off be-

tween the Indian and Chinese armies in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on Monday in which 20 Indian military personnel were killed, significantly escalating the already volatile situation in the region.

Indian Embassy officials said the transcript of the remarks of the MEA spokesman Anurag Srivastava were found to have been removed from the Embassy's account of Sina Weibo on June 18.

After that the Indian officials re-published the screen shots of Srivastava's comments on June 19.

Sina Weibo which is similar to Twitter in China has millions of users and all embassies in Beijing besides several world leaders including Prime Minister Modi have opened their accounts to interact with the Chinese people.

The MEA spokesman's remarks have also been removed from the official WeChat ac-

count. A note on WeChat says, unable to view this content because it violates regulations.

In his comments, Srivastava had asked China to confine its activities to its side of the Line of Actual Control and that it must not take any unilateral action to alter it.

Prime Minister Modi's remarks of June 18 about the Indian soldiers killed in the Galwan Valley clash has also become inaccessible on WeChat. The page says

that the content has been deleted by the author, whereas the Embassy officials said they have not removed it.

Emphasising that the sacrifice of Indian soldiers killed in the Galwan Valley clash in Ladakh will not go in vain, Modi said that India wants peace but is capable of giving a befitting reply, if instigated.

Both the Weibo pages of the Indian embassy and its WeChat

group have thousands of followers. While the Weibo page was opened earlier, the WeChat group started in January this year.

Modi opened an account in Weibo during his visit here in 2015 and continued to make use of it to interact with the Chinese people. No posts related to the recent military confrontation were posted on his page.

Twenty Indian Army person-

nel, including a Colonel, were killed in the clashes with the Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on Monday night.

While China has acknowledged casualties on their side, it has not specified the numbers. Beijing has not made any official statement on the casualties suffered by the People's Liberation Army during the face-off with the Indian Army.

No mandatory institutional quarantine in Delhi after AAP govt's stiff opposition to LG's order; Cases cross 56,000

New Delhi, Jun 20 (PTI) A day after Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal directed a five-day mandatory institutional quarantine for every coronavirus patient, the decision was revoked on Saturday following stiff opposition by the AAP government.

The development came after two meetings between the Delhi government and the LG. Now all individuals who test positive will be first examined at COVID care centres to find out if they need

hospitalisation. It will also be checked if they have adequate facilities for home isolation.

The AAP government had contended that the mandatory institutional quarantine will seriously harm the city as its facilities will not be able to take the burden of the rising number of cases.

With a record spike of 3,630, the total number of coronavirus cases reached 56,746 on Saturday, while 77 more deaths were reported, a Delhi government

bulletin said.

The death toll has now reached 2,112. The bulletin said 7,725 people recovered in the last 24 hours.

There are 249 containment zones in the city.

According to a statement issued by the LG House, the issue of mandatory institutional quarantine was also discussed in detail during the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) which was attended by Chief

Minister Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia and other senior officials of the Delhi government.

In another decision, the DDMA approved recommendations of the High Level Expert Committee for fixing rates of hospital beds for treatment of coronavirus patients. Rates for isolation bed, ICUs without and with ventilator in all hospitals have been capped at Rs 8000-10000, 13000-15000 and 15000-18000 respectively.

China Lays Claim To Galwan

in the backdrop of allegations and counter-allegations by New Delhi and Beijing over the deadly clash that has brought the two neighbouring nations to the brink of war.

On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told an all-party meet that 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. The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long LAC. 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.

India Rejects China's...

past, noting that attempts of transgression by Chinese side were invariably met with appropriate response from the Indian troops. "The position with regard to the Galwan Valley area has been historically clear. Attempts by the Chinese side to now advance exaggerated and untenable claims with regard to Line of Actual Control (LAC) there are not acceptable. They are not in accordance with China's own position in the past," he said.

The MEA spokesperson was responding to a question on the issue. The Galwan Valley was the site of the violent clash between the two militaries on Monday evening in which a Colonel and 19 other Indian Army personnel were killed.

China's People's Liberation Army has not yet talked about the number of casualties it suffered during the cross border clash, the worst in 45 years.

Srivastava said Indian troops are fully familiar with the alignment of the LAC in all sectors of the India-China border areas, including in the Galwan Valley.

"They abide by it scrupulously here, as they do elsewhere. The Indian side has never undertaken any actions across the LAC. In fact, they have been patrolling this area for a long time without any incident," he said.

Srivastava said the Chinese side attempted to transgress the LAC in other areas of the western sector of the India-China border areas since mid-May.

"These attempts were invariably met with an appropriate response from us," he said.

Srivastava said India expects that Chinese side will sincerely follow the understanding reached between the foreign ministers of two countries recently to ensure peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

PMO Clarifies Modi's...

of the bravery of our armed forces," it said.

The Congress as well as a number of strategic affairs experts raised questions over Modi's remarks asking if there was no transgression by the Chinese military in Galwan Valley then where did Indian soldiers die. They also wondered whether Modi gave a clean chit to China over the standoff.

"The sacrifices of the soldiers of the 16 Bihar Regiment foiled the attempt of the Chinese side to erect structures and also cleared the attempted transgression at this point of the LAC on that day," the PMO said.

"The words of the prime minister 'those who tried to transgress our land were taught a befitting lesson by our brave sons of soil', succinctly summed up the ethos and the values of our armed forces," it said.

The PMO said Modi assured that India's armed forces will leave no stone unturned to protect the country's borders.

"Attempts are being made in some quarters to give a mischievous interpretation to remarks by the prime minister at the all-party meeting on Friday," it said.

Why Were Our Soldiers...

"PM has surrendered Indian territory to Chinese aggression." "If the land was Chinese: 1. Why were our soldiers killed? 2. Where were they killed?" Gandhi said.

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, 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, at the all-party meet, 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.

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

He has been questioning the government on the LAC standoff and asking how the Chinese occupied Indian territory and why Indian soldiers were sent "unarmed to martyrdom" in Ladakh.

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.

Geared Up For Any...

I assure the nation that we are determined to deliver and will never let the sacrifice of our braves of Galwan go in vain," he said. His statement comes in the wake of 20 Indian soldiers losing their lives in a violent clash between the troops of India and China at Galwan Valley in Ladakh on Monday night.

"The security scenario in our region mandates that our armed forces remain prepared and vigilant at all times. The development at LAC Ladakh is a small snapshot of what we are required to handle at short notice.

In spite of unacceptable Chinese actions after agreements reached during military talks and resultant loss of life all efforts are endeavoured to ensure that the current situation at the LAC is resolved peacefully," Bhadauria said.

The gallant actions of our soldiers who lost their lives during the confrontation with the Chinese forces has demonstrated the resolve to protect the sovereignty of our country at any cost, he asserted

Nepal Lays Claim Over Bihar

never faced such objection from Nepal.

Reports said, initially, the authorities tried hard to sort out the issue at the local level, but they failed. The Bihar authorities have now reported the matter to the federal Home Ministry, Government of Bihar and the Indian Embassy in Nepal.

"Nepal has stopped embankment-related work in Indian territory near the border. We have reported the matter to both, the Bihar government as well as the Union Government. We hope to resolve the issue soon," east Champaran district magistrate Shirshat Kapil Ashok told the media.

The district magistrate has also apprised the Geological Survey of India of the entire situation, urging the latter to resolve the dispute at the earliest so that the pending embankment work can be completed soon.

'Raising objections'

"Fortification of embankment in 400 metres, out of a 2.5km-long stretch, was not done. The WRD department has built the embankment till the last point of the border, but now Nepalese authorities are raising objections over it," the district magistrate told the media on Saturday. According to him, he also held talks with his Nepalese counterpart, but the matter remains unresolved.

Another senior official said the portion of embankment now being claimed by Nepal is located far away from the international border, but they don't know why Nepal is objecting to it this time.

"The last portion of the embankment is more than nine metres south of the no-man's-land. The dispute is untenable and unwarranted," local circle officer Ashok Kumar said on Saturday.

Lockdown in Nepal

The fresh incident comes barely a week after the Nepalese Armed Police Force resorted to firing on a crowd of Bihar villagers, leaving one dead on the spot and detaining two others who were later released after the authorities intervened.

The incident took place during a meeting between the family members from both sides of the border and Indian villagers were told to leave the border due to lockdown in Nepal. Such meetings are quite common during normal times, but they remain banned now since Nepal is under lockdown, while India has withdrawn it. A series of such incidents have created tension along the porous Indo-Nepal border as the people from Bihar are now shirking from entering Nepal.

The fresh incident comes amid the violent conflict between Indian and Chinese troops along the LAC in the Ladakh region last week, in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed.

World In 'New & Dangerous

A vaccine remains months off at best despite several trials, while scientists are still discovering more about the virus, its symptoms and the extent to which it may have spread before being identified.

DAK Seeks Audit Of...

done and are classified into Covid-19 or non Covid death," he said. Citing an example of death of a boy from Handwara, Dr Naik said that many deaths have medico-legal aspects and outcome of probe and subsequent punishment under law may change by providing a wrong death certificate.

He said an accurate count of the number of deaths caused due to COVID-19 infection, which depends in part on proper death certification, is critical to ongoing public health surveillance, response and policy switching.

The Death Audit committee should go through the case sheets, investigations, and death summary of the deceased before classifying it as a Covid-19 death, Dr Naik said.

"The audit committee should follow the guidelines prescribed by the ICMR and all hospitals should submit their death summaries to the committee within 24 hours," he demanded.

Kargil Councillor Held...

a thing that would bring harm to the motherland.

Accusing his friend of back-stabbing him, he said, As a human being, all of us have private casual conversations between friends where we swear, abuse, and say all kinds of things without meaning them literally.

The councillor was arrested from a house in Kargil town during an early morning raid and is being questioned while efforts are on to get hold of his friend with whom he was heard holding the conversation over the phone, a police official said.

A police spokesman said an FIR was registered against him after receiving reliable information that an audio clip was going viral, containing incriminating content, on various social media platforms.

The conversation is between a sitting LAHDC-Kargil councillor with one of his known persons with content prejudicial to the regional or religious peace and tranquillity, spreading rumours and also seditious in nature, the spokesman said.

After conducting a preliminary probe, he said Kargil police station registered the case following an inquiry under relevant provisions of penal law.

Taking serious note of the conversation between Hussain and his friend, Ladakh Congress president Rigzin Jora expelled the councillor from the party without waiting for the reply of the show-cause notice served to him by the Kargil district unit of the party two days ago.

Condemning the telephonic conversation between Hussain and his friend, LAHDC-Kargil said, "People of Kargil have a long history of standing behind to defend the nation and stand with the Indian Army during toughest of times. We reiterate our unflinching loyalty to our nation".

The content of the conversation is highly objectionable and condemnable. LAHDC-Kargil deplores the content of this conversation in the strongest possible terms and also disassociates itself from it, a statement issued by the office of the chairman and chief executive councillor LAHDC-Kargil said.

LoC Flares Up In Uri...

said were removed to the primary health centre Uri for treatment. "Around 2:30, five people, including two children aged 12 and 16 were brought to our health facility in Uri. Preliminary treatment was given to all the five. However, among them, three with splinter injuries were referred to Baramulla hospital for advanced treatment," Block Medical Officer (BMO) Uri Dr Ramzan told Kashmir Observer.

He said the condition of all the five was stable. The locals identified three of the injured as Maqbool Magriyal, Parveena Begum and Ahmad Sheikh, all residents of Nambia.

Last week, a woman was killed and two other people injured in Batgran village of Uri during cross-LoC shelling. Intense shelling had also prompted the district authorities to evacuate the villagers towards the safer places.

Meanwhile, an army spokesperson said that four civilians were injured when Pakistani troops violated the ceasefire along the LoC in Uri, according to an Army spokesperson.

"On 20 June 2020, in the morning hours, Pakistan initiated an unprovoked ceasefire violation along the LoC in Rampur sector by firing mortars and other weapons," the spokesman said. He said four civilians were injured in the Pakistani firing. The Army has given a befitting response to the Pakistani aggression, he said. (with PTI inputs)

Cross-LoC Shelling Rattles

There was no immediate report of any casualty, he said.

"At about 6:45 PM, Pakistan initiated an unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and shelling mortars along LoC in Nowshera sector. The Army is retaliating befittingly," the spokesperson said.

The cross-border shelling was going on when last reports were received, he added.

Pak Drone Shot Down ...

and explosives was shot down by the BSF.

The 8x8 drone (from blade to blade) was spotted hovering in the skies by a BSF party on patrol duty at Rathua village in the vicinity of Border Out Post (BOP) Pansar around 5.10 am, the officials said. They said the BSF personnel fired nine rounds and shot it down 250 metres inside the Indian territory.

"A highly sophisticated rifle, two magazines, 60 rounds and seven grenades were the payload on the drone meant to be delivered to Pakistani agents," the officials said quoting preliminary information.

"It is believed that the Pakistani rangers manning the forward posts opposite BOP Pansar were controlling the drone," they said. Meanwhile, the officials said Pakistani rangers fired a few rounds on Babiya post in Hiranagar sector around 8.50 am. There was no retaliation by the BSF guarding the IB, they said, adding the situation is being monitored closely.

Finding Ways To Reopen...

schools. We are trying to find more solutions."

He further said that in addition to online education, the govern-

ment is trying to find more ways. "That's what we are upto these days," Sharma added. He also said that the government is trying to explore one more Television channel through NCERT so that the more areas will be covered through it.

Sharma further said that "the government has not decided anything about the mass-promotion of primary or any other standard."

Earlier, the Union Minister for Human Resource Development (HRD) Ramesh Pokhriyal had issued a statement about the re-opening of schools wherein he had said that the decision will be taken in the month of August.

Earlier this year in March, the schools and colleges in Jammu and Kashmir reopened after a gap of more than seven months following the abrogation of Article 370 in the month of August.

In the second week of March, the government ordered closure of all education till March 31 that got extended multiple times in view of the pandemic. (KNO)

Govt Identifies 67 Spots...

According to the documents, the Excise department has identified spots/places in all four districts of south Kashmir—Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag followed by Srinagar, Baramulla, Bandipora, Ganderbal and Budgam.

Baramulla with 18 spots tops the survey list compiled by the excise department, while Srinagar remains second with 8 identified places. Ganderbal and Budgam has 7 identified spots each, Shopian 6, Anantnag and Kulgam 5 each, Pulwama and Kupwara 4 each, while Bandipora has three proposed liquor outlet spots.

5 More Die Of Covid-19,...

was taken on Friday and it returned as positive for COVID-19 on Saturday, the officials said, adding, he died of cardiopulmonary arrest in the afternoon.

An 80-year-old woman from Kulgam died at SMHS hospital on Saturday, they said.

The officials said the woman was admitted to the hospital on June 18 with chest and kidney-related ailments and tested positive for the coronavirus.

15 Paramilitary Men, 5 Cops

While 114 of them are from Kashmir, 40 are from Jammu," the officials said.

Among fresh cases, 28 cases were reported from Srinagar, 21 from Baramulla, 20 from Budgam, 12 from Shopian, 11 each from Pulwama & Jammu, nine from Kulgam, seven each from Kupwara & Kathua, six each from Ramban & Udhampur, four from Doda, three each from Anantnag & Samba, two from Bandipora and one each from Ganderbal, Reasi, Kishtwar & Rajouri, they said.

They said that 142 more patients recovered and were discharged from different hospitals.

Among the new cases include, 14 CRPF personnel from 144 Battalion, one BSF man from Humhama, five policemen from District Police Lines (DPL) Pulwama, one cop from Shopian, six pregnant women, two doctors, six months old baby, two minors, a government employee and a health worker, news agency GNS reported. The number of confirmed cases has now reached 5, 834 out of which 4,488 are in Kashmir, while 1,346 are in Jammu, the officials said.

There are 2,417 active cases of the coronavirus disease in J&K – 1,820 in Kashmir and 597 in Jammu – and 3,336 (2,597 from Kashmir and 739 from Jammu) patients have recovered, according to officials.

The J&K has witnessed 80 Covid-19 (71 from Kashmir, 09 from Jammu) deaths so far.

Militant Killed In Ongoing...

The state forces launched a cordon and search operation at Likhdipora in the south Kashmir district following specific information about the presence of militants in the area, a police official said.

As the forces were searching the area, the hiding militants fired upon them.

The forces retaliated, ensuing an encounter, in which a militant was killed, the official said.

He said the identity and group affiliation of the militant is being ascertained.

The operation is going on, the official added

Senior Health Officer...

further orders," reads an order.

Meanwhile, Dr.IqbalBichoo, Incharge BMO Bijbehara, has been asked to look after work of I/C Medical Superintendent SDH Bijbehara in addition to his own duties till further orders. (GNS)

Newborn Found In Chadura...

hospitals about deliveries and intelligence is being gathered from local sources about pregnant women who could possibly be the mother. We will soon arrest the accused," said a police official. (KNO)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of the Kashmir Observer LLP
Published from: # 5- Boulevard, Srinagar-190001
Printed at: KT Press Pvt. Ltd, Rangreth Ind Area, Srinagar.
RNI Registration No: 69503/98
Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16
Editor-in-Chief: Sajjad Haider
Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja
Switchboard: (0194) 2106304
Editorial: (0194) 2502327
Email editorial: editor@kashmirobservers.net

NO HOLDS BARRED



“If China withdraws from the Indian-claimed territory it has occupied, the two sides could negotiate new border agreements and operating procedures. But if China holds on to what it has gained, India would most certainly shift more overtly toward Washington.”

The World In The Womb Of Virus

Covid pandemic may not change history but it will certainly accelerate it

FAHEEM JEELANI

China in few decades has turned its economy around. With the amount of supply chain markets that China controls, it is nearly responsible for 80% of world's exports, and advent of a new technology where it is a key player

On new year's eve I was talking to my friend on skype. We usually catch up after every few days. At times talking for hours. With best friends time evaporates. Horas Volat as they say in Latin. I don't exactly remember what triggered our point of discussion: but now in hindsight it was a very insightful discourse.

World was entering into a new decade. We listed out companies and businesses that will flourish in the new decade. Historically previous predictions have almost all fallen on dead ground. No one had imagined on 31st December 2009 that Amazon and Apple would grow its business almost 10 times in 2010s. Amazon of course has outgrown from an online retailer and has invested heavily into web services and cloud computing. Apple has grown from a niche market into a global corporate giant with foot prints almost all over the world. If you had invested \$1000 in Apple shares on 31st December 2009, it would be worth \$13000 now! An increase of 1200%. Clearly technology was at the forefront in 2010s, but what about 2020s?

I argued that we will be in for a surprise. New technologies would emerge but not take over as we expect them. Bit coins, big data will exist but its climate that is going to hog the limelight in 2020s. Industries and companies that invest in alternatives to fossil fuels will emerge out. I had my reasons. Working in ICT industry, over last few years I witnessed there have been multiple plans to enhance technologies and move towards digitalization but things largely have grown slowly. Couple of reasons

for it were: industry unpreparedness and markets still unripe for massive digitalization. My friend Mohsin argued against it. It was technology for him. He expected massive strides in this decade.

Six months into the new decade and it seems both of us were right. The covid-19 pandemic has thrown all possibilities out. We are looking at a change not only at political level but almost at all levels.

With most of the people working from home, schools holding classes online, universities operating, the amount of data consumption has surged through skies. The current technologies are not capable enough of transmitting high speeds to large populations. In this event 5G technology becomes important. It is capable of providing speeds in excess of 1Gig. This was unthinkable 5 years back. This not only means access to high speeds for end users but potentially transforming how we operate right now. Its utilization is in smart machines which need no human intervention, driver-less cars, health care, manufacturing.

To think of it, the world even though had made huge strides in last century, yet it was reluctant to disregard old habits. Our way of working and functioning is primitive. It is an industrial revolution era mode of operation where productivity is measured by the amount of hours you work. It made sense when a worker had to put certain hours to extract work from mechanical machines. With technology at hand it doesn't matter. It is more about smart work. Productivity has new benchmarks.

There is a very interesting side to 5G

development. More than 60% of world's 5G equipment is provided by China, through its main tech companies Huawei and ZTE. For China, 5G is the means to assert its strength to rest of the world. Why is China eager not to miss this opportunity? To understand its genesis I remember what Winston Churchill once said, 'The farther backward you look, the farther forward you are likely to see.'

Roughly between 1750 and 20th century nearly all explanations for why West ruled were variations on the long term lock-in-theme. The most popular version being that Europeans were simply culturally superior to everyone else. The oriental writers further fueled this theory. The Europeans believed that they were conquering everyone else because culture made them do it.

Right through the twentieth century a complicated dance went on in the West as historians uncovered facts that did not seem to fit the long-term lock-in stories. For instance, no one now disputes that when Europe's great age of maritime discovery was just beginning, Chinese navigation was more advanced. Chinese sailor's already knew the coasts of India, Arabia, Africa.

When a Chinese admiral Zheng He sailed from China for Sri-lanka in 1405 he led nearly three hundred vessels. His treasure ships had advanced rudders, elaborate signaling devices and magnetic compasses. Compared to this Columbus barely knew where he was, let alone where he was going.

So why did China lag behind? Where did it lose out to West? Geographer Jared Diamond in his classic Guns, Germs

and Steel explains that China's centralized rulers who were more concerned about holding onto their empire favored Europe's surge. To avoid political fragmentation Chinese emperors banned voyages.

Of course, imperialism later on came into picture and West was to vastly benefit from the riches of its conquered colonies. History at times takes turns on the whims of an egoistic king or general. Remarkably true.

Things however have changed. China in few decades has turned its economy around. With the amount of supply chain markets that China controls, it is nearly responsible for 80% of world's exports, and advent of a new technology where it is a key player, it will be very hard for West to undermine China. Simply blaming it for the novel virus and expecting an alternative to China, isn't going to be so easy.

We're already seeing the consequences. China is punishing India in the Ladakh region, for cozying up to US. With its modern army and muscle power, China is no pushover.

Without falling into hyperboles, the covid pandemic may not change history but it will certainly accelerate it. The change that our world was in need of may happen sooner, than we expected. In Aldous Huxley's terms it may not be a brave new world, but it certainly will be a different world.

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How China and India Came to Lethal Blows

Beijing saw a threat in New Delhi's steady improvement of borderland infrastructure and renewed Indian claims on disputed territory.

AJAI SHUKLA

Tensions between Indian and Chinese troops have simmered since early May in the remote, high Karakoram mountains that separate India's northern Ladakh region from the alkaline desert of Aksai Chin, which is claimed by India but controlled by China and abuts its Xinjiang province.

It is a forbidding landscape of cold deserts, snow-capped peaks, sparse vegetation and freezing temperature about 14,000 feet above sea level. On Monday evening, in a brutal hand-to-hand battle, Chinese soldiers killed at least 20 Indian soldiers with wooden staves and nail-studded clubs, in the severest escalation of the dispute on the Sino-Indian frontier in decades.

British colonial authorities bequeathed India a border with China that was neither delineated on a map nor demarcated on the ground. After China invaded Tibet in 1950 and the two Asian giants sought to formalize their frontier, the territorial dispute emerged. The Sino-Indian border dispute involves about 13,500 square miles in Ladakh and Aksai Chin and about 35,000 square miles in the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China calls South Tibet.

In 1962, the border dispute flared into a war. China won conclusively but retreated after a cease-fire to what were broadly its prewar positions. That de facto border, which is called the Line of Actual Control, is patrolled by both armies. Occasional unarmed clashes have taken place over the years despite five agreements aimed at reducing the risk of combat.

China has built a network of roads and tracks on its side of the Line of Actual Control, but the Chinese military has consistently objected to India's far slower but steady improvement of borderland infrastructure.

One of the key Indian projects is the construction of the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi road in Ladakh, cutting through treacherous mountain ridges as high as 16,000 feet. The road runs almost parallel to the disputed border with Chinese-controlled

Aksai Chin and reaches Daulat Beg Oldi, an Indian military base and landing ground for the Indian Air Force, about 12 miles from Karakoram Pass, which separates Ladakh from Xinjiang.

The road, which includes 37 bridges built over snow-fed rivers, took 19 years to construct, providing India the ability to move its troops with much greater speed toward Aksai Chin and Karakoram Pass. On Oct. 21, India's defense minister, Rajnath Singh, inaugurated a major bridge on the road, which made it completely operational even in the summer melt, when the rivers are in spate.

China saw the road as reducing the power asymmetry between the two countries and threatening its interests. Two and a half months earlier, an aggressive political move flaunting the muscular nationalism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "New India" had not gone unnoticed in Beijing. On Aug. 5, Mr. Modi's government unilaterally abolished the constitutionally guaranteed semiautonomous status of the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is disputed among India, Pakistan and China.

Mr. Modi also bifurcated the state into two federally administered territories: Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. India's home minister and Mr. Modi's confidante, Amit Shah, insisted in the Indian Parliament that both Pakistani-controlled Kashmir and Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin belonged to India.

Beijing objected. Hua Chunying, a spokesman for China's foreign affairs ministry, described Mr. Modi's move as undermining China's territorial sovereignty, described it as "inclusion of the Chinese territory" into Indian administrative jurisdiction and warned, "Such practice is unacceptable and will not come into force."

Between May and June, the Chinese military seized about 40 square miles of Indian territory, including an area known as the Galwan River valley. The high ridges of the Galwan valley overlook the strategic Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi road leading toward Aksai Chin and Karakoram Pass. The seizure of the Galwan River valley allows the Chinese Army to watch the road and, when necessary, bring down artillery fire to preclude its use, rendering a significant strategic asset inoperative.

India protested. On June 6, Indian and Chinese military officers started talks to de-escalate the crisis. The Chinese agreed to vacate some positions. On the evening of June 15, an Indian Army patrol set out to verify whether the Chinese had withdrawn from positions on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control.

According to the Indian officials, the Chinese had not withdrawn as agreed, and several hundred Chinese soldiers ambushed the Indian patrol. The Chinese claim they were on their own side of the Line of Actual Control when the Indian soldiers crossed over and attacked them.

While both Indian and Chinese soldiers carry weapons when they patrol the border, it has been a longstanding practice, in accordance with agreements signed by the two countries in 1996 and 2005, not to use firearms during patrol clashes. Brutal hand-to-hand fighting followed in which the Chinese killed at least 20 Indian soldiers with wooden staves and nail-studded clubs, pushing some of the wounded over the steep cliffs overlooking the Galwan River.

Beijing has admitted that there were Chinese casualties but has not given any details. New Delhi has not officially claimed any count of Chinese casualties either, but the Indian press and social media claim, with no evidence, that 43 Chinese soldiers were killed.

Only on Wednesday did Mr. Modi discover his voice and declare that "peace-loving" India would ensure that the deaths of its soldiers would not go in vain. India's foreign minister, who rarely holds back in railing against Pakistan, was restrained in his criticism of Beijing and agreed with his Chinese counterpart to "cool down" tensions on the ground "as soon as possible."

With China not stepping back from the territory it has captured and the deaths of Indian soldiers, India's beleaguered opposition parties are cornering the government and asking: Can Mr. Modi, who makes political capital out of his muscularity in dealing with Pakistan, adopt an entirely different set of standards in dealing with China?

After the Doklam crisis, Mr. Modi met Mr. Xi in Wuhan in 2018 and in India last year. Mr. Modi

hailed both summits as harbingers of a new strategic convergence with China. The Wuhan summit particularly had significant outcomes that were described as building a "consensus" between the two sides to deal with border tensions.

India's opposition parties are portraying Mr. Modi's embrace of Mr. Xi as a grave misjudgment. The outrage over the killing of Indian soldiers leaves Mr. Modi's strongman image dented and confronts him with the difficult choice of appearing to stand up to China while preventing a full-scale war. Mr. Modi's party has responded by aggressively arguing that the fallen Indian soldiers killed 43 Chinese soldiers, despite the absence of any proof.

Some analysts believe that just as Mao Zedong strengthened his control over China by going to war with India in 1962 and crushing it militarily, Mr. Xi is burnishing his strongman image by slapping down an India that is growing uncomfortably close to the United States.

Mr. Modi, his China policy in tatters, confronts the question, should New Delhi accept assistance from Washington to handle the crisis? Since May, American political officials have communicated Washington's support to New Delhi repeatedly, but Mr. Modi has replied that India is capable of handling the situation and that diplomatic and intelligence support from Washington would suffice.

For the Sino-India border, the current tensions have destroyed the existing playbook, which had maintained peace since 1993, when the two sides signed the Border Peace and Tranquillity Agreement.

If China withdraws from the Indian-claimed territory it has occupied, the two sides could negotiate new border agreements and operating procedures. But if China holds on to what it has gained, India would most certainly shift more overtly toward Washington.

New York Times

(Ajai Shukla, a retired Indian Army colonel, is a consulting editor for the Business Standard newspaper in New Delhi)

Trust Science, Ignore The Conspiracy Theorists

Conspiracy theorists are often neither malevolent nor unintelligent

YOO JUNG KIM

A second allure of conspiracy theories may be that they allow the believer to lay claim to a secret truth that is not limited by one's level of wealth or education. Previous studies have demonstrated that lower education levels correspond with increased reliance on conspiratorial explanations, with one concluding that "education may undermine the reasoning processes and assumptions that are reflected in conspiracy belief." The average Covid-19 conspiracy theorist has probably never received the training needed to interpret complex academic papers. I couldn't send them one of the dozens of research articles I've read over the past months and expect them to

Few weeks ago, I took an uncomfortable trip down the rabbit hole of Covid-19 conspiracy theory videos. As a newly minted M.D. who will soon be taking care of patients at a safety-net hospital on the frontlines of an ongoing pandemic, I was especially pained by what I saw. There was the infamous "Plandemic" video, which asserts that a cabal of elite individuals and organisations is using Covid-19 to cement power. There were also false claims that the new coronavirus was created with the backing of Bill Gates, for the purposes of diminishing our freedoms.

Watching the videos pushed me to think about why so many viewers gravitate toward them - and how best to counter their misinformation. On both of those fronts, my experiences working with patients have taught me valuable lessons.

I've learned that conspiracy theorists are often neither malevolent nor unintelligent. Rather, many are afraid of their own powerlessness, and these theories offer them a semblance of control. Believing that Covid-19 was perpetuated by organisations with evil intentions allows conspiracy theorists to affix their anxiety onto a big, bad villain, rather than acknowledge our collective powerlessness against the whims of nature. It helps allay existential fears regarding the indifferent, arbitrary universe we live in. I recognise these emotions because I have seen them time and time again in my patients who are hesitant to heed medical advice, either due to misinformation or due to a reluctance to change their habits.

A second allure of conspiracy theories may be that they allow the believer to lay claim to a secret truth that is not limited by one's level of wealth or education. Previous studies have demonstrated that lower education levels correspond with increased reliance on conspiratorial explanations,

with one concluding that "education may undermine the reasoning processes and assumptions that are reflected in conspiracy belief." The average Covid-19 conspiracy theorist has probably never received the training needed to interpret complex academic papers. I couldn't send them one of the dozens of research articles I've read over the past months and expect them to grasp its nuances. Yet, if I were to challenge them on their beliefs, it wouldn't be surprising if they accused me of being the one who hadn't done my due diligence in researching Covid-19. Conspiracy

Fortunately, physicians have a powerful tool to persuade patients on a wide range of issues, from smoking to vaccines: motivational interviewing, a form of conversation therapy used to assess and guide patients in the process of making positive changes. As a part of motivational interviewing, I ask my patients about their biggest barriers to changing their minds or habits; this way, I know which worries or misinformation to try to address

theories abound because they are easy to understand and fit neatly within their own twisted internal logic. The truth is often hopelessly complicated, but the best lies are simple and easy to believe.

Fortunately, physicians have a powerful tool to persuade patients on a wide range of issues, from smoking to vaccines: motivational interviewing, a form of conversation therapy used to assess and guide patients in the process of making positive changes. As a part of motivational interviewing, I ask my patients about their biggest barriers to changing their minds or habits; this way, I know which worries or misinformation to try to address. I never resort to guilt-tripping, fearmongering, or ridicule, because those who feel their beliefs are being threatened become even more entrenched in their views.

At the end of every discussion, I reassess my patients' willingness

to change. Most of my patients aren't willing to give up their deep-rooted beliefs or habits after a single office visit, so I remain open to an ongoing conversation. Over the course of many visits, my patients get to know me and understand that I want the best for them. By fostering a sense of mutual respect, I can often nudge them toward healthy behaviours, like taking their medications or taking actionable steps to quit smoking.

So, now, when I encounter a Covid-19 conspiracy theorist, I approach the conversation like this: I empathise with them, acknowledge

that Covid-19 is horrifying and that we all want our loved ones to be safe. I tell them that I don't trust the conclusions of some of the conspiracy videos on the internet, and I offer to refer them to more trustworthy sources of information. Even if they don't change their mind, they know that I take their concerns seriously. The conversation about Covid-19 will be an ongoing one, but in time, I hope that evidence-based views will win the conspiracy theorists over.

Viral misinformation has proliferated during the pandemic, and many of our friends and families have been afflicted. Fortunately, there is a potential cure: healthy doses of active listening, empathy, patience, and respect.

Yoo Jung Kim works at a safety-net hospital in San Jose, California. -undark.org

Sorry Is Not Just Another Word, It Has Power To Heal

BEVERLY ENGEL

At this crucial time in our history, when the brutal death of George Floyd has seemingly created a moment of reckoning in our country, apology has become more important than ever. One by one, people and companies are stepping up to apologise for the way the police have treated black people, for the inherent racism in the US, and for not recognising the horrible fear and humiliation this racism has inflicted on the black people.

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell recently apologised for not listening to players and admitted the league was wrong about protests. Volkswagen apologised for posting a racist video promoting its new Golf 8 on the company's official Instagram page. And black people and other people of colour are receiving messages from white people they used to be close to, saying they are sorry for their previous racist behaviours.

Apology is not just a social nicety, something we do to be polite. It is an important social ritual, a way of showing respect and empathy for the wronged person or persons. Conversely, by not giving a genuine apology we show disrespect towards the person or the people we have harmed. In addition to expressing respect and empathy, there are several other reasons why apologising to those we have hurt or harmed is so important:

- Apologising shows that we care about the other person's feelings.

- Apologising shows that we are capable of taking responsibility for our actions.

- By apologising to another person he or she no longer feels that we are a threat to them and often, our apology quiets their anger.

- By apologising to someone we hurt or harmed we validate their feelings and their perceptions.

I have specialised in working with former victims of child abuse for nearly forty years. Time after time I hear from clients that the one thing they wish for more than anything else, the one thing they believe can help them to heal from the abuse they suffered, is an acknowledgment from their parents (or other offenders) about how they mistreated them and an apology for the harm they caused. Once in a while I have even been a witness to the healing that can come when a survivor receives a meaningful apology. The reason why this kind of apology is so healing: the survivor finally feels validated.

Validation is the recognition and acceptance of another person's thoughts, feelings, sensations, and behaviours as understandable. In the case of survivors of abuse it is a statement that their reactions and emotions are normal, for example: "Of course you were frightened by my anger. I was out of control." This not only validates their experience and their perceptions but normalises their reaction.

Apologies such as this also acknowledge that the person was indeed harmed and has a right to feel hurt or angry. This kind of validation is incredibly healing. We all want our feelings to be acknowledged, especially when our feelings have been hurt or we have been emotionally damaged by an act. We want the other person to show us that they know they have harmed us.

Even today, for many, having someone accept responsibility for wrongdoing and express remorse for the harm he or she caused is far more healing than any punishment the wrongdoer would ever be forced to experience.

One simple apology can melt even the hardest of hearts, and tear down the strongest of walls.

Beverly Engel has been a psychotherapist and author

How To Stay Calm And Fight The Odds

BRYAN E. ROBINSON

"If uncertainty is unacceptable to you, it turns into fear. If it is perfectly acceptable, it turns into increased alertness, alertness, and creativity."
-Eckhart Tolle

Uncertainty is an unavoidable part of life. None of us knows the future, so we must live with a certain amount of it. But life's inevitable uncertainty is like sulfuric acid for the primitive "survive brain," saddled with the hefty responsibility to keep us safe. When it doesn't know what's around the corner, it can't keep us out of harm's way. It can go haywire when certainty is questioned instantly arousing your fight-or-flight reaction, kicking you in the pants in an attempt to spur you to action and get you to safety. If you're intolerant of uncertainty, odds are you will have more anxiety than average and will do almost anything in your power to avoid or extinguish it. The problem is, it's impossible to eliminate all uncertainty. In order to live fully, freely, and happily, we must be able to tolerate uncertainty, which bolsters our "thrive brain."

If you have uncertainty intolerance, it can cause tremendous anxiety. Your survive brain is constantly updating your world, making judgments about what's safe and what isn't. Due to its disdain for uncertainty, it makes up all sorts of untested stories hundreds of times a day because to the mind, uncertainty equals danger. The survive brain, because it's hard-wired with what scientists call a negativity bias, assumes the worst, over-personalises threats, and jumps to conclusions. It overestimates threats and underestimates your ability to handle them - all in the name of survival.

Waiting in the unknown can feel like torture by a million tiny cuts. Will I contact the coronavirus? Will the MRI



reveal cancer? Will I get the job? Who's in the house when the alarm goes off, friend or foe? Who lurks underneath the clown makeup? The ground beneath you opens up, threatening to swallow you, or so it feels. Sometimes the survive brain prefers to know an outcome one way or another to take the edge off. It's more stressful wondering if you'll get to your meeting on time than knowing you'll be late. It's more anxiety-inducing to know you'll divorce than being unsure of it. And it's more fearful not knowing if you're going to get sacked than knowing for sure you lost your job.

Scientists have found that job uncertainty takes a greater toll on your health than actually losing the job. Statistics show you're more likely to maintain the stamina to continue taking

risks after a car crash than after a series of psychological setbacks. Patients with cancer who have an intolerance to uncertainty develop thought patterns to avoid the negative fears of the possibility of death, and they slip deeper into mental distress. And research shows that you're calmer anticipating pain than anticipating uncertainty of pain. British researchers discovered that study participants who knew for sure they would receive a painful electric shock felt calmer and less agitated than those who were told they only had a 50 per cent chance of getting the electric shock.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, things are different, and the uncertainty of what the future holds looms, breeding unease, fear, and anxiety. But we can ask ourselves if it's the virus

that scares us or the drastic changes, the uncontrollable and the unknown that scare us. Meanwhile, once we stay informed and follow what the experts tell us, our best ally is uncertainty tolerance, which comes from cultivating what social scientists call attitude certainty. When you choose your perspective instead of letting it choose you, this form of attitude certainty can keep you calm, cool and collected.

While avoiding uncertainty is adaptive in that it keeps you safe and sound, the cocoon your primitive brain constructs can be a virtual prison. The same assumptions that keep you safe permeate every sphere of your life and can prevent you from growing, taking necessary risks, and reaching your dreams. The most powerful antidote against uncertainty anxiety is your

perspective, which can victimise or empower you. When you look for the upside of an uncertain situation and figure out what you can control and what you can't, it's easier to develop uncertainty tolerance and accept whatever is beyond your control.

Studies show that attitude certainty leads to endurance and levelheadedness; whereas attitude uncertainty can lead to doubt and anxiety. One way to cultivate attitude certainty is to look for the upside of the quarantine restrictions. When we can't control what's happening, we can shift into our thrive mind and challenge ourselves to control the way we respond to what's happening. That's where our power lies. Nobody and no situation can take that away unless we give it away.

Other best practices are to extricate the "cans" from the "cannots." That involves seeing if we can find the opportunity in the difficulty and dwell on positive aspects of life where we can make a difference. We can consider the personal resources at our fingertips, instead of the limitations, and brainstorm possibilities. And we can remind ourselves how our resources provide opportunities to learn about our strengths and positive qualities and put them into practice to grow.

Internal chatter can either boost self-control and uncertainty tolerance and help us thrive. Or it can overestimate threats and undermine our growth. It helps to avoid negative, catastrophic self-talk and use positive self-talk that comforts and reassures us. The more stable and resilient your thrive brain's tolerance for uncertainty, the more likely you can offset the negativity bias and your survive brain's fears and flourish - regardless of the uncertain circumstance in your life.

Bryan Robinson is a professor Emeritus at the University of North Carolina. -Psychology Today

Scientists Call For Retraction Of Study Claiming Coronavirus Spread Is Mainly Airborne



Press Trust Of India

More than 40 scientists have signed an open letter calling for the retraction of a study which made "extraordinary claims" that airborne transmission could be the dominant mode of spread of COVID-19. The study, which was published last week in the journal PNAS, compared COVID-19 case counts and measures enforced in China's Wuhan city, Italy, and New York City in the US, and noted that wearing of face masks in public corresponds to the most effective means to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In the open letter, scientists including Noah Haber from Stanford University in the US, said the PNAS study had methodological design flaws and made "easily falsifiable claims." According to the open letter, the main conclusions of the study are based on the comparison of disease control measures, case count trends within and between Wuhan, Italy, and New York City (NYC). However, it said the PNAS study ignored other clear differ-

ences in disease control policy between these places, including broader variation in face mask policy.

"In one critical example, the paper asserts that after April 3, the only difference in regulatory measures between NYC and the US lies in face coverings on April 17 in NYC. This is verifiably false, based on widely available sources," the open letter noted.

"It is flatly untrue that there were no other regulatory differences between NYC and the rest of the US on those dates," it said.

The open letter said the study's analysis ignored the lag between changes in disease transmission and changes in reported case counts.

It said the policy implementation dates considered in the study are extremely poor proxies for mass behaviours, including social distancing and mask use.

"Dates of policy implementation were concurrent with an enormous set of changes across society which plausibly affected reported incidence of COVID-19," the scientists noted in the open letter.

According to the scientists, case counts in the PNAS study were modelled with simple lin-

ear regressions, which they said is not consistent with infectious disease dynamics.

The scientists also reasoned that factors like demographics, public policies, and contact behaviours of people in Wuhan, Italy, and NYC were treated as equivalent, which they added was inappropriate.

"Any one of the above issues in isolation would be cause for serious concern, but in combination, they are alarming," the open letter noted.

"While masks are almost certainly an effective public health measure for preventing and slowing the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the claims presented in this study are dangerously misleading and lack any basis in evidence," the scientists said.

Due to the scale, scope, and intensity of the issues in the PNAS study, and the immediacy of the decisions being made based on its conclusions, they believe it is now impossible to correct or extend debate on the research within the academic literature.

"Accordingly, we ask that the editorial board of PNAS retract this paper immediately," they said.

Coronavirus May Infect Respiratory Centre Of Brain, Suggests Research

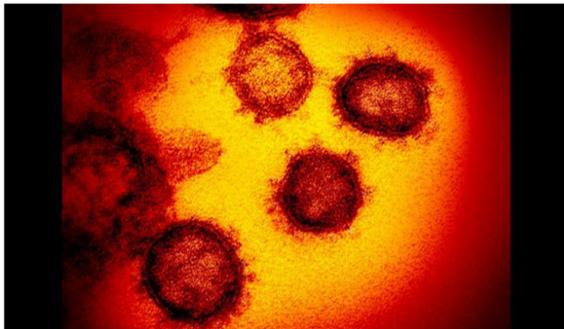
A team of researchers at CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology (IICB), Kolkata has explored the neuro-invasive potential of COVID-19 and suggested that the virus may infect the respiratory centre of the brain, a statement said.

The researchers have also suggested that attention should be focused on the respiratory centre of the central nervous system to learn about mortality due to coronavirus.

The paper published in ACS Chemical Neuroscience and supported by Science & Engineering Research Board (SERB), a statutory body of the Department of Science & Technology (DST), implies that coronavirus could enter the human brain through the nose and reach the olfactory bulb of the brain.

From there, the virus might infect PreBotzinger complex (PBC), the primary centre of the brain that controls the respiratory rhythm generation. This explains that collapse of the respiratory centre in the brain may be responsible for breakdown of COVID-19 patients.

The team of researchers comprising Dr. Prem Tripathi, Dr. Upasana Ray, Dr. Amit Srivastava and Dr.



Sonu Gandhi suggested that while the lung is one of the most infected organs, several other organs, including the brain, are also affected by COVID-19.

This is the first report that highlights that SARS-CoV-2 may target the PBC of the brainstem that controls respiration and causes respiratory collapse of COVID-19 patients, the statement added.

The scientists have suggested that cerebrospinal fluid of COVID-19 pa-

tients and postmortem of the brain of the deceased should be assessed to better understand the route of SARS-CoV-2 entry and its spread to the respiratory centre of the brain.

The PreBotzinger complex functions as the primary respiratory oscillator and it has been proposed as a centre of respiration. It has been earlier shown that disruption of PBC causes lethality due to respiratory failure, suggesting its central role in respiratory rhythm generation.

It is possible that SARS-CoV-2 may shut down respiratory centre, and in turn breathing by infecting and destroying the PBC of the brainstem, it said, adding that this hypothesis needs to be validated for SARS-CoV-2.

Another recent study from a group of scientists at King's College London, UK highlighting that loss of smell was one of main symptoms of COVID-19 patients, hinting at the involvement of the same route through which coronavirus may enter the brain.

The study highlights that it is important to not only screen the COVID-19 patients for neurological symptoms but also further segregate when the symptom appears.

The researchers have pointed out that while at present, the brain is not considered as the site of primary or secondary reason for death of a COVID-19 patient, attention needs to be focused towards the brain's respiratory centre.

Postmortem of brain of COVID-19 patients could be assessed to know the route of entry and affected areas including detailed assessment of respiratory centre of the brain, the statement added.

Lonely People Less Likely To Quit Smoking: Study

Agencies

LONDON- Being lonely may make it harder to quit smoking as the researchers now say there is evidence for a causal link between the prolonged experience of loneliness and smoking.

By applying a novel research method - Mendelian randomisation - which uses genetic and surveys data from hundreds of thousands of people, the team found that loneliness appears to lead to an increased likelihood of smoking behaviour.

"We found evidence to suggest that loneliness leads to increased smoking, with people more likely to start smoking, to smoke more cigarettes, and to be less likely to quit," said co-lead author Robyn Wootton from the University of Bristol in the UK.

There was evidence that being lonelier increases the likelihood of starting smoking, the number of cigarettes smoked per day and decreases the likelihood of successfully quitting.

This reflects the trends observed during the pandemic. YouGov's Covid-19 tracker suggests 2.2 million people across the UK are smoking more than they were before lockdown.

In the other direction, there

was also evidence that starting smoking increased individuals' loneliness.

"Our finding that smoking may also lead to more loneliness is tentative, but it is in line with other recent studies that identified smoking as a risk factor for poor mental health," said study senior author Dr Jorien Treur.

The team also investigated the relationship between loneliness and alcohol use and abuse and found no clear evidence for a causal relationship there.

According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), during the first month of the lockdown, the equivalent of 7.4 million people said their well-being was affected through feeling lonely.

Lonely people were more likely than others to be struggling to find things to help them cope and were also less likely to feel they had support networks to fall back on, the study said.

"We are still yet to see the full effects of the coronavirus pandemic on alcohol and cigarette use in the UK," Wootton said.

This research highlights the need for smokers suffering from loneliness to be given support to stop, to improve not just their health and wellbeing but also to help reduce their loneliness.



Vitamin D May Help Mitigate Chemotherapy Side Effects: Study

Agencies

SYDNEY- Researchers have found that vitamin D can mitigate chemotherapy-induced gastrointestinal mucositis -- a painful inflammation and ulceration of the digestive tract.

Gastrointestinal mucositis is one adverse outcome of chemotherapy that has plagued cancer sufferers for years and, for which, no effective treatment currently exists.

The findings showed that vitamin D could potentially mitigate inflamed intestinal tracts and provide relief to cancer patients.

The study, published in the journal Supportive and Palliative Care, highlights the limited options for easing the gastrointestinal side effects of chemotherapy, singling out Vitamin D and probiotics as the most promising.

"We already know that Vitamin D helps in the absorption of calcium, but new findings suggest it may also play an important role in chemotherapy-induced intestinal mucositis," said study lead author Cyan Sylvester from the University of South Australia.

"The severity and progression of various gastrointestinal diseases, such as irritable bowel syndrome and colorectal cancer, is associated with Vitamin D deficiency," Sylvester added.

"It appears that Vitamin D helps suppress inflammation and enhances the function of T-cells which boosts immunity," she explained.

Vitamin D is also thought to im-



prove the efficacy of certain anti-cancer drugs.

The researchers are now working on ways to enhance the activity of vitamin D in the intestine as a more viable option for treating gastrointestinal mucositis.

"We know that Vitamin D definitely does more than help absorb calcium, but we need to better understand and optimise its action in the gut before we can be 100 per cent confident that it could be a treatment option for gastrointestinal mucositis," said study researcher Andrea Stringer.

Probiotics (live bacteria and yeast) have also been widely promoted for digestive health and there is evidence they reduce the severity of diarrhoea and abdominal pain, but researchers have not been able to establish the direct effect of probiotics on intestinal function that reduces these side effects during and following cancer treatment.

"Vitamin D shows the most promise and could prove the key hormone to alleviate suffering for cancer patients," the study authors wrote.

Scholarships This Week

Kashmir Observer in association with Buddy4Study.com presents scholarships available for the meritorious students of Jammu and Kashmir

Scholarship Name 1: IIT BHU Department of Metallurgical Engineering Junior Research Fellowship 2020

DESCRIPTION: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Varanasi invites applications for Department of Metallurgical Engineering Junior Research Fellowship 2020 from B.Tech/B.E/M.Tech/M.E. degree holders. The fellowship requires the fellows to work on the project titled, "Development of Functionally Graded Armor Composites (FGACs) Materials".

ELIGIBILITY: The fellowship is open for candidates below 28 years of age who hold a B.Tech/B.E/M.Tech/M.E. degree in Metallurgical Engineering/ Material Science/ Ceramic Engineering/ Mechanical Engineering. They must be GATE qualified.

PRIZES & REWARDS: INR 31,000 per month plus 16% HRA

Last Date to Apply: 02-07-2020

Application mode: Via email only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/BDM3



Scholarship Name 2: Abdul Kalam Technology Innovation National Fellowship 2020-2021

DESCRIPTION: Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE), Gurgaon has set forth this national fellowship for outstanding engineers to recognize, encourage and support translational research in the country.

ELIGIBILITY: Indian scholars with at least a bachelor's degree, working in India in various capacities of the engineering profession in public-funded institutions, can apply for this fellowship.

PRIZES & REWARDS: 10 selected fellows will get a monthly fellowship of INR 25,000, a research grant of INR 15 lakh per year and INR 1 lakh per annum overhead.

Last Date to Apply: 30-06-2020

Application mode: Apply online

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/AKT5

Scholarship Name 3: ICMR Centenary-Post Doctoral Research Fellowship Scheme 2020

DESCRIPTION: The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has announced this fellowship for PhD/MD/MS degree holders in India. The aim of the fellowship scheme is to foster high-quality research opportunities to talented and young PhD/MD/MS degree holders in the areas of basic science, communicable and non-communicable diseases, and reproductive health including nutrition at ICMR Institutes/Centers.

ELIGIBILITY: Indian PhD/MS/MD degree holder within 3 years of completing his/her PhD/MS/MD or hold a provisional PhD/MS/MD degree who are less than 32 years of age can apply for this fellowship.

PRIZES & REWARDS: Selected scholars will get consolidated fellowship grant of INR 50,000 per month, house rent allowance, contingency grant of INR 3 lakhs per annum and other benefits.

Last Date to Apply: 30-06-2020

Application mode: Interested candidates have to apply to this address by post, the address is - Attention of Director General: Dr. NC Jain Scientist-G and Head, Human Resource Planning and Development Department, Indian Medical Research Headquarters, Ansari Nagar, New Delhi

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/ICD1

Scholarship Name 4: EWS Scholarship for Class 10 Passed Students 2020

DESCRIPTION: Buddy4Study India Foundation invites scholarship applications from Class 10 passed students studying in Class 11 and 12 for EWS Scholarship. The scholarship program is meant to support students belonging to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of the society.

ELIGIBILITY: The scholarship is open for Class 10 passed students studying in Class 11 and 12. Marks obtained in Class 10 board examination should be at least 50%. The annual income of the family should be less than INR 6 lakhs per annum.

PRIZES & REWARDS: Selected students will get scholarship of INR 10,000

Last Date to Apply: 30-06-2020

Application mode: Online applications only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/EWS1

Muslims, Jews have higher COVID-19 death rate, UK figures indicate

Agencies

LONDON: The death rate from COVID-19 in England and Wales is higher among people who identify as Muslims, Jews, Hindus or Sikh than Christians or those with no stated religion, Britain's statistics office said on Friday.

The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics also reflected previous studies which showed that black and other ethnic minority groups had a far higher risk of death from the disease than those with white ethnicity.

According to the ONS, which examined data from the start of March until May 15, the mortality rate among Muslims was higher than any other group, with those who were Jewish, Hindu or Sikh also showing higher death rates.

"With ethnicity included, (this) demonstrates that a substantial part of the difference in mortality...between religious groups is explained by the different circumstances in which members of these groups are known to live; for example, living in areas with higher levels of socio-economic deprivation and differences in ethnic makeup," the ONS report said.

"However, after adjusting for the above, Jewish males

are at twice the risk of Christian males, and Jewish women are also at higher risk," said Nick Stripe, Head of Life Events at the ONS, adding that more research was needed to explain this.

The mortality rate among Muslim men was 98.9 deaths per 100,000 and 98.2 deaths per 100,000 for women. For those who said they had no religion in Britain's 2011 census, the figure was 80.7 deaths per 100,000 males and 47.9 deaths per 100,000 females.

The findings coincide with more statistics which show that black and Asian people in England and Wales were at higher risk from the novel coronavirus.

Figures showed that the highest mortality rate was among black men at 255.7 per 100,000 compared to a rate of 87 deaths per 100,000 white males. The death rate was 119.8 per 100,000 for black women and 52 per 100,000 for white women.

That echoes an official study earlier this month which found black and Asian people in England were up to 50% more likely to die after becoming infected with COVID-19.

"Significant differences also remain for Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian men," Stripe said.

Another Iranian Ship Is En Route To Venezuela Despite Us Warnings

Agencies

BEIRUT, LEBANON (12:40 P.M.) - Another Iranian oil tanker is en route to Venezuela, as the Islamic Republic continues to defy the U.S.' warnings about delivering petrol to the South American nation.

According to the Washington Post, the Iranian 'Golsan' fuel tanker is en route to Venezuela and is expected



to dock soon.

In particular, the article claimed that the Golsan will reach the Venezuelan coast by either Sunday or Monday.

At the same time, Russ Dallen, the head of the Miami-based investment company, was cited as saying that this Iranian ship is not only carrying fuel to Venezuela, but also, parts to repair the South American nation's refineries.

This latest delivery by Iran comes just a few weeks after five of their fuel tankers reached the South American country.

The five Iranian fuel tankers reportedly delivered 1.5 million barrels of gasoline to the South American nation, despite the U.S. warnings against entering the Caribbean waters and completing this delivery.

In response to the warnings, the Iranian government summoned the Swiss ambassador in order to inform the U.S. that the Islamic Republic will respond militarily to any perceived threat against their vessels.



UN Orders Probe Into "Systemic Racism" After Black Man's Killing In US

Agencies

Geneva: The UN Human Rights Council on Friday condemned discriminatory and violent policing after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis last month and ordered a report on "systemic racism" against people of African descent.

The 47-member-state forum unanimously adopted a resolution brought by African countries. The mandate also asks UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet to examine government responses to peaceful protests, including alleged use of excessive force, and deliver findings in a year's time.

Philonise Floyd, the brother of the Black man whose death under the knee of a white officer roused world protests against racial injustice, urged the forum on Wednesday to investigate US police brutality and racial discrimination.

Burkina Faso's Ambassador Desire Sogouari presented the African resolution on Friday, urging its adoption by consensus.

"It is important to show

Africa...the Human Rights Council has heard the plight of African and people of African descent calling for equal treatment and application of equal rights for all," he said.

The Africa group had made numerous "concessions" in the negotiations with other countries, he added.

Senegal's envoy Coly Seck, a former council president, welcomed the consensus, telling the talks: "Black Lives Matter".

The text was watered down during closed-door negotiations from an initial draft explicitly calling for a UN commission of inquiry on racism in the United States and elsewhere.

"It is absurd that the final resolution passed by the United Nations strips mention of the United States, where police kill people, particularly Black people, at alarmingly higher rates compared to other developed countries," said Jamil Dakwar of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which led 600 activists groups in calling for the urgent debate.

"The United Nations needs to do its job - not get bul-

lied out of doing it - and hold the United States accountable," he said in a statement.

The Trump administration, which quit the forum two years ago alleging bias against its ally Israel, made no immediate comment. US Ambassador to the UN in Geneva Andrew Bremberg said on Wednesday that his country was "not above scrutiny" as it grappled with racial discrimination but was implementing police reforms after Floyd's killing.

During the debate, Western delegations including Australia, Germany, Italy, Poland and the European Union said that the United States should not be singled out.

"This problem does not belong to any one country, it is a problem around the world," said Australian ambassador Sally Mansfield.

Activists said that Australia had been particularly active in negotiations to take the spotlight off the United States.

Germany's ambassador Michael Ungern-Sternberg said: "We are convinced a report with a broader approach and less focus on one specific case would have been more appropriate".

US Protesters Topple Statue Of Confederate General In Washington DC: Report

Agencies

Washington: Protesters have toppled Washington DC's only statue of a Confederate general and set it on fire, according to US media, an act labeled a "disgrace" by US President Donald Trump.

The images, broadcast on ABC7 News late Friday, showed the figure of Albert Pike being pulled down by rope before dozens of demonstrators started chanting "black lives matter" and set fire to it.

Trump tweeted shortly afterwards, tagging the city's mayor, that the "D.C. police are not doing their job as they watch a statue be ripped down & burn. These people should be immediately arrested. A disgrace to our Country!"

The capital's Democratic mayor Muriel Bowser and Trump have jostled over the



use of force in Washington DC, with the president previously calling in the National Guard to quell unrest.

Marches and rallies were held across the United States on Friday to demand racial justice on the Juneteenth holiday, which commemorates the end of slavery in the country.

Demonstrators had earlier gathered in Washington out-

side the Lincoln Memorial and near the White House.

Rolling protests have roiled the US in recent weeks, fueled by the deaths of African Americans at the hands of police.

Several monuments depicting Confederate figures have been toppled by demonstrators, who have been protesting systemic racism, police brutality and injustice.

After 3-Month Closure, Makkah Mosques To Reopen

Agencies

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia plans to reopen from Sunday mosques in Makkah, the holiest city in Islam, after they were closed for three months due to the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic, state television reported.

The kingdom has taken restrictive measures against the virus, particularly in Makkah, but the number of new coronavirus cases has notably increased in recent days.

"The mosques in the holy city will begin to reopen their doors to the faithful on Sunday after three months of closure due to the coronavirus pandemic," the state-run Al-Ekhabriya channel reported, citing a decision by the Islamic

affairs ministry.

Some 1,500 holy sites are preparing to welcome visitors, the channel reported, showing footage of workers disinfecting floors and carpets.

The decision comes weeks before the hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah.

While the hajj is set to be held in late July, authorities are yet to announce if it will go ahead or be cancelled.

Outside Makkah, mosques elsewhere in the country reopened at the end of May, but with strict rules imposing social distancing and other measures.

The hardest hit Gulf state, Saudi Arabia has reported over 150,000 virus cases, including nearly 1,200 deaths. - AFP

US threatens UAE with sanctions over Syria rapprochement



Agencies

Washington: The US has threatened to slap sanctions on the United Arab Emirates as Abu Dhabi presses ahead with efforts to normalize ties with the Syrian government.

US Special Representative for Syria Engagement James Jeffrey issued the warning during a press conference on Washington's recently enacted anti-Syria economic measures, known as the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, which blacklists 39 entities and individuals, including Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his wife Asma.

Jeffrey said the US would not exclude the UAE from its coercive measures if it violates the Caesar Act.

"Anyone who engages in economic activities, whether in the UAE or in other countries...may be targeted by these sanctions," Jeffrey said.

The US envoy also rebuked Abu Dhabi for its policy of rapprochement with the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, calling the re-opening of the UAE embassy in Damascus a "bad idea." "The UAE knows that we absolutely refuse that countries take such steps," he added.

The Caesar Act came into effect on Wednesday, six months after it was signed into law by US President Donald Trump, targeting individuals and businesses anywhere in the world that operate either directly or indirectly in Syria's economy.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry condemned the American sanctions as "a crime against humanity and a flagrant violation of the international law that targets the livelihood of the Syrians."

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called the bans "the beginning of what will be a sustained campaign of economic and political pressure to deny the Assad regime revenue."

The measures are meant to "prevent the Assad regime from securing a military victory" in the fight against foreign-backed terrorists, according to US Ambassador to the UN Kelly Craft.

The UAE has long been a supporter of anti-Damascus terrorists, but in recent years it has tried to make overtures to Syria as the national army inches closer to win the counter-terrorism battle.

In late 2018, Abu Dhabi reopened its embassy in Damascus for the first time since an Arab diplomatic boycott of Syria.

In December 2019, Emirati charge d'affaires Abdul-Hakim Naimi praised Assad for his "wise leadership," describing relations between the two Arab countries as "solid and special".

In March 2020, Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan held a phone conversation with Assad and vowed to support the war-torn Arab country during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

NEWS MAKERS

City Mayor promises to protect Leicester's Gandhi statue

The Mayor of the city of Leicester has committed to protecting the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in the heart of the central England city, as an online petition created to save the under-threat monument attracted over 6,000 signatures.

Peter Soulsby confirmed his support for the monument as the city's "great pride" in his response to a letter from former Indian-origin Leicester East MP Keith Vaz, who has been leading a campaign ever since an online petition called for the statue's removal last week.

"I am delighted to be able to give you an absolute assurance that there is no prospect whatsoever of the council agreeing at any time to the removal of the statue - and certainly not while I am Mayor," said Soulsby, the Labour leader of the Leicester City Council.

"It was a matter of great pride that our city with the generous support of the donors was

able to celebrate the life of Bapu who was so inspirational in the creation of modern India and such an example to the rest of the world," he said.

The bronze statue, which captures the leader of the Indian freedom struggle in his characteristic walking stride in the city's famous Belgrave Road Golden Mile, came into focus with a "Remove the Gandhi Statue in Leicester" online petition last week alleging that Gandhi was a "fascist, racist and sexual predator".

A counter petition launched on Change.Org this week, "Save the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Leicester", has since attracted thousands of signatures in support within days.

"The statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Leicester should never be removed as it resembles



independence, non-violence and peace," notes the petition.

"Together we need to fight for justice and save the statue of Gandhi," it adds.

The sculpture by Kolkata artist Gautam Pal was unveiled in 2006 following a fundraising drive by Indian charity Samanwaya Pariwar. Vaz, the Goan-origin former Labour MP who

was present at the launch, led a socially-distanced silent demonstration in keeping with the coronavirus lockdown rules at the monument last week, which was followed up by another "Leicester stands with Gandhi" show of support on Friday.

Leicester City Council has said all representations would be taken into consideration as part of a wider review of the city's statues, street and building names, which follows similar initiatives being undertaken by local authorities around the UK in the wake of anti-racism Black Lives Matter protests targeting statues with a dubious slave trade history.

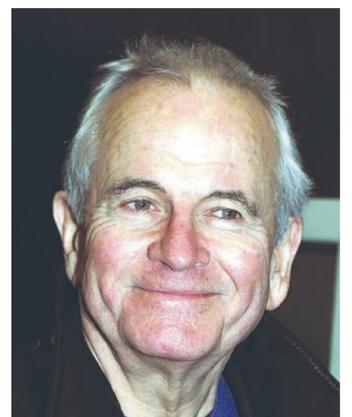
"In such a culturally diverse city as Leicester, it's important that we respect the histories of all our communities and understand the context for the historical references that are part of our streetscape and built environment," a council spokesperson said.

'Lord of Rings' star Ian Holm dies at 88

LONDON: British actor Ian Holm, best known for his roles in "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy and "Alien", has died aged 88, the Guardian newspaper said on Friday.

The actor, who received an Oscar nomination for his performance in the 1981 film "Chariots of Fire", had died from a Parkinson's related illness, the paper said. "It is with great sadness that the actor Sir Ian Holm CBE passed away this morning," his agent told the paper. - Reuters

It is with great sadness that the actor Sir Ian Holm CBE passed away this morning.



Fuel Price Today: Petrol, Diesel Prices Hiked For 14th Day In A Row. Check Revised Rates

State-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) on Saturday hiked the price of petrol and diesel for the 14th consecutive day as they continued to adjust retail rates in line with costs after an 82-day break from rate revision amidst the coronavirus pandemic. Petrol and diesel will now cost Rs 78.88/litre after an increase by 0.51 paise and Rs 77.67/litre respectively after an increase by 0.61 paise in Delhi, according to notifications from state-run Indian Oil Corporation, the country's largest fuel retailer.

The price of petrol and diesel has increased by Rs 5.88/litre and Rs 6.50/litre respectively since June 9, in the national capital.

Petrol, diesel rates in metro cities

today in the city is retailing at Rs 76.11 per litre, 58 paise up from Friday's rate of Rs 75.53 a litre.

Similarly, in Chennai, the retail prices of petrol and diesel on Saturday are Rs 82.27 (45 paise more) a litre and Rs 75.29 (52 paise increase) a litre respectively. The rates of auto fuels vary from state to state because of different local taxes and VAT imposed by state governments.

In Noida, petrol was retailing at Rs 79.90 per litre while diesel was selling at Rs 70.33 a litre. In Bengaluru and Gurugram, while petrol today was retailing at Rs 81.44 and Rs 77.14 respectively, diesel in both cities was priced at Rs 73.86 and Rs 70.20 per litre respectively.

Crude Oil price



After today's price revision, citizens in Kolkata will have to shell out Rs 80.62 for a litre of petrol after a 49 paise rise over Friday's rate. A litre of diesel in the costs Rs 73.07 per litre, 54 paise more than yesterday's price of Rs 72.53 a litre.

In Mumbai, the retail price of petrol price was hiked by 49 paise to Rs 85.70 per litre from Rs 85.21 a litre recorded on Friday. Diesel

Crude oil prices on Friday rose by Rs 52 to Rs 3,008 per barrel as participants widened their positions on firm spot demand. Analysts said raising of bets by participants kept crude prices higher in futures trade. Globally, West Texas Intermediate crude oil rose 1.31 per cent to \$39.35 per barrel, while Brent Crude was trading up 1.23 per cent at \$42.02 per barrel in New York.

Blood Plasma From Recovered Patients Safe For Covid-19 Treatment: Study

A large study of 20,000 hospitalised COVID-19 patients who received transfusions of blood plasma from recovered people found the treatment was safe. The report, published in the journal Mayo Clinic Proceedings on Thursday, assessed the seven days following transfusion for hospitalised patients between April 3 and June 11 who were deemed at risk of progressing to a severe or life-threatening condition.

Nearly 40 per cent of the patients were women; 20 per cent African Americans; 35 per cent Hispanic and 5 per cent Asian, the researchers said.

Seven-day mortality rates declined to 8.6 per cent compared to 12 per cent in a previous safety study of the first 5,000 transfused patients, the researchers said.

Serious adverse events continued to be less than one per cent, they said.

"Our efforts to understand convalescent plasma continue," said Michael Joyner, principal investigator at Mayo Clinic in the US, and lead author of the research article.

"We're optimistic but must remain objective as we assess increasing amounts of data," Joyner said.

The report reveals a decline in mortality which appears contemporary with the more rapid availability



of plasma for use, according to the researchers.

However, the researchers caution that this alone does not provide any evidence on effectiveness of convalescent plasma for treating COVID-19.

At this time, convalescent plasma therapy is the only antibody-based therapy for COVID-19, they noted.

"The 7000-plus physicians who are part of the programme have done an exceptional job of offering convalescent plasma to a diverse group of patients, enrolling women as forty per cent of the participants as well as significant numbers of patients who are of African American, Asian or Hispanic ethnicity," said researcher DeLisa Fairweather.

"We hope recruitment of minority subjects continues to increase given the disproportionate burden these communities have faced with COVID-19," said Fairweather.

The researchers say that while the mortality rate has decreased, the patients in the latter part of this study were less critically ill.



"Rogue Actor" China Escalated Border Tension With India, Says US

WASHINGTON: The US on Friday criticised the Chinese Army for "escalating" the border tension with India and described the ruling Chinese Communist Party as a "rogue actor."

Launching a scathing attack on the Chinese government, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the Chinese Communist Party wants to undo all the progress the free world has made through institutions like NATO and adopt a new set of rules and norms that accommodate Beijing.

"The PLA (People's Liberation Army) has escalated border tensions with India, the world's most populous democracy. It's militarising the South China Sea and illegally claiming more territory there, threatening vital sea lanes," Mike Pompeo said, a day after he expressed deep condolences to India on the death of 20 soldiers in violent clashes with Chinese troops at the Galwan Valley in Ladakh early in the week.

In his virtual address on "Europe and the China Challenge" during the 2020 Copenhagen Democracy Summit on Friday, the top American diplomat said that for many years, the West, in an era of hope, believed they could change the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and improve the lives of the Chinese people along the way.

"Along the way, the CCP took advantage of our goodwill while assuring us they wanted a cooperative relationship. As (former Chinese politician) Deng Xiaoping said 'Hide your strength, bide your time.' I've talked in other venues about why this happened. It's a complicated story. It's no one's fault," Mike Pompeo said.

Chinese University Threatens Action Against Indian Student For Offensive Comments

A Chinese university has threatened to take action against an Indian student for allegedly posting offensive comments against the Chinese people on social media, the official media here reported on Saturday.

The Indian national surnamed Kadukkasseri is a student at the Jiangsu University (JSU) in east China's Jiangsu Province. His offensive posts have gone viral on China's Twitter-like Sina Weibo, the Global Times reported.

"The university will punish Kadukkasseri for his wrongdoing according to its regulations on overseas students after further investigation," the report quoted an official from the JSU surnamed Wu as saying.

The Indian student has since apologised, the report said.

China lukewarm to India's emphatic win at UNSC

China on Friday gave a lukewarm

response to India's election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, saying as a permanent member, it would like to enhance cooperation with all the newly-elected members of the top organ of the UN.

While countries like Germany, Norway and Ukraine have congratulated India on its emphatic victory, China has not done so nor did the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman mention India by name.

Over decades, European and American companies have invested in China with great optimism. It outsourced supply chains to places like Shenzhen, opened education institutions for PLA-affiliated students and welcomed Chinese state-backed investment in their countries, he said. But the CPC decreed an end to freedom in Hong Kong, violating an UN-registered treaty and the rights of its citizens. This is one of many international treaties the party has violated, the secretary said.

"General Secretary Xi Jinping has greenlighted a brutal campaign of repression against Chinese Muslims, a human rights violation on a scale we haven't seen since World War II. Now, the PLA has escalated border tensions with India," he said.

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 count 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 Line of Actual Control in Galwan. "The CCP isn't just a rogue actor in its own neighbourhood. It lied about the coronavirus and let it spread to the rest of the world, while pressuring the WHO to assist its cover-up campaign. Hundreds of thousands of people have died, and the global economy has been decimated," Mike Pompeo said.



China has been stonewalling India's efforts to become member of the UN's powerful body for years, pointing to the lack of consensus even though the other four permanent members, the US, the UK, France and Russia have expressed backing for New Delhi's membership.

Along with India, Norway, Ireland and Mexico will join the Security Council as the non-permanent members for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2021.

Google Pay Not A Payment System Operator: RBI Tells High Court

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has told the Delhi High Court that Google Pay is a third party app provider (TPAP) and does not operate any payment systems. Therefore, its operations are not in violation of the Payment and Settlement System Act of 2007, RBI has told a bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan.

RBI has also told the court that since Google Pay does not operate any payment system, it does not find a place in the list of authorised payment system operators published by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

The RBI's submissions came in response to a PIL by financial economist Abhijit Mishra who has alleged that Google's mobile payment app, Google Pay or GPay in short, was facilitating finan-

cial transactions without the requisite authorisation from RBI.

Mishra has claimed that GPay was acting as a payments system provider in violation of the Payments and Settlements Act as it has no valid authorisation from the central bank of the country to carry out such functions.



He has also contended that GPay does not figure in NPCI's list of authorised payment systems operators released on March 20, 2019.

The bench said the matter requires detailed hearing as it affects other third party apps and listed it on July 22.

US Sends Back Imported Shipment From India After Spotting Insect In It



Coronavirus has had everyone's antennae up for a long time. The changes are visible for everyone to see. Just sneeze in a public place and passerbys will stare at you as if you've committed a capital crime. Everyone has their reasons of course. And in times of coronavirus, self-care is paramount. Public health has suddenly become an important area of concern worldwide.

It is not known whether this was the reason why this happened but the US authorities sent back a container imported from India after they spotted an insect in it. The imported container had aluminium billets in it and US Customs and Border protection officials found a green rice leafhopper in it.

The US Department of Agriculture confirmed that a Nephrotettix nigropictus (Cicadellidae), commonly known as a green rice leafhopper, was the first-ever discovery of this insect in the Delaware Valley in Pennsylvania.

The Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agriculture specialists discovered it in a container of aluminium billets from India on March 11.

"The container was ordered re-exported," the CBP said.

Additionally in May, the specialists discovered five wood borers, including a live immature Cerambycidae larva inside wood dunnage in a container of steel structures from Italy.

They also found a live immature Cerambycidae larva on May 13 inside wood dunnage in a container of steel from

Switzerland; two live adult Cerambycidae insects on May 18 inside wood dunnage in a container of dunnage and steel from Brazil.

The CBP said its inspectors also discovered live immature Sircicidae larva on May 19 inside a container of dunnage and steel from Turkey. Cerambycidae are commonly known as longhorn beetles; Sircicidae are commonly known as horntail or wood wasps. All are wood-boring actionable insect pests.

In each case, the specialists discovered holes in wood dunnage and used tools to cut and chisel out the insect pests.

Wood dunnage is used in shipping containers to brace and stabilise commodities during transport.

International conventions require that wood dunnage and packing materials are certified to be treated and pest free.

The CBP submitted the specimens to a local United States Department of Agriculture entomologist for identification, which determined an appropriate mitigation strategy. In each case, the importer destroyed the dunnage by incineration.

"Customs and Border Protection's agriculture protection mission is vital to our nation's agricultural resources and economic security and these discoveries, including this first-in-port leafhopper, is evidence of our agriculture specialists' tireless efforts every day to intercept destructive, invasive pests," said Casey Durst, CBP's Director of Field Operations in Baltimore.

NEWS MAKERS

Qatar Virtually Unveils Third 2022 World Cup Venue

DOHA: Launching the third 2022 World Cup stadium, Qatar's chief organiser said on Monday he was consulting with the English Premier League and Bundesliga to learn about how they are dealing with the coronavirus.

Hassan Al-Thawadi's comments underscore how sports are taking into account the potential for ongoing health precautions at events, if there is no vaccine for Covid-19.

"This is an opportunity for all of us to learn from each other," said Al-Thawadi, the general secretary of the Qatar organising committee. "We are maybe in a better position than most in the sense that we have two years ahead where

we can learn from other people's experiences."

The Bundesliga resumed last month and the Premier League's 100-day shutdown ends on Wednesday, with fans prohibited from stadiums in Germany and England.

The Qatar World Cup does not start until November 2022. The 40,000-capacity Education City Stadium is the third venue to be completed after the redevelopment of Khalifa International in 2017 and last year's opening of Al Janoub.

Covid-19 restrictions meant the third stadium was launched during a digital show rather than at the venue known as the 'Diamond in the Desert'. "Launching the stadium



now while the world is overcoming the coronavirus pandemic shows everyone that there is light at the end of the tunnel and brighter days ahead," Al-Thawadi said.

Al-Thawadi said finishing the stadium amid the pandemic had been "a big challenge".

But he managed to overcome it," he said. We were able

to maintain the continuity of work in a positive way, but at the same time ensure a safe and healthy environment for everyone." The stadium will drop to a 20,000 capacity after the tournament with the surplus seats going to stadiums in developing countries.

The Al Rayyan Stadium, also with a 40,000 capacity, and

the 60,000-seat Al Bayt Stadium are due to be completed by the end of this year.

Three down, five to go. We're on track," said 2022 World Cup chief executive Nasser Al Khater. "This is a virtual launch, not something that we ever imagined we'd do. But who would have imagined that the world would be where it is right now."

Nasser insisted that "more than 80 per cent" of the infrastructure required for 2022 was now complete.

Gianni Infantino, president of world football body FIFA, looked forward to a time when matches no longer had to be played without spectators due to the crisis.

Pope Francis, In First Post-Lockdown Audience, Thanks Italian Doctors

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis on Saturday held his first audience for a group of people since Italy lifted its coronavirus lockdown, granting it to health workers from the Italian region most affected by the pandemic.

"You were one of the supporting pillars of the entire country," he told doctors and nurses from the Lombardy region gathered in the Vatican's frescoed Clementine Hall, which had not been used for months because of the crisis.

"To those of you here and to your colleagues all across Italy go my esteem and my sincere thanks, and I know very well I am interpreting everyone's sentiments," he said.

He thanked the health workers, who wore masks, for being "angels," including by lending their cell phones to dying patients so they could say their final goodbyes to their loved ones.

Italy returned to relative normality on June 3 when Italians were allowed to move between regions again. But rules such as social distancing in public and wearing masks are still in effect.

Nearly 35,000 people in Italy have died of coronavirus, the fourth highest number in the world after the United States, Brazil and Britain.

Nearly 170 of them were doctors and the pope paid

special tribute to them in his address on Saturday.

At the end of the meeting, the pope joked about what he called "the liturgy of the greeting" explaining that they would take a group picture but he would "be obedient to the rules" and greet them from a distance as he passed down the aisle.

Francis' weekly general audience is still being held without the public and streamed over the Internet, although he has resumed giving his Sunday message from his window since St. Peter's Square was reopened last month.

He has resumed public Masses but with only about 50 people allowed.