



Maximum : 29°C  
Minimum : 17°C  
Humidity : 47%

SUNSET  
Today 07:38 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 05:36 AM



## News Digest

### Jaish Module Busted, 3 Held: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Wednesday claimed to have arrested three Jaish-e-Muhammad workers from central Kashmir's Budgam district. On a credible input, police, army's 50RR and the personnel of CRPF 29 battalion arrested 3 JeM associated at a checkpoint in Chadoora area of the district, a police spokesperson said. He said incriminating materials, including 40 rounds of AK-47, 02 detonators and 03 JeM matrix sheets were recovered from their possession. The police spokesperson identified the arrested OGWs as Javaid Ahmad Bhat resident of Pulwama, Ajaz Wani resident of Chitroodangerpore and Aqib Ganaie resident of Khansaib. "As per the police records, they were involved in providing logistic support and shelter to the active militants of JeM operating in the area," the police spokesperson said. "Case FIR No. 120/2020 under relevant sections of law stands registered in Police Station Chadoora and further investigation into the case has been initiated," he added.

### Girl Drowns In Shopian Stream

SRINAGAR: A teenage girl on Wednesday died of drowning in a nallah in south Kashmir's Shopian district. 13-year-old Shahnaz Bano of Kabukut Rajouri slipped into nallah Gramtoo at Mandujan in Shopian when she was washing some utensils, reports said. She was rescued from the nallah and taken to the district hospital Shopian. However, the doctors there declared her brought dead. Meanwhile, police have taken cognizance of the incident (KNS)

### 11 Gamblers Held In Srinagar: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Wednesday claimed to have arrested 11 gamblers in a raid in Zakoora area of the city outskirts. Acting on an input, a police team carried out a raid on gambling site near Pathan Colony Zakoora and arrested 11 gamblers from the spot, a police spokesperson said. He said an amount of Rs 118495 and sets of playing cards were seized from the spot. The accused were shifted to police station Zakoora after arrest. "Accordingly, a case FIR No. 68/2020 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Zakoora and investigation has been initiated," the police spokesperson added.

### Man Held For Attempt To Murder

JAMMU- A man was arrested in connection with an attempt to murder case in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district in the early hours of Wednesday, police said. Identified as Parveen Kumar, the man is accused of attacking a person, Krishan Lal, with a sharp-edged weapon on Tuesday night and severely injuring him, they said. A complaint was filed in this regard by Sukhdev Raj, brother of the victim, the police said. Lal is undergoing treatment at a hospital, they added. In separate incidents, two people were arrested in Poonch district on Wednesday in connection with rioting and other criminal cases. The duo, Liyaqat Hussain and Ghulam Din, were held following raids at multiple locations in Gursai, the police said.

### India, Pak Troops Trade Fire Along LoC

JAMMU: India and Pakistan troops on Wednesday exchanged heavy gunfire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said. "At about 1915 hours today, Pak army initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and shelling with mortars along LoC in Kirni and Qasba sectors of Poonch district," a defence spokesman said. Indian Army retaliated befittingly, he added. Pakistani troops on Tuesday had shelled forward areas along the LoC in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri district. On July 18, three civilians were killed when Pakistan violated ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked mortar shelling on forward posts and villages along the LoC in Poonch district. ● P-02

### JK Govt Accords Brigadier Rank Like Status To BDC Chairpersons

SRINAGAR: In a major boost to the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jammu and Kashmir, the administration on Wednesday amended rules to give block development council chairpersons a status equivalent to that of an Army brigadier. According to the warrant of precedence issued by the Hospitality and Protocol Department of Jammu and Kashmir, BDC chairpersons have been placed at serial number 28. They are placed alongside district magistrates, district and sessions judge, major heads of departments, presidents of municipal committees and municipal councils and officers of the rank of brigadier. ● P-02

## Govt Locks Down 9 Districts Till July 27

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration has imposed a complete lockdown across Kashmir Valley, except for Bandipore district till July 27, to stem the spread of COVID-19, officials said on Wednesday.

The lockdown, which came into effect on Wednesday evening, will last till 6 am of July 27, they said.

"Complete lockdown in all Red districts (excluding Bandipora) of Kmr (Kashmir) Div (Division) from today evening till 6 am on 27-7-2020," the Jammu and Kashmir administration's Department of Information and Public Relations said on Twitter.

"Agriculture, horticulture and construction activities will continue in accordance with disaster management guidelines. The movement of goods carriers, LPG and oil tankers will also continue unhindered," it added.



A CRPF PERSONAL stands guard on a barricaded road in Srinagar's Lal Chowk during a lockdown. File pic, Abid Bhat

### Markets To Open For 3-Days From July 28: Div Com

The markets in Kashmir valley will remain open for three days from July 28 to allow people to purchase sacrificial animals and other necessary items in view of the Eid-ul-Adha festival, the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole said Wednesday. This Div Com said this while chairing a meeting to review Eid arrangements, an official spokesperson said. Pole also directed all DCs of Kashmir to establish sale centers where people can purchase the sacrificial animals with proper COVID-19 protocol. "He instructed DCs to open up markets in a phased manner with different timings to avoid gatherings and violation of social distancing protocol by the public thronging market places during these three days deals," the official spokesperson said. In order to avoid unnecessary rush, he said the ● P-02

### SKIMS Procures Remdesivir After KO Reports Shortage

KO NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR: The anti-viral drug Remdesivir has finally arrived at the premier SK Institute of medical sciences here, three days after Kashmir Observer reported shortage of the vital drug at the tertiary care hospital.

Director, SKIMS Dr A G Ahangar told Kashmir Observer that they have received 500 doses and more were arriving within a few days.

Doctors in Kashmir have maintained that the drug is "vital" and reduces the risk of death among Covid-19 patients. However, according to reports

the cost of drugs is too high that poor men can hardly afford.

On July 18, Kashmir Observer published a news report about the shortage of the vital drug at the SKIMS and the panic caused by the unavailability of the drug among the patients.

Dr Ahangar said that the drug will cost around 30,000 and they will provide it with no-profit-no loss.

"I don't know the exact cost but it might cost around 30,000" he said.

When asked if it was affordable he said "we are selling it on company cost and whether it is too costly or less costly, I can't say," he added. ● PAGE 02

## China Remains In Ladakh Despite Pull Out Promise: Report

Agencies

NEW DELHI: It seems that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is not in a mood to de-escalate the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as it has continued deployment of around 40,000 troops in its front and depth areas for the Eastern Ladakh sector.

The Chinese are also not honouring their commitment for disengagement at the friction points in Eastern Ladakh and not moving back as per the agreed terms during the multiple rounds of talks at the government and Army levels and intervention at the senior level like the one done by the National Security Advisor couple of weeks ago, the sources said.

### IAF's Assets Deployment In Ladakh Sent Signal To Adversary: Rajnath

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday complimented the Indian Air Force for its rapid deployment of assets at forward locations in response to the border row with China in eastern Ladakh, saying its Balakot strike and the current combat readiness have sent a strong message to "adversaries". ● P-02

"The Chinese have not shown any signs of de-escalation as they continue to maintain their heavy troop deployment of almost 40,000 troops supported by heavy weaponry like air defence systems, armoured personnel carriers and long-range artillery in front and depth areas," sources said. The disengagement process has

also not made any progress since the last round of talks between the two Corps Commanders held last week and ground positions have also not changed, the sources said.

The Chinese are also showing reluctance in moving out of the Finger 5 area and retreat back to their permanent location in Sirijap as they want to create an ● PAGE 02

### Ikhwani-Turned-Cop Shot Dead In Kulgam

SRINAGAR: Suspected militants on Wednesday shot dead an Ikhwani-turned policeman in south Kashmir's Kulgam district.

58-year-old cop Abdul Rashid Dar was fired upon by suspected militants at Furrah area in Mir Bazar area of Kulgam on Wednesday evening, officials said. Dar was critically injured in the attack.

He was shifted to the hospital for treatment. However, the doctors there declared him brought dead on arrival, officials said. Medical superintendent GMC Anantnag Dr Majid Mahrib confirmed that the cop was brought dead to the hospital.

Dar, according to a local news agency GNS was a pro-government gunman. Meanwhile, soon after the attack, the government forces reached the area and launched a cordon and search operation to nab the assailants

## Heat Wave Melts Ice Lingam At Amarnath Cave Shrine

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: The naturally formed ice lingam in Amarnath cave shrine has melted almost completely due to the soaring mercury in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the Deccan Chronicle reported Wednesday.

The report that came a day after the government announced cancellation of the annual pilgrimage, said that the ice lingam has melted over 80 percent due to the high temperature in the Valley. The report said that though the Shiv Lingam had fully formed by mid-June but its size and girth started decreasing thereafter.

"It was reduced to half by the first week of July and when de-



File Pic: Abid Bhat

fence minister Rajnath Singh visited the place of worship on July 18, it had melted more than 80 percent," the report added.

Last week, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court asked Shri

Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) to take an urgent decision on holding the annual pilgrimage to the cave shrine, located in the higher reaches of South Kashmir, keeping in mind the threat of ● PAGE 02

### J&K Govt Transfers 6 Officers

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Wednesday ordered transfer of six officers in the interest of administration.

As per an order, Shrikant Bala-saheb Suse (IAS), Sub Divisional Magistrate, has been transferred and posted as additional deputy Commissioner in the office of divisional Commissioner, Kashmir.

Syed Naseer Ahmad, KAS, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Pattan, holding additional charge of Sub-Registrar, Pattan, has been transferred and posted as Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Pahalgam. "He shall also hold the charge of Sub-Registrar, Pahalgam, in addition to his own duties, till further orders."

Abhishake Abrol, Deputy Secretary to the Government, School Education Department, has been transferred and posted as ● P-02

### China Has Never Been Out Of Situation In Kashmir: Naeem Akhtar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Former Minister and senior leader of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Naeem Akhtar said on Wednesday that India was on the path of becoming a Hindu Rashtra while China has decided to become a world power after rediscovering the power of land routes.

Akhtar, who was released last month after 10-month detention following the abrogation of J&K's special status on August 5, last year, told Kashmir Observer in an exclusive interview that the Kashmir situation continues to be grim as "everything is being let loose on this place".

The founding PDP leader also said that the government faces a great credibility crisis among the people of Kashmir.



Replying to a question about the India-China stand-off in Ladakh, Akhtar said that a new strategic challenge is shaping up for India as new blocks are being created in the neighborhood.

"China has decided it has to become a world power, that it has to control the world. They have achieved that in 70 years. But India in 2014 decided it has to become a Hindu Rashtra. That's their vision," he said.

Read Full Interview On P5

## Govt Likely To Release Political Prisoners Ahead Of Eid

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Government has decided to release all political prisoners and lift curbs on the movement of political leaders ahead of Eid as a major confidence building measure after the abrogation of Article 370.

Government of India has given green signal to Lt Governor administration for the release of political prisoners, a local news agency KNS reported while quoting sources.

The initiative has been taken after J&K parties, including the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP),



File Pic

Apni party, CPI (M), People's Conference demanded the release of all political leaders ahead of the upcoming Eid festival in the Valley.

Recently, J&K Apni Party delegation led by Muhammad Altaf Bukhari in a meeting with Lt Governor had demanded release of all Political prisoners.

The report said that Modi-led government is expecting the political parties to start their political activities so that a semblance of normalcy is sensed on ground.

The report added that former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, People's Conference Chief and Former Minister Sajad ● PAGE 02

## 2.5 Lakh Apply For 8575 Class IV Jobs In J&K

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Nearly 2.50 lakh candidates have submitted applications to the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) for 8575 Class IV posts announced by the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory administration recently.

According to an official spokesperson, till Wednesday morning, 2,43,510 registrations have been done by the candidates on JKSSB's Online Portal, since the commencement of online application submission from 10th July, 2020 and 1,26,250 candidates completed their online application submission process for Class IV posts.

"Also 6,390 applications have been submitted online for the post of Accounts Assistant. It has been

noted that about 97,000 unique visitors visited the online application portal of JKSSB yesterday," the official spokesperson said.

Pertinently, JKSSB has advertised 8575 Class IV posts for District/Divisional/Union Territory cadre in various departments under the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Appointment to the Class-IV (Special Recruitment) Rules, 2020, in pursuance of General Administration Department's Revised Indent No. GAD/Mtg/RB-IV/50/2020 Dated 22.06.2020 under Advertisement Notification No. 01 of 2020 dated 26.06.2020.

Further, the Board has operationalized two helplines one each at Srinagar and Jammu for the convenience of aspirants.

"In addition, any person who finds difficulty in submission ● PAGE 02

# All 11 Ex-Cops Guilty Of Killing Bharatpur Royal Scion & His Two Colleagues Given Life Term

**Press Trust Of India**

**MATHURA/NEW DELHI:** All 11 former policemen from Rajasthan, convicted for killing Raja Man Singh of the erstwhile Bharatpur royal family and his two colleagues over 35 years ago in Deeg area of the state, were awarded life sentence by a court here on Wednesday.

The convicts, who were sentenced to life term by Mathura District Judge Sadhna Rani Thakur, include former Deeg Dy SP Kan Singh, 82, and local police station in-charge, sub-inspector Virendra Singh, 78, who had led a police team in killing the Bharatpur royal scion and his two colleagues Sumer Singh and Hari Singh on February 21, 1985.

The other policemen sen-

tenced for the crime are ex-ASI Ravi Shekhar and former constables Sukh Ram, Jeevan Ram, Jag Mohan, Bhanwar Singh, Hari Singh, Chhatar Singh, Sher Singh, Daya Ram and Ravi Shekhar, all above 70 years of age.

The encounter had taken place in Deeg grain market a day after Raja Man Singh, then contesting the state Vidhan Sabha election as an independent candidate, had allegedly banged his jeep into former Rajasthan's chief minister Shiv Charan Mathur's helicopter.

According to the prosecution, he was also accused of damaging some publicity material and a stage set up for Mathur to address an election rally in favour of the Congress candidate Brajendra Singh, a retired IAS offi-

cer, the prosecution had told the court.

Besides undergoing life imprisonment, all the eleven convicts will have to furnish a fine of Rs 10,000 each failing which they will have to undergo additional imprisonment of two months each, District & Session Judge Thakur announced in a jam-packed courtroom.

Besides being held guilty of murder, all 11 former policemen were also convicted for committing riots armed with deadly weapons and being part of the unlawful assembly committing an offence with common objective under sections 148 and 149 of the IPC respectively.

For these two offences, all 11 convicts were sentenced to two years and six months respec-

tively in jail and were imposed fines of Rs 2,000 each. All sentences would run concurrently, the court said.

The court also ordered payment of Rs 30,000 to the next of kin of each of the deceased and Rs 2,000 to the four injured persons, Vijai Singh, Chandan Singh, Nawab Singh and Babu Lal, in the encounter.

Out of 18 persons sent up for trial by the CBI, three policemen, Sita Ram, Neki Ram and Kuldeep, had died during its pendency and the case was abated against them.

The three ex-policemen who were acquitted of charges of shielding their colleagues by creating false records are former inspector Kan Singh Shirvi of Bharatpur Crime Branch and

head constables Hari Kishan and Govind Prasad.

One former policeman, Mahendra Singh, was discharged in the case.

Based on the allegations that Raja Man Singh had banged his Jonga jeep into the then Rajasthan CM's helicopter in Deeg and also damaged an election rally stage, two FIRs had been lodged against him and his associates at Deeg police station, said CBI in a statement in New Delhi on late Wednesday evening.

Accordingly, a police team, led by Dy SP Bhati proceeded to arrest them on February 21, 1985 and intercepted the Bharatpur scion and his associates at Deeg gain market, but Bhati, instead of arresting them, opened fire at them without any reason and also

ordered his men to fire at them , said CBI spokesperson R K Gaur.

"In this encounter, Raja Man Singh, Thakur Hari Singh and Thakur Sumer Singh were killed," he said.

Days after the killings of the royal family chief and his two colleagues, the case was transferred by the then central government to the CBI on February 27, 1985.

The CBI took over the case on March 1, 1985 and filed a charge sheet in the case on July 18, 1985, within five months of taking over it and completing the probe. It indicted a total of 18 policemen for their alleged roles in killings and shielding fellow cops by creating false evidence.

The CBI had filed the charge sheet in the court of Jaipur's

special judicial magistrate, but in January 1988, a court of Additional Sessions Judge was created there for the early disposal of the case.

The trial was later shifted from a Jaipur special court to Mathura in Uttar Pradesh by the Supreme Court in November 1989 on the plea of complainant Vijay Singh, a son-in-law of the slain chief of the erstwhile riyasat.

The trial in the case eventually began in Mathura in January 1990 and the court framed charges in the case on April 30, 1990, against 16 persons, discharging one of the accused while a second one had already died by then.

Two more accused also died in October, 2011 and December, 2006 respectively.

## Delhi Soaks In Heavy Rain; Records July's Lowest Maximum In 5 Years

**Press Trust Of India**

**NEW DELHI:** The second spell of heavy rainfall in four days submerged many areas in waist-deep water and brought traffic to a standstill in the national capital on Wednesday.

The rains also brought the mercury down significantly. At 27.5 degrees Celsius, Delhi recorded its lowest maximum temperature in July since 2015.

The India Meteorological Centre said the rains covered most parts of Delhi and the adjoining areas of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides the representative figure for the city, recorded 67.6 mm rainfall.

In July, so far, it has recorded 157.4 mm rainfall, 13 per cent more than the normal of 139.1 mm. The Palam and Lodhi Road weather stations gauged 81.2 mm and 72 mm precipitation, respectively.

Rainfall recorded below



15mm is considered light, between 15 and 64.5 mm is moderate, and above 64.5mm is heavy, according to IMD.

The Delhi Traffic Police reported snarls near the World Health Organisation building, Minto Bridge, ITO among others.

Residents shared pictures and videos of rainwater gushing into their houses and vehicles wading through waterlogged areas. Municipal bodies reported 10 incidents of tree felling due to rains across Delhi. A wall of a house also collapsed in Kotla Mubarak-

pur area due to the downpour.

A part of Ashoka Road in central Delhi caved in.

The IMD said the rains caused the mercury to drop below the 30-degrees Celsius mark for the first time this month. The Safdarjung Observatory recorded its lowest maximum temperature in July (27.5 degrees Celsius) in five years on Wednesday. It recorded a maximum of 26.5 degrees Celsius on July 12, 2015.

On July 30, 2014, the city recorded a maximum of 24.9 degrees Celsius, the lowest in 28 years.

Earlier, the India Meteorological Department predicted widespread rainfall with "isolated heavy to very heavy rain" in Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Union territories of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh. The rainfall intensity and distribution are very likely to decrease significantly Thursday onwards, the IMD said.

The convergence of moist easterly winds from the Bay of Bengal and southwesterly winds from the Arabian Sea is likely to continue over northwest India for another two-three days, weather experts said.

The monsoon though is also running through the region. These two factors together led to moderate to heavy rains in Delhi-NCR, they said.

Delhi recorded moderate rainfall (24.8 mm) on Tuesday.

Heavy rains on Sunday morning caused heavy water logging in several areas which led to the death of at least four persons.

## India And US Need To Think Bigger While Addressing Trade Issues: Jaishankar

**Press Trust Of India**

**NEW DELHI:** India and the US need to think "bigger" while attempting to resolve the pending trade issues, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday, while delving into various key facets of the fast expanding ties between the two countries.

In an interactive session at an annual summit of the US-India Business Council, Jaishankar pitched for deeper collaboration between the two countries in the areas of innovation and technology.

On the trade issue, he said: "I understand the centrality of the economic relations....These are bread and butter issues. These are really what make countries deal with each other. But I think, between India and the US, while we work through trade issues, we need to think bigger."

India and the US have been engaged in talks to iron out differences over a set of tariff related issues.

"My sense is that it is in our

mutual interest. We need to resolve these pending problems and move onto something bigger. I think there is a lot of interest here in doing that," he said.

Mentioning about the strength of the Indo-US ties, he said there will be issues on which "our convergence will be more, somewhere it will be less. I think the quest in the last 20 years, and I see that continuing into the future, is really to find more common ground."

Talking about changing geopolitics, he said the US really will require to learn to work with a more multipolar world with a more plurilateral arrangement and will require to go beyond the alliances with which it has really grown up over the last two generations.

The external affairs minister said there is a much "bigger connect" between the two countries beyond trade, which he identified as "knowledge innovation connect"

"I think beyond the exchange of goods and creating a better investment climate for each other, this ability to work together

in the world of innovation and technology, I think, that is really what will set our relationship apart," said the minister.

Explaining about the importance of innovation and technology, he said it is vital that both the countries have a very strong convergence on the "big picture".

"When we see the world, the landscape looks similar to us, aspirations look more shared. I think definitely in all of these, values do matter. Because at the end of the day, when you work on technology, on innovation and knowledge, trust and confidence are very very important factors," he added.

On the overall ties, the external affairs minister said both countries have the ability today to shape the world by working together.

"We are working on maritime security, counter-terrorism, connectivity, how to respond in the case of coronavirus pandemic, even on issues like climate change, the knowledge economy," he said.

### 11 More Die Of Covid-19, J&K...

who was declared brought dead on arrival by the doctors at CD hospital, his age-mate male from Palpora who passed away at SMHS hospital, a 70-year-old male from Ganderbal, a 54-year-old man from Sonawar Srinagar, 58-year-old from Rajbagh Srinagar, a 45-year-old from Khanyar Srinagar who was suffering from diabetes, hypertension and bilateral pneumonia, a male, in 50s, from Umarhair Srinagar who died at SKIMS Soura and 56-year-old woman from Pulwama.

Regarding the quinquagenarian from Pulwama, they said, she was resident of Pathan. She was admitted to SMHS hospital on July 21 and died today. "she was a cancer patient suffering for Myelodysplastic syndrome" they added.

Regarding 45-year-old from Shahgund Bandipora, they said, he was declared brought dead on arrival by the doctors at CD hospital, one of the exclusive facilities for the management of the covid-19 patients here, late last night. "The patient was declared covid-19 positive and was brought to CD hospital late last night. However the doctors who attended upon him declared him dead on arrival," they said. .

Regarding the 45-year-old male from Palpora who was diagnosed of having community acquired pneumonia among other ailments died at SMHS hospital, a senior doctor said.

Regarding the quinquagenarian from Rajbagh, they said, he was admitted on July 16 and tested positive subsequently.

Regarding septuagenarian from Ganderbal, they said, he was admitted on July 20 and died last night at SMHS. "He was suffering from bilateral pneumonia and had tested positive posthumously."

As regards the 54-year-old man from Sonwar Srinagar, they said he was admitted on July 14. Regarding the BSF trooper, they said, he was from 40 battalion and admitted to SMHS hospital of July 20. "he died today," they added.

With these deaths, 258 people in Kashmir and 20 in Jammu have died so far due to the covid-19.

Srinagar district with 74 deaths has the highest fatalities followed by Baramulla (58), Kulgam (26), 19 each in Shopian and Anantnag, Budgam (20), fifteen each in Pulwama and Kupwara, Jammu(12), Bandipora (7), Ganderbal (5), two each in Rajouri and Doda and one each in Poonch, Udhampur, and Kathua. (with GNS inputs)

### J&K Reports 453 New Cases

Samba 4, Doda 6, Poonch 4 and Reasi 8.

Among the cases include two government employees, five Defence personnel, two pregnant women and three from BB Cantt Srinagar.

### Markets To Open For 3-Days...

DCs were asked to notify about operation and timing of mandis and markets places in advance for timely information to the general public.

"He said that custodians of masjids, shrines and khankahas shall be allowed to carry out cleaning of religious structures during these three days as a religious formality, but no gathering shall be allowed at these places," the official spokesperson said.

Stressing on rate regulation of essential commodities and other items, the Div Com instructed concerned to constitute multi-departmental squads to conduct extensive market checking to prevent traders, dealers and shopkeepers resorting to hoarding, overcharging, black marketing or sale of sub-standard items.

The concerned were directed to ensure availability of sacrificial animals, birds and all essential commodities across all markets.

Urging people to take all precaution while distributing sacrificial meat, the Div Com called for strict adherence to Covid SOPs and prevention of social or religious gatherings on Eid as mandatory to contain the spread of disease in their respective districts.

The Div Com emphasized on PDD and PHE to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity and drinking water supply across all

districts during the festival days.

The DCs were asked to rope in religious leaders for COVID-19 SOPs' IEC activities to sensitize people about the importance of following laid down guidelines and precautions to control the disease effectively.

Police authorities were instructed to ensure proper security arrangements and prevent the public from resorting to any sort of violation during the festivity days.

Stressing on cleanliness and sanitation, Commissioner SMC Srinagar was directed to ensure regular lifting of garbage and waste material and maintenance of proper sanitation around religious and market places.

Among others, the meeting was attended by DC Srinagar, RTO Kashmir, Chief Engineers, PHE, R&B, Directors of Health Services, FCS&CA, Sheep Husbandry, SSP, Traffic, SP Headquarter Srinagar, CEO, Waqf Board and other dignitaries.

IGP Kashmir, Deputy Commissioners and SSPs of all districts of Kashmir also attended the meeting through video conferencing.

### SKIMS Procures Remdesivir...

The Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) also said the drug is unaffordable for poor patients.

"Because of high cost, Remdesivir is out of reach for poor people" said, DAK President and influenza expert Dr Nisar ul Hassan in a statement.

"It is a five day treatment. The loading dose of 200 mg (shot) on day 1 is followed by 100 mg (shot) daily for 4 days (total 5 days)," he added.

Dr Nisar said each vial of Remdesivir costs between Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,400. Thus for a five day treatment, a patient has to pay anywhere between Rs 24,000 and Rs 32,400 as the cost of the drug.

"The price makes it inaccessible to those patients who desperately need it," he said.

Meanwhile, Medical Superintendent SKIMS, Dr. Farooq A. Jan told Kashmir Observer that they wouldn't be providing the drug to any outsider but only to the patients admitted in the institute.

### China Remains In Ladakh...

observation post in the Finger area, sources said.

Similarly, they have done a heavy amount of construction of structures in the Hot Springs and Gogra post areas, which are the two major friction points in the Eastern Ladakh sector.

In the Hot Springs and Gogra area, the Chinese have been giving an excuse that India might occupy strategic heights once they retreat to their permanent locations in their side of the border, the sources said.

In the last meeting between Corps commander-level officers on July 14-15, it was agreed that both sides will now monitor further disengagement by troops and verify the development in the next few days.

The NSA, during his interaction with the Chinese side, had made it clear that both sides will have to move back to their permanent locations for the matter to be sorted out completely and to the satisfaction of both sides

### IAF's Assets Deployment...

In an address to the top commanders of the IAF on the opening day of a three-day conference, the defence minister said the nation's resolve to defend its sovereignty stands firm and that the people of the country have full confidence in the capability of its armed forces.

Singh also talked about the "professional manner" in which the IAF conducted the air strikes deep inside Pakistan's Balakot last year and appreciated the force for its proactive response in bolstering its operational capabilities over the past few months.

"He stated that the professional manner in which IAF conducted the air strikes in Balakot as well as rapid deployment of IAF assets at forward locations in response to the prevailing situation

in eastern Ladakh has sent a strong message to the adversaries," the defence ministry said in a release.

He said the nation's resolve to defend its sovereignty stands firm on the faith its people have in the capability of its armed forces.

Singh also mentioned the ongoing efforts to de-escalate tension along the Line of Actual Control and urged the IAF to stand ready to handle any eventuality.

Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria said that the IAF was well prepared to counter short term as well as strategic threats and the units were "evenly poised" to counter any aggressive action by the adversary.

He said the response by all commands in ensuring deployment and readiness of forces was prompt and laudable. He also emphasised on the need to focus on the ability to handle situations at a short notice for ensuring a robust response.

In his address, the defence minister also acknowledged the IAF's role in adapting to changes in technology.

He also talked about adopting emerging capabilities like nano technology, artificial intelligence, cyber and space domains.

He assured the commanders that all requirements of the Armed Forces, whether financial or otherwise, would be fulfilled, the ministry said.

In the conference, the IAF commanders will carry out an in-depth review of the country's air defence system which will include deployment of the first batch of Rafale fighter jets in the Ladakh sector.

The main focus of the commanders' conference will be to deliberate on the overall situation in eastern Ladakh and enhance the IAF's combat prowess over the country's air space in all sensitive sectors along the de-facto border with China including in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Uttarakhand, the sources said.

The commanders are expected to specifically deliberate on deployment of first batch of around six Rafale jets in the Ladakh sector by early next month as the aircraft are set to join the IAF's fighter fleet by July 29, the sources said.

In a demonstration of its aerial prowess, the IAF has been carrying out night time combat air patrols over the eastern Ladakh region in the last few weeks, in an apparent message to China that it was ready to deal with any eventualities in the mountainous region.

The IAF has deployed almost all its frontline fighter jets like Sukhoi 30 MKI, Jaguar and Mirage 2000 aircraft in key frontier air bases in eastern Ladakh and elsewhere along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China notwithstanding disengagement of troops by Chinese military from a number of friction points.

The IAF has also deployed Apache attack choppers as well as Chinook heavy-lift helicopters to transport troops to various forward locations

The IAF has also pressed into service a fleet of C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft as well as C-130J Super Hercules in transporting heavy military equipment and weaponry to several forward bases in the region.

### Heat Wave Melts Ice Lingam...

COVID-19.

Situated in a narrow gorge at the end of Lidder Valley, Amarnath shrine stands at 3,888 metres, 46 km from Pahalgam and 14 km from Baltal in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on August 2 last year had issued a security advisory asking Amarnath pilgrims and tourists to leave Kashmir as soon as possible, citing threat in the Valley.

The advisory was issued just before the Centre announced the nullification of Article 370 of the Constitution and bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into Union Territories on August 5.

Meanwhile, Mahant Deependra Giri, the custodian of the holy mace of Lord Shiva, on Wednesday supported the Board decision to cancel this year's pilgrimage to the cave shrine in south Kashmir Himalayas.

"The annual yatra has been prematurely ended in the past due to various reasons but it is for the first time that the pilgrimage has been cancelled at the outset. Given the situation arising out

of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was the right decision," Giri said in a video message here.

Giri, who is the custodian of the 'Charri Mubarak', carries the holy mace from its abode at Akhara building in Lal Chowk here to the holy cave in south Kashmir Himalayas in the last week of the yatra and then back to its resting place after performing the rituals at various places in either side of the journey.

He said the decision could be taken only due to "Lord Shiva's wish".

"The devotees should benefit from the live telecast of the morning and evening aarti on Doordarshan. When things will improve next year, we shall have even more numbers than earlier performing the yatra," Giri added.

### J&K Govt Transfers 6 Officers

Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Jammu (South).

Syed Faheem Ahmad Bihaqi, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Pahalgam, holding additional charge of Sub-Registrar, Pahalgam, has been transferred and posted as Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Pattan. He shall also hold the charge of Sub Divisional Magistrate Pattan in addition to his own duties till further orders.

Owais Mushtaq, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Kokernag, holding additional charge of Sub Registrar, Kokernag, has been transferred and posted as Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Srinagar (East).

Mohammad Jahangir Khanday, KAS, Sub Divisional Magistrate, Bijbehara, shall hold the charge of the posts of Sub Divisional Magistrate, Kokernag and Sub-Registrar, Kokernag, in addition to his own duties, till further orders.

S. Sundeeep Singh Bali, KAS, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Srinagar (East), has been transferred and posted as Assistant Commissioner (Nazool), Srinagar, relieving Mohammad Rouf Rehman, KAS, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Srinagar of the additional charge of the post.

### 2.5 Lakh Apply For 8575 ...

of application form due to technical issue or for any other reasons, may send a self-explanatory mail at ssbjkgrievance@gmail.com for seeking guidance, clarification etc," the official spokesperson added.

### Govt Likely To Release...

Gani Lone will likely be also freed and restrictions on movement of other political leaders will also be lifted and would be allowed to resume their political activities.

Former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah was released by the government after more than seven months in detention.

The move came just two weeks after his father Farooq Abdullah, also a former chief minister, was freed and marked the easing of restrictions on opposition politicians in Kashmir, which has been in a lockdown since 5 August 2019.

Sources also told the news agency that some separatist leaders and activists who are not wanted in militancy related cases will also be released.

As many as 48 inmates at a jail in Anantnag-- most of them political prisoners -- have tested positive for the coronavirus. As soon as the news broke out, the families of these Prisoners and political parties started rallying for their release.

### India, Pak Troops Trade Fire...

On July 10, an Army jawan was killed in a ceasefire violation by Pakistani troops along the LoC in Rajouri district.

### JK Govt Accords Brigadier...

The precedence is meant for state and ceremonial occasions, the notification read.

COVID - 19

Panic Grips Budgam Residents After Scores Of Migrant Labourers Working In Brick Kilns Test Positive

Agencies

Budgam: Panic gripped residents of central Kashmir's Budgam district after many migrant labourers working at different brick kilns in the district tested positive for COVID-19.

According to KNO the migrant labourers who arrived in Kashmir valley did not undergo any administration quarantine as they were directly brought to brick kilns and started working there.

He said that at least 15,000 non-local labourers have entered

Kashmir since July 14 with at least 113 of them testing positive for the virus in various districts of the valley.

Local residents from different areas of Budgam said that brick kilns are the latest hot spots for this infection and district administration is watching as mute spectators.

Chief medical officer Budgam, Dr. Tajamul Hussain Khan told KNO that at least 91 migrant labourers have tested positive for this virus since Monday. "71 labourers tested positive on Monday

and 20 on Tuesday."

Dr. Tajamul said that a brick kiln owner has to ensure the labourers working with them are following proper quarantine procedures once they arrive and have to follow the government SOPs.

Pertinently, divisional commissioner Kashmir, PK Pole on Tuesday said that the labourers will be tested in the respective districts of work and directed all the deputy commissioners of Kashmir to constitute three member teams and train them for smooth conduct of antigen testing of all labourers.



PSA of 2 Elderly Men Lodged in Agra Jail Quashed

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has quashed the detention of two elderly persons who were booked and detained in an Uttar Pradesh jail on charges of stone pelting under the Public Safety Act last year shortly after the annulment of special status of erstwhile state.

These two detention orders were quashed by a Single Bench of Justice Tashi Rabstan through a video conference that had earlier reserved its verdict in these two separate habeas corpus petitions on behalf of his clients by Advocate Bashir Ahmed Tak.

Justice Tashi Rabstan had heard the arguments and counter arguments on 7 July and today he quashed the detention of both elderly persons on the grounds that both the persons were not provided any material with regard to their detentions and have been booked under old FIR's.

As submitted in the petition before the High Court, 60 year old

Abdul Majid Rather son of Abdul Gafar from Archanderhama Pattan area of Baramulla district in North Kashmir, was arrested on 5 August in 2019 where many Sections under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act were invoked against him. Advocate Bashir Ahmed Tak said that the subject was booked on charges of stone pelting under two old FIR's (127/2016 and 149/2016). He was accused of helping Hurriyat Conference and lodged at UP's Agra Jail.

"The subject is an elderly person, physically very weak and can't be involved in stone-pelting. I argued in the court through a video conference. The subject is a fruit grower and innocent," Tak said.

The High Court quashed his detention and directed authorities to release him. The subject was detained by police station Magam.

The court of Justice Tashi Rabistan also quashed the detention of 55 year old Muhammad

Yousuf Ganaie son of Ghulam Muhammad, a resident of Kurhama Ganderbal.

Muhammad Yousuf Ganaie was booked by police station Kheer Bhawani on 7 August 2019 in a year old case (9/2018) registered against him. He was booked under section 153 RPC and shifted to Agra Jail under Public Safety Act.

Tak while arguing Yousuf's petition submitted before the court that his client is an elderly person who has never gone to school. He further submitted that the grounds of detention were never supplied to his client or read to him by the authorities in the language which he could have understood. "The High Court considered these submissions and accordingly quashed the PSA detention order passed against Muhammad Yousuf Ganaie."

The State was represented by Advocate Asifa Padroo and Advocate Bashir Ahmed Dar in these cases. (KNT)

Release Pending Salaries Before Eid: EJAC tells Govt

Srinagar: Terming alleged 'dillydallying tactics' of the government in regularizing services of daily wagers, need base, consolidate and contractual employees as 'mockery of service rules', Employees Joint Action Committee (EJAC) on Wednesday asked the government to resolve 'once for all' the issues confronting these employees.

Fayaz Shabnam, President of the association said that a one-time regularization policy should be framed for these employees and their pending salaries released well before the upcoming Eid-ul-Adha.

"Government should come clear over the issues confronting these employees and frame a one-time policy for their regularization. Their salaries which are pending for the past several months should also be released," Shabnam said while addressing the presser at Kashmir Press Club (KPC) here.

He warned the government of dire consequences in


case the pending salaries of un-regularized employees are not released well before the upcoming Eid, to be celebrated on August 1.

Shabnam said most of the daily wagers and need base employees have attained the age of superannuation, however, the government instead of regularizing them, extends services of ex-servicemen in every government sector.


"There should be no delay on the part of the government in releasing their pending salaries before Eid and framing a one-time regularization policy for them. They too want to celebrate Eid with their families but are helpless as their salaries have not been released for months together," Shabnam added.

He said the employees body has never hesitated to be the voice of helpless daily wagers, consolidate and need base employees and that they will continue their support to them till their issues are resolved according to their wishes.


**DIAL-EMMA**

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


**AIRPORTS**

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 

**RAILWAYS**

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

**HIGHWAY STATUS**

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

  
**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
01 Zil-Haj  
1441

**PRAYERS**

FAJR	3: 56
ZUHR	12: 37
ASR	5:34
Magrib	7:42
ISHA	9:18

**This Day In History**

- 1793 - The Prussians conquer Mainz
- 1798 - Napoleon captures Alexandria, Egypt
- 1812 - Battle of Mogiley Russia-Napoleon fights Tsar Alexander I
- 1914 - Austria-Hungary presents an ultimatum to Serbia; demanding acceptance within 48 hours making peacekeeping difficult
- 1929 - The Fascist government in Italy bans the use of foreign words
- 1930 - Earthquake strikes Ariano Italy, 1,500 killed
- 1942 - German troops conquer Rostow
- 1942 - World War II: Operation Edelweiss (a German plan to gain control over the Caucasus) begins.
- 1943 - Battle of Koersk, USSR ends in Nazi defeat (6,000 tanks)
- 1944 - Soviet Army marches into Lublin Poland
- 1944 - US forces invade Japanese-held Tinian in WW II
- 1944 - US troops occupy Pisa Italy
- 1956 - Bell X-2 rocket plane sets world aircraft speed record of 3,050 kph
- 1968 - PLO's 1st hijacking of an El Al plane
- 1973 - US President Richard Nixon refuses to release Watergate tapes of conversations in the White House relevant to the Watergate investigation
- 1978 - Israeli government rejects Sadat's call for return of 2 Sinai areas
- 1980 - Soyuz 37 ferries 2 cosmonauts (1 Vietnamese) to Salyut 6
- 1986 - Moroccan King Hassan II meets with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres
- 1994 - Space shuttle STS-65: Columbia 17, lands after record 14 days 55 mins
- 1995 - Comet Hale-Bopp is discovered and becomes visible to the naked eye nearly a year later
- 1997 - The US State Department rules that Turkey's agreement to purchase \$23 billion worth of natural gas from Iran does not violate the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act
- 1999 - Crown Prince Mohammed Ben Al-Hassan is crowned King Mohammed VI of Morocco on the death of his father.
- 1999 - ANA Flight 61 is hijacked in Tokyo, Japan.
- 2005 - Three bombs explode in the Naama Bay area of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, killing 88 people.
- 2009 42nd San Diego Comic-Con International opens at San Diego Convention Center
- 2012 - A series of attacks across Iraq kill 103 people
- 2014 - 44 people are killed after TransAsia Airways Flight 222 crashed into buildings in Taiwan
- 2015 - NASA's Kepler mission announces discovery of the most Earth-like planet yet - Kepler-452b, 1,400 light years from Earth

From KO Archives  
Tunnel Beneath Kohi Sulaiman

Govt exploring feasibility to ease traffic

**Observer News Service**

SRINAGAR – Jammu and Kashmir government would explore feasibility of constructing a tunnel across the Shankaracharya (Kohi Sulaiman) hill to address the acute traffic congestion on the Boulevard and Dalgate.

"We will explore the possibility of constructing a tunnel in the Shankaracharya hill to connect the Gupakr road with the Boulevard," Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed said here this morning at a function organised to name the road from Jehangir Chowk to Batmalu as Mohammad Yusuf Rathar Avenue. He unveiled a black marble plaque to announce the new name of the road.

Rathar a brilliant-engineer who headed the R&B department in Kashmir lost his life in a grenade blast in the south Kashmir village of Kapran on July 19, 2004.

The Chief Minister said traffic congestion in the Srinagar City is assuming alarming proportions and movement of vehicles on busy routes has become a real problem. He cited the instance of Dalgate and the Boulevard and said his government, apart from planning a flyover near the J&K Bank Corporate Office, is also contemplating construction of a tunnel in the Shankaracharya hill so that some of the traffic is diverted through it. This would ease the traffic congestion at the busy traffic junction of the city. He said technical and environmental feasibility of the tunnel would be explored.

The Chief Minister said he has asked the R&B department to repair on priority the city roads which have been damaged due to heavy snowfall last winter. He said the city is the heart of the valley and its roads should present a beautiful picture. He alluded to the efforts made by his government in the beautification of the city and said the various development measures taken during the last about 3 years would soon transform Srinagar into a city of international reckoning.

Mufti Sayeed paid rich tributes to late Engineer Mohammad Yusuf Rathar and said he was an honest, dedicated and upright officer. He said he had excelled himself as an able and efficient officer. He said the rechristening of the Jahangir-Batamalu Road after his name is a tribute to this son of the soil. He also remembered other victims of the Kapran blast including Abdur Rashid, Special Assistant to Minister for Power and paid tributes to them.

(Kashmir Observer, 23 July, 2005)

Two married women missing, girl kidnapped

Srinagar: Two married women have gone missing while a girl has been kidnapped in Kashmir Valley in the past 24 hours.

Police sources said that a 31 year old woman, who is wife of one Maqsood Ahmed of Chenabal Pattan is missing since 9th of July. Similarly another woman (38) who is wife of one Farooq Ahmed Ganaie of Gund Roshan Ganderbal has also gone missing.

Police have registered missing reports at police post Shadipora, Ganderbal and Police Station Pattan.

Sources further added that police registered a case after a man Ghulam Nabi Sheikh of Gurseer Sopore reported at Police Station Tarzoo that his daughter has been kidnapped by one Abdul Hamid Dar son of Ghulam Muhammad of Hathlangoo Sopore.

"A hunt has been launched to trace the kidnapped girl," said an official.

3-days training programme on NGDRS, e-Stamping starts at Srinagar

SRINAGAR, JULY 22- A three days training programme on National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS) and e-Stamping started at DC Office Srinagar today.

The training programme is being conducted through video conferencing.

The training programme was coordinated by Additional Inspector General Registration (AIGR), Kashmir, Gulzar Ahmad at Srinagar, while as Tehsildar Head Quarter in the office of Inspector General Registration, Rafiq Ahmad Jaral coordinated it at Jammu.

Speaking during the inaugural session of the programme, AIGR Kashmir, Gulzar Ahmad said that the training programme is aimed at enhancing the capacities of the human resource of Registration Department for digital registration of properties and to facilitate the people in a more transparent and expeditious manner in the registration process of their properties.

Secy HED asks Govt Colleges to explore their potential

JAMMU, JULY 22: Commissioner/Secretary to Government Higher Education Department, Talat Parvez Rohella, today asked the management of Government Colleges to explore their potential to become centres of excellence of higher education.

He was speaking at a meeting of Principals of 16 Non-NAAC Accredited Colleges of Jammu Division, here at G.G.M. Science College.

The agenda of the meeting was to orient the Principals to initiate the process of NAAC



Accreditation and to focus on various parameters to achieve quality education. He encouraged the Principals to identify their potentialities and work rigorously to achieve them.

The Secretary further asked Colleges to assess the demands and requirements of the students and rationalize their resources accordingly. The Principals apprised the

Commissioner/Secretary of the problems and challenges being faced by them and the various initiatives under taken in that direction.

"Identify unique signature features of the colleges and work on them to achieve excellence in the field of education and skill development keeping the employability index of the outgoing students in mind," he advised further.

Director Finance, Higher Education Department, Abdul Majid Bhat among others was present in the meeting.

CUK Holds Webinar on Gender Bias & Stereotyping in Society

Ganderbal: Women Empowerment Cell (WEC) of the Central University of Kashmir (CUK) Wednesday, organized a National Webinar on 'Gender Bias and Stereotyping in the Society-Some concerns' at Green Campus of the varsity here.

Delivering the presidential address to both online and offline participants, Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir, hailed the guest speakers for raising the relevant issues and topics pertaining to women including gender bias, sexual harassment, dowry deaths, female feticide, child marriage and stressed that "we need to seriously ponder upon such issues and tackle them accordingly." He stressed that "discrimination starts from family and thus the mothers need to be oriented first." He further said that in the context of women empowerment parents need to act as role model for their children.

National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson, Ms. Rekha Sharma in her inaugural address talked at length about the gender bias which, according to her, "starts even before the birth of a child." She said that "Gender bias is deep rooted and we cannot think of a society without the bias, which is increasing with each passing day." "Even when it comes to education, the quality education is preferred for boys mostly." She stressed that counseling can help when both men and women have open minds and both should change their attitude and behavior. She believed that empow-



erment is possible when girls are capable and free enough to decide for themselves. In this context she said that the focus of NCW is on making women as job creators and not job seekers.

Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Annpurna Nautiyal, in her special address said that women in hilly areas are more vulnerable as they shoulder double responsibility (both at home and workplace) in the society. "Despite huge work load, they are active participants in various spheres of life." She believed that gender bias is the result of "toxic mas-

culinity which comes from the society itself." She said that at "work place, male colleagues don't value the idea of women as they feel it not worthy, thus our society is gendered as a whole." She stressed that the mindset needs to be changed and - social, educational and economic harmony is the need of hour."

Speaking on the occasion, Registrar, Prof Farooq Ahmad Shah said that gender bias has been historically there and almost all the realms of life have been affected by this attitude and thus stressed that this is the high time we realize our responsibilities.

KASHMIR  
OBSERVER

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## Doctor, Heal Thyself

Several incidents of beating of some doctors in Kashmir by the attendants has become a subject of contentious debate on social media. Some of these incidents were reported at Government Medical College Srinagar on Saturday following which the medical staff at the hospital went on strike amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. To begin with, the beating of the doctors is inexcusable. And the culprits should be taken to task for that. It is tragic that the healthcare professionals who are at the vanguard of the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and should be valorized for their tireless effort should instead become the target of those they care for. The image of a doctor being thrashed by some attendants and injured in the process is a sad reflection on the state of affairs.

That said, it is also equally important to put these incidents in a proper perspective. For one, they were just a few incidents perpetrated by a few individuals. So, holding the entire population in Kashmir responsible for them, as some doctors have done on social media, is a problematic thing to do. How can the incidents which are not enough to be counted on the fingers of one hand become a representative of the behaviour of a community? Some doctors have even gone to the extent of creating a Them-versus-Kashmiris binary, the latter term used pejoratively, as if the doctors themselves were not from this society. And one of the doctors who has identified himself as Chief Medical Officer of Budgam Tajamul Hussain Khan has in his social media post heaped abuse on Kashmiris, so have several other medical professionals.

These social media outpourings are not only in bad taste but shocking too. How can a section of doctors, enjoying a privileged position in the society be so prejudiced and hateful towards their own community? And how can they refuse to treat the hundreds of hapless and seriously ill patients during a pandemic by striking work? Just because a few rogue individuals beat up a few doctors? How come these few individuals stand in for an entire community of which the doctors themselves are a part? Doesn't this reveal an overblown sense of entitlement on the part of some members of the medical fraternity?

Now coming back to the few incidents of beating, it needs to be ascertained as to why they happened in the first place. There has to be a proper enquiry to establish this. On social media scores of attendants have narrated the heart-breaking stories of the neglect by the medical professionals at the hospitals, something they allege led to the death of their loved ones. These stories should also be investigated. The criticism of the abhorrent social media posts of some doctors, however, should in no way detract from the sterling effort put in by a predominant majority of the medical professionals to fight the ongoing pandemic. Our community is perpetually indebted to them for this.

### OTHER OPINION

## Only silver lining

Only a vaccine can restore our confidence in a world stricken by a virus that has infected 14.5 million people in a bit over six months and killed 600,000 of them and is adding a quarter of a million cases a day in all areas - urban and rural. Healthcare systems have been overwhelmed. Hospital beds are scarce from San Francisco Bay to Bangalore.

There is a silver lining in the form of expedited vaccine trials, some of which have reported progress. None of the 224 vaccine trials that are currently going on may promise a one-shot immunity.

Trials by Oxford University (in association with the Jenner Institute and pharma giant AstraZeneca) with their high-tech RNA and adenovirus vaccine may be the frontrunner at the moment as it promises the generation of not only antibodies but also virus killing T-cells in the body.

A highly anticipated Lancet study on the trial corroborated the vaccine's efficacy saying there were no adverse side-effects either. T-cells are white blood cells that may ensure Covid-19 infected cells are not only detected but also killed off, actively or passively.

A word of caution about the efficacy of vaccines is that they have not eliminated any disease in 100 years except smallpox and, to an extent, polio. Booster shots may be required to fight this virus.

However, a vaccine against Covid-19 is the sole passport to a saner world in which not only can people hope to resume a life without a fear psychosis but also for society to revive livelihoods so that a lack of them will not cause collateral damage by way of job losses and outright hunger and starvation that may get even bigger than virus-induced mortality.

The stress on the success of vaccines and faith in them regardless of what the anti-vaxxers may believe is a clear giveaway that most nations have failed their citizens in the battle against Covid-19.

A litany of reasons from initial scepticism that delayed lockdowns to bureaucratic muddles, faulty models projecting misplaced confidence and hubris or Cassandra-like overstatement, outright sloth or corruption in medical materials procurement and politicians passing the buck and the blame after promising to follow the science can be listed to prove how the world fell, from the best-equipped and wealthy USA and Europe to many clueless States in India down to poorer Africa and South America.

Given the experience of this universal pandemic, a vaccine may only be the start of a new journey. Getting billions of doses, first to the most vulnerable and the workforce, in orderly fashion may be an even bigger challenge to a leadership that has now veered to the view that God alone can help now.

T-cells on their own generate immunity too and prayers may have to be aimed at a new decade, new millennium God who has been residing all along within our own body.

Deccan Chronicle

# China's 5-Finger Punch

Tibet is the key to China's territorial claims in the Himalayan region. As long as the Communist Party of China – and especially China's revisionist president, Xi Jinping – holds a monopoly on power, none of the country's neighbors will be safe

BRAHMA CHELLANEY

**‘Mao considered Tibet to be China's right-hand palm, with five fingers – Nepal, Bhutan, and the three Indian territories of Ladakh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh – that China was also meant to “liberate.” Mao's 1962 war against India helped China gain more territory in Ladakh, after it earlier grabbed a Switzerland-sized chunk, the Aksai Chin region.**



Exiled Tibetans shout their solidarity with India in the country's standoff with China over the Ladakh region during a protest outside the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on July 11.

As the world struggles to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, which first emerged in China, Chinese President Xi Jinping is pursuing his quest for regional dominance more aggressively than ever. From the Himalayas to Hong Kong and Tibet to the South and East China Seas, Xi seems to be picking up where Mao Zedong left off, with little fear of international retribution.

The parallels between Xi and the despots of the past are obvious. He has overseen a brutal crackdown on dissent, engineered the effective demise of the “one country, two systems” arrangement with Hong Kong, filled concentration camps and detention centers with Uighurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang province, and laid the groundwork to remain president for life.

According to US National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien, “Xi sees himself as Joseph Stalin's successor.” Many others have compared Xi to Adolf Hitler, even coining the nickname “Xitler.” But it is Mao – the People's Republic's founding father, and the twentieth century's most prolific butcher – to whom Xi bears the closest resemblance.

For starters, Xi has cultivated a Mao-style personality cult. In 2017, the Communist Party of China enshrined in its constitution a new political doctrine: “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.” The ideology is inspired by Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, but its inclusion in the CPC's constitution makes Xi the third Chinese leader – after Mao and the architect of China's modernization, Deng Xiaoping – to be mentioned in the document. Last December, the CPC also conferred upon Xi a new title: renmin lingxiu, or “people's leader” – a label associated with Mao.

Now, Xi is working to complete Mao's expansionist vision. Mao's China annexed Xinjiang and Tibet, more than doubling the country's territory and making it the world's fourth largest by area. Its annexation of resource-rich Tibet, in particular, represented one of the most far-reaching geopo-

litical developments in post-World War II history, not least because it gave China common borders with India, Nepal, Bhutan, and northernmost Myanmar.

In fact, Mao considered Tibet to be China's right-hand palm, with five fingers – Nepal, Bhutan, and the three Indian territories of Ladakh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh – that China was also meant to “liberate.” Mao's 1962 war against India helped China gain more territory in Ladakh, after it earlier grabbed a Switzerland-sized chunk, the Aksai Chin region.

This past April and May, Xi had the People's Liberation Army carry out a series of well-coordinated incursions into Ladakh, with the intruding forces setting up heavily fortified encampments. He then deployed tens of thousands of troops along the disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC) with Ladakh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh.

This “incredibly aggressive action,” as US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called it, led to bloody clashes in Ladakh on June 15, leaving 20 Indian soldiers, and an unknown number of Chinese troops, dead. (US intelligence agencies believe China suffered more casualties than India, but whereas India has honored its fallen as martyrs, China has refused to divulge its losses.) Despite continuing bilateral efforts to disengage rival forces, the specter of further clashes or a war continues to loom.

The CPC has not forgotten about the other two fingers, Bhutan and Nepal. Just as China and India began withdrawing troops from the site of the June 15 clashes, Beijing opened another front in its bid for territorial expansion, asserting a new claim in Bhutan.

In 2017, China occupied the Doklam Plateau – at the intersection of Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan, and claimed by the latter – following a 73-day military standoff with India, the de facto guarantor of Bhutanese security. Now, China is laying claim to another 11% of the tiny kingdom's territory, in an area that can be accessed only through Arunachal Pradesh (which Chinese maps already show as part of China). The move thus advances Xi's efforts against two of the five

fingers simultaneously.

The fifth “finger,” Nepal, has been drifting away from India and toward China since it came under communist rule two and a half years ago. Indeed, China aided the Nepalese communists' victory, including by unifying rival factions and funding their election campaign. Since then, China has openly meddled in the country's fractious politics, in order to keep the ruling party intact, with its ambassador acting as if she were Nepal's matriarch.

But being in China's strategic orbit has done nothing to protect Nepal from the CPC's territorial predation. Last month, a leaked Nepalese agricultural department report warned that China's massive road-development projects have expanded China's boundary into northern territories of Nepal and changed the course of rivers.

Of course, altering Asia's water map is nothing new for China. Tibet is the starting point of Asia's ten major river systems. This has facilitated China's rise as a hydro-hegemon with no modern historical parallel. Today, Chinese-built mega-dams near the borders of the Tibetan Plateau give the country leverage over downstream countries.

As the hand metaphor indicates, Tibet is the key to China's territorial claims in the Himalayan region – and not only because of geography. China cannot claim the five fingers on the basis of any Han-Chinese connection. Instead, it points to alleged Tibetan ecclesiastical or tutelary links, even though Tibet was part of China only when China itself had been conquered by outsiders like the Mongols and the Manchus. Chinese current claims are nothing more than a power (and resource) grab.

In other words, the five-fingers strategy, coupled with Chinese expansionism elsewhere, is all about upholding the world's longest-running autocracy. As long as the CPC – and especially the revisionist Xi – holds a monopoly on power, none of China's neighbors will be safe.

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## Hagia Sophia is better as museum

Hagia Sophia was originally built as a Christian Basilica, for the Orthodox Greek Christian Church. After Sultan Mehmed conquered Constantinople, Hagia Sophia was renovated into a mosque. It was a mosque for almost five centuries, after which it was converted into a museum by the former President of Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, as a part of his secular politics.

The changing of this structure into a museum by Ataturk was seen as a message of secularism, plurality, and coexistence by the world. It looked like a mark of reconciliation for both of the Abrahamic faiths, as people from both could now access this historical structure and the cultural sig-

nificance it held within.

It remained a museum for almost 86 years but now, as per the recent orders given by the Turkish Court, it will be refurbished into the mosque it was. Thus, as it will slowly start operating like a mosque, the structure will also be subjected to all the jurisprudential rules, therefore making it inaccessible for Christians to connect with their past. This might hurt the religious sentiments of a large number of people and create disunity (Tafarqa).

It may be looked upon as a legitimate legal victory by some people, considering the fact that it was a mosque before it got converted into a museum, unlike in India, where mythologies have been given more consideration than ex-

isting structures and historical facts.

But as per the Quranic teachings of ‘Ta’qwa’ and the principle of unity, this may not seem as a victory. Islam does not only constitute a few sets of prayers and practices, but a large number of human values which stress on respect for plurality, unity, and peaceful coexistence are also propagated through the verses.

Quran in its 5th and 16th chapters clearly mentions, “If Allah would have willed, he would have made you in one nation (united in religion),” but he didn't because diversity is the essence of creation and Islam respects as well as accepts differences. The very famous verse, “To you your religion and to me my religion,” makes it clear

that Islam does not believe in exclusivity or parochialism but in tolerance and acknowledging diversity. Obedience to these verses demands respect for the faith and religious sentiments of other people as well.

This conversion may have added one more mosque in the list of mosques that adhere to the values of Islam, but it certainly gives out a political message of disunity. This may cause the larger parts of the world's population to raise questions about the Islamic message of universal peace and tolerance.

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# ‘China Has Never Been Out Of The Situation In Kashmir’

‘China has Decided to Become a World Power, India a Hindu Rashtra’

SENIOR PDP leader Naeem Akhtar is one of the fewer mainstream leaders in the Valley who has continued to express his opinion after his release from detention and subsequent eviction from the official residence. In an interview with *Kashmir Observer*, Akhtar talks about the evolving situation in J&K and the new geopolitical challenges impacting it and India as a whole

**Q. How do you look at the current Kashmir situation?**

A. It is an emerging situation, one can't say anything. But Kashmir is under pressure. Everything is being let loose on this place.

**Q. Government has issued clarifications about the new law that enables conversion of any place in J&K into a strategic area?**

A. They are issuing clarifications about the new law which provides for branding some areas as strategic in nature. Last year too they were making clarifications, saying they were taking security measures for Amarnath Yatra. Then yatra was cancelled half way through its period for the first time in history. The government faces a great credibility crisis among the people of Kashmir.

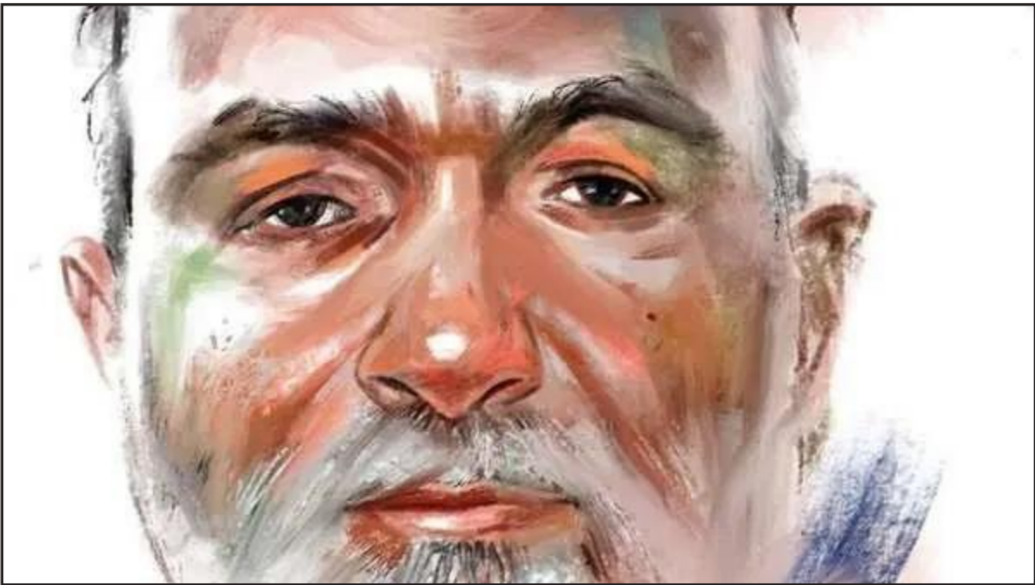
**“But in India you have decided to convert a flourishing and inclusive democracy into a Hindu Rashtra. You didn't need even to change the constitution for that. There has been the Kashmir experiment. Kashmir experiment can now be extended to rest of the country.**

**Q. What do you think will be the long term fallout of the India-China stand-off along the LAC in Ladakh?**

A. It is not specifically about this stand-off. It is about how a new strategic challenge is shaping up for India. South is closed, east is closed, west is closed. Can such a huge country create any strategic influence in the modern world without friendly relations with its neighbours and the consequent access to the wider world through them?

Then new blocks are being created in the neighborhood. You have China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The difference between India and China is what Rahul Gandhi also pointed out in his recent video: China has decided it has to become a world power, that it has to control the world. They have achieved that in 70 years. But India in 2014 decided it has to become a Hindu-rashtra. That's their vision.

This has created a huge asymmetry between the two countries. The asymmetry is not between their forces like how many fighter planes each country has. Didn't Vietnam defeat China in border war? This is about what is your national vision.



China has rediscovered the power of land routes. It was for a long time that sea was used for trade. China thinks big. These land routes are going to reshape the world. This change is happening after 2000 years. India is out of it. There's a new strategic reality that is shaping up.

But in India you have decided to convert a flourishing and inclusive democracy into a Hindu Rashtra. You didn't need even to change the constitution for that. There has been the Kashmir experiment. Kashmir experiment can now be extended to rest of the country.

**Q. What about India's relations with Pakistan?**

A. Unless this western front is open to India, it will be incomplete. Any national ambition will not fructify. when you are barred from a relationship with the countries in your West with which you have had a long historical relationship like Iran and central Asia. It is an inflection point for India where the country has to decide whether it has to close itself up or open up to the neighborhood in its West.

**Q. But India has neighbourhood in the east too?**

A. In the neighborhood, if you have any problem with Bangladesh, no issues, Bangladesh ends there, beyond Bangladesh you have no strategic interest. But beyond Pakistan you have all the strategic interest. Here you have been trying to go through Chabahar, go through air to Afghanistan, go by sea to Gulf. The world is there on the west, not on the east, no matter the Look East policy.

**Q. Can India now open up without joining BRI?**

A. India can open up through Pakistan. And it has to sooner or later. There's no helping that. That is the reality. This we have to face. Today or

hundred years from now.

**Q. There have been noises in India about annexing Pakistni side of Kashmir?**

A. Is that doable? Pakistan is virtually a province of China. It is commanded by one person called General Bajwa. China has one commander in Tibet, one commander in Pakistan.

Besides, more we alienate Pakistan, more shall we push them into Chinese lap. And we will be allowing ourselves to be encircled by a great wall of China on all the sides – north, east, west.

**“I think there were two occasions when Modi could have risen to the level of statesman, even greater than Nehru: one was November 7, 2015 rally in Kashmir when he had 30,000 strong Muslim crowd of Kashmir, all wanting to hear one word, peace. But no, he said to his ally who was to die in two months, that I don't need anybody's advice on Kashmir.**

**Q. Isn't India's relations with Pakistan at a point of no return because of revocation of the annulment of Article 370 in Kashmir?**

A. I think it is a question of statesmanship still. Suddenly the Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided one day he should go and see Nawaz Sharif, who stopped him?

I think there were two occasions when Modi could have risen to the level of statesman, even greater than Nehru: one was November 7, 2015 rally in Kashmir when he had 30,000 strong Muslim crowd of Kashmir, all wanting to hear one word, peace. But no, he said to his ally who was to die in two months, that I don't need anybody's advice on Kashmir.

Second was in the CAA protests when thousands of Muslims were at Jamia Masjid in New Delhi, both Muslims and Hindus, holding Indian tricolour. A prime minister could have gone and seized that historic moment. Fundamental problem in India has been integration. The anti-CAA protest had been the highest moment of integration of Indians and they swore by the Indian constitution. At that time, if the prime minister would have gone and reached out to Muslims at Jamia Masjid and told them that what Maulana Azad had told you at the mosque in 1947 was not perhaps right and that I am with you.

**Q. Also, if he had taken the process forward with Pakistan?**

A. Yes, ultimately we have to do business with Pakistan. Things are not going to move forward otherwise. Besides, Pakistan is the only willing party in this. China has shown, it is not going to deal with India honourably. And it won't also be possible for Pakistan to open up to India indefinitely.

**Q. Because of China factor?**

A. I have this belief that China has been sabotaging India, Pakistan relationship. If we go by events that took place at the hands of Jaish-e-Mohammad and the way China protected Masood Azhar, it becomes clear. The way Masood Azhar was got freed from Kashmir jail through hijacking, and how it was managed in Afghanistan. Then see when Narendra Modi went to meet Nawaz Sharif, a week after there was Pathankot. That's my point, China has never been out of the situation in Kashmir.

**“I have this belief that China has been sabotaging India, Pakistan relationship. The way Masood Azhar was got freed from Kashmir jail through hijacking, and how it was managed in Afghanistan. Then see when Narendra Modi went to meet Nawaz Sharif, a week after there was Pathankot.**

**Q. You attribute Pathankot to China?**

A. Yes. Why did they (China) adopt Masood Azhar only. Why not Hafiz Saeed and Salahuddin? Unfortunately this country's strategic community is numbed. They don't want to see where the reality is. They want to say anything that is in line with the political thinking of the ruling class.

**Q. Where do you see the situation in Kashmir going?**

A. Geopolitics changes. Kashmiris didn't own a single marla of land hundred years ago. In Central Asian states who were part of the USSR, religion was banned, mosques were demolished, Russian population was settled there. History took a turn. Now, they are again Muslim states.

## Tech Colonialism And Data Sovereignty

SHALINI VERMA

**“Tech companies with a sizeable presence in international markets will get caught in the cross-fire when countries clash over trade and border issues. Investors will consider geopolitical ramifications when investing in apps. Local data centres will become foundational for maintaining data sovereignty.**

**T**ikTok is banned." I messaged my nephew in India. "Is it banned everywhere? Or just in India?" His question was remarkably prescient.

When the Chinese and Indian army clashed on the icy borders of the Himalayas, the Indian government trained its guns on Chinese apps like TikTok. My nephew is part of the cult following that TikTok enjoys, and yet governments are becoming uneasy with the app. TikTok is just one of the apps wielding enough influence to make governments uncomfortable.

This is not the first time that companies have been on a collision course with governments. For a 100 years, India's many princely states ceded control to the British East India Company, which was not just synonymous with state. It was the state. What started as sporadic skirmishes grew into contractual agreements, revenue control and military dominance. The company's expansion cleared the way for the British government to eventually take over the colonial reins of India.

This precedence cannot be ignored when tech companies are becoming a powerful force. If Amazon were a country it would rank 43rd in terms of GDP, and almost comparable to that of Pakistan. Facebook's monthly active users equals the combined population of the two most populous countries, India and China.

China's crown jewel, Huawei is facing a push back from many governments. But it is not all that simple. One cannot just simply snap ties. After the British government expressed its intent to ban Huawei, taking the cue from the US Government, the Chinese government has repeatedly issued stern warnings. While the Chinese government has Huawei's back, the latter is menacingly waving its existing maintenance contracts for the gear already installed in British telecom companies. Behind all the public posturing, talks are still on. Huawei is a pill that governments are finding hard to swallow or spit out.

Similarly, the Indian government has banned WeChat whose parent company Tencent has invested in at least 15 Indian startups. As the US government considers banning TikTok, it is already facing the wokeness of Gen Z who built a large community and



income sources through the video sharing app. Yet, the United States is protesting against the European Union's anti-trust investigations against American crown jewels Apple and Google. These ties are far too complex, and the concerns are far too contentious.

China can hardly take a moral high ground on matters of level playing fields, which it has denied to the likes of Facebook. But China is not alone. The stakes are always high when it comes to large tech companies. When the US government does a rationing of H1B visas - the low-cost instruments for Indian tech services companies in the US, the Indian government promptly opens its diplomatic channels.

The blurred line between Huawei and the Chinese government is a known secret. But the main anxiety is data sovereignty. Engineers who have reverse engineered TikTok, claim that it is actually a data collection service, thinly veiled as a social network. But that is largely true for many popular apps. Amazon studies my reading habit on the Kindle, including the portions I highlight or copy. It can infer changes in my state of mind, likes and attitude from my reading. Each time I ask Alexa to switch on my bedroom lights, Amazon is taking notes. Every app

worth its salt is asking for access to every nook and cranny of my smartphone.

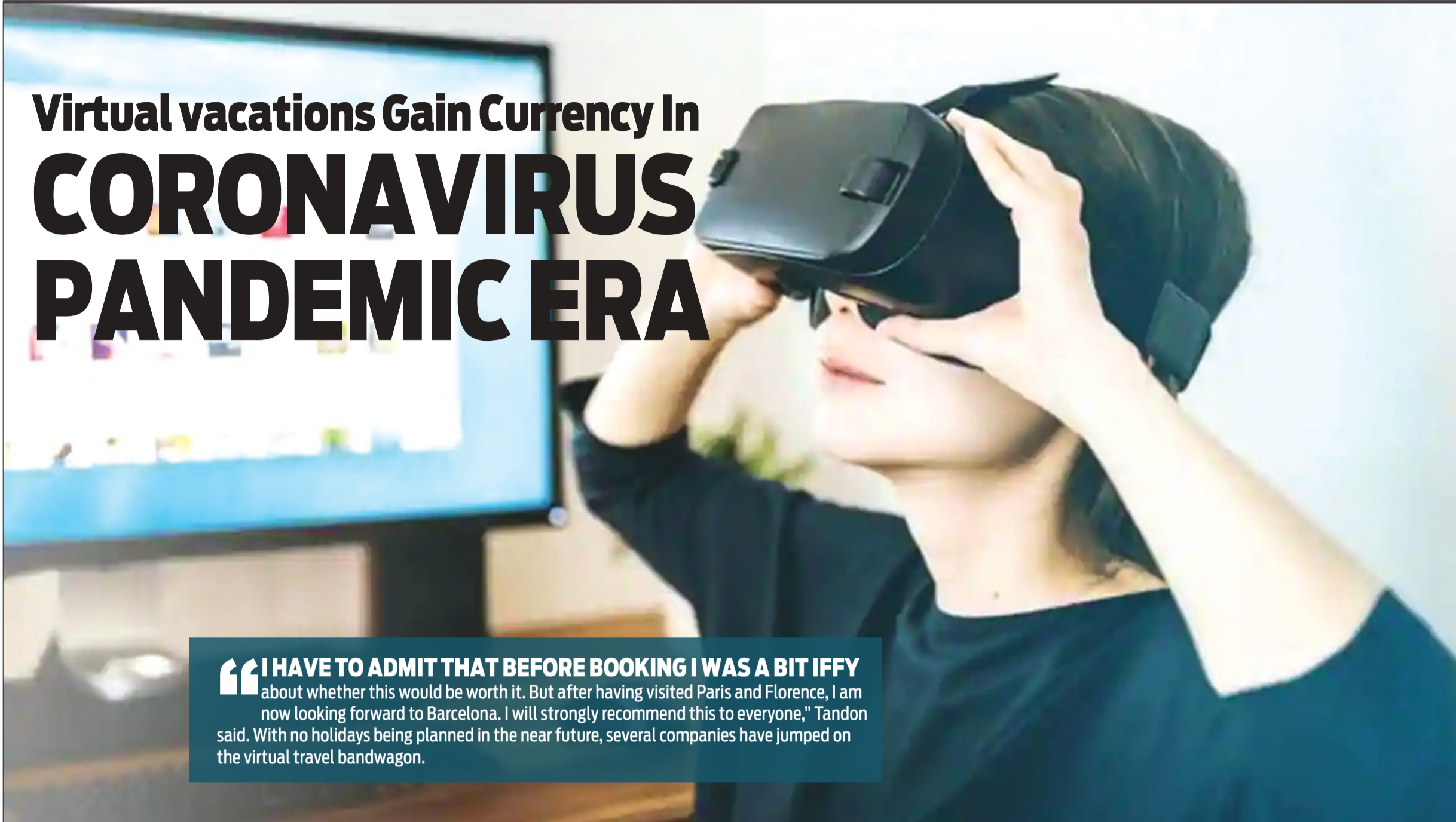
Data sovereignty concerns have now forced TikTok to distance itself from Beijing by declaring that it would not comply with any data request by the Chinese government. It has also announced its intention to build a local datacenter in India. This is a clear sign of things to come.

Tech companies with a sizeable presence in international markets will get caught in the cross-fire when countries clash over trade and border issues. Investors will consider geopolitical ramifications when investing in apps. Local data centres will become foundational for maintaining data sovereignty.

Regulators must demand information on customer data collected by foreign apps to take preemptive actions if required. The British East India company demonstrated how a company can impinge on the sovereignty of countries and exploit their wealth. History should not be tempted to repeat itself.

Shalini Verma is CEO of PIVOT technologies

Khaleej Times



# Virtual vacations Gain Currency In CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ERA

**“I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT BEFORE BOOKING I WAS A BIT IFFY** about whether this would be worth it. But after having visited Paris and Florence, I am now looking forward to Barcelona. I will strongly recommend this to everyone,” Tandon said. With no holidays being planned in the near future, several companies have jumped on the virtual travel bandwagon.

Press Trust Of India

Work from home, yes. Classes from home, that too. But travel from home? The COVID-19 pandemic forced a new normal as people, particularly in urban India, went about their jobs and academics from the confines of their homes. Now, as one month slips into another and the infection shows little sign of abating, the young, the not-so-young and the restless are touring the world – from their armchairs, their living room couch or maybe their beds. The new breed of ‘travel potatoes’ are not just browsing the net but actually booking holidays through major travel operators. So, you can drive around Berlin, walk through the Sistine Chapel or go up the Eiffel Tower. Virtually if not really is what Vritti Tandon decided to do when the long planned family trip to Europe didn’t happen because of the global pandemic. “I booked for Florence and Paris. I got to see and know so much

more about Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, Statue of David, Uffizi Gallery and many others. The guides were well-informed, interactive and gave many fun facts along with tips for future travel,” the Class 12 Delhi student told PTI. It had been a long and difficult summer and the 17-year-old was despondently surfing through images of places she could have visited in a ‘normal’ 2020 when up popped a link for a travel company providing virtual tours. Tandon knew it was her best bet as leisure travel doesn’t seem possible in the foreseeable future. With 11,55,191 COVID-19 cases and 28,084 fatalities till Monday, India is behind only the US and Brazil in the global tally and has currently restricted international air travel to repatriation missions only. So, from no option to suddenly spoil for choices, Tandon sat in her pyjamas, set the AC to her preferred temperature and explored the two European cities last month from the comfort of her home. “I have to admit that before booking I was a bit iffy about

whether this would be worth it. But after having visited Paris and Florence, I am now looking forward to Barcelona. I will strongly recommend this to everyone,” Tandon said. With no holidays being planned in the near future, several companies have jumped on the virtual travel bandwagon. MakeMyTrip offers a live ‘virtual guided tour’ experience with local hosts and travel guides taking the tourist sightseeing in video platforms. Others, like Expedia, offer a part live and part recorded experience, including a licensed guide led webinar packed with photos, videos, polls and a fully interactive chat function. There is also a live Q&A at the end. From driving around Berlin or Barcelona, admiring the stunning treasures of the Vatican Museums and Sistine Chapel and the Uffizi Gallery to a fun-packed tour of Harry Potter Studio in London, there are many journeys on offer for armchair travellers. Many international tours, with a duration of at least 60 minutes or more, cost less than Rs 1,300

per person on Expedia. International and domestic experiences on MakeMyTrip too are not pocket-heavy and start at Rs 799 and Rs 99 per person, respectively. Domestic experiences offered by MMT, including a tour of the Taj Mahal and the Khajuraho Temples, are offered depending on availability. TourHQ, Viator, ToursByLocals are some other platforms providing the facility of this new found form of travel. According to Expedia’s 2019 annual ‘Vacation Deprivation Study’, which deep dived into the motivations and benefits of taking a holiday, “the positive impact on mental wellbeing experienced by taking a holiday, can be achieved without the physical act of travelling”. “In fact, 92 per cent of Indians say taking regular holidays is important for their general health and wellbeing and that they find it de-stressing to tap into those vacation memories. This mindset and mood of positive effects is what Expedia has termed as being in a ‘Vacation State of Mind’.

“These virtual experiences will continue to be available on our website as even with the gradual lifting of lockdown, consumers are still not planning a holiday in the immediate future and thus these virtual experiences are helping fill the gap,” Manmeet Ahluwalia, Expedia India’s marketing head, told PTI. After more than four months, travellers are itching to go back to experiencing travel, added a MakeMyTrip spokesperson. “We launched our Live In-City experiences in early July. The response has been extremely encouraging. In the two weeks following the launch, we have received interests from 50k users for both, international and domestic travel and for culinary experiences that bring the taste of a destination home,” the spokesperson added. Vandana Kinra, who has booked a virtual tour to Paris, is one of those eager to get back on “the road” and just relive her earlier holidays. “Every year we travel for a month or so. This year we had planned to go to the United Kingdom. But of course we had to eventually cancel it because of coronavirus and

the subsequent lockdown. That’s when I got to know about virtual tours and immediately signed up for a Paris one. “I had visited Paris in the past, but I wanted to relive those travel memories or see Disneyland again. It was really good,” said the 44-year-old. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourism could shrink by 60-80 per cent in 2020 due to the ongoing pandemic, resulting in the revenue loss of \$910 billion to \$1.2 trillion and placing millions of livelihoods at risk. It’s not just sightseeing. Virtual trips are also helping people hone their skills. Aspiring cooks, for instance, can learn the secrets of making pasta, perfect the original tiramisu from Italian chefs or transport themselves to the streets of Barcelona and learn the secret to dishing up delicious tapas. There are other experiences in store. Airbnb India recently announced the launch of “At Home With Airbnb”, online experiences

that bring together India’s most popular celebrities, artists and influencers. It allows guests to visit the host’s personal spaces to learn their craft in small group. The virtual experiences on offer include workout sessions with celebrity trainer Nam Wook, zero wastage cooking with Sandeep Sreedharan and learning the art of fashion illustrations from popular designers Shivan and Naresh. “I attended two sessions. One of fashion illustrations by Shiven and Naresh and second of cocktail making by Pankaj Balachandran. Both were pretty good. Since you can’t go out, it is always better to hone your skills by virtual experiences like these for the time being,” said Riaan George, a lifestyle journalist and blogger based in Mumbai and Colombo. That said, given a choice, George said he would always pick an in-person experience over online and doesn’t see “virtual travel and experiences” finding takers once things get back to normal. Till then, either wait or watch – literally.

## Increased Blood Sugar Levels Likely To Decrease Benefits Of Aerobic Exercise

Agencies

Aerobic exercises are well known for its many benefits for overall health. However, a team of scientists, from Joslin Diabetes Center now have discovered that some benefits of aerobic exercise may be dampened by higher-than-normal blood sugar levels, a condition is known as hyperglycemia. These diminished gains are seen in mouse models and humans with chronic hyperglycemia that is in the “prediabetes” range, said Sarah Lessard, PhD, a Joslin assistant investigator in the section of Clinical, Behavioural and Outcomes Research and senior author on a paper in Nature Metabolism that presents the work. The study also



showed that this maladaptive trait is independent of obesity and insulin levels in the blood. Clinical studies have demonstrated that people with diabetes or chronically high levels of blood sugar struggle to improve their aerobic exercise capacity compared to people with normal blood sugar levels.

“The idea behind this study was to see if we induce high blood sugar in mice, will we impair their ability to improve their aerobic fitness?” said Lessard, who is an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. The study also

aimed to uncover the mechanisms that may lead to low fitness levels in people with hyperglycemia. Her team used two mouse models that reflect the two major causes of hyperglycemia in humans. One group of mice consumed a Western diet, high in sugar and saturated fat, which caused some weight gain in addition to hyperglycemia. The other group was modified to produce less insulin, which caused similar increases in blood sugar as the Western diet, even though the mice ate a diet lower in sugar and fat, and maintained normal body weight. Both groups were subjected to a training protocol in which they ran in wheels in their cages to boost their aerobic fitness.

## Researchers Identify Possible Drug Target For Prostate Cancer

Agencies

Researchers have discovered that the protein BRD4 could be an important new target to prevent castration-resistant prostate cancer metastases. Bromodomain-containing protein 4 is a protein in humans encoded by the BRD4 gene. Castration-resistant prostate cancer is a highly aggressive form of prostate cancer that often leads to the development of lethal metastases that kills more than 31,000 American men every year.

The standard of care treatment for these patients typically includes disruption of androgen receptor signalling with drugs called ‘androgen deprivation therapy’. “While effective for an average of two-three years, this therapy eventually fails to impede cancer progression, due to acquired resistance to the drugs,” study authors from Boston University in the US said. Researchers have long studied a family of three closely-related proteins, called BET bromodomain proteins, composed of BRD2, BRD3 and BRD4, which regulate gene expression. The researchers examined prostate cancer cell lines that model common forms of prostate cancer that are resistant to androgen deprivation therapy. They found that BRD4, but not similar family members BRD2 or BRD3, regulates the expression of key proteins that directly contribute to prostate cancer disease progression.

“These findings are novel because, until now, it was not clear which of the BET family of proteins regulate transcriptional programmes, or how they influence prostate cancer cell morphology (shape and polarity), motility (the ability to move independently) and invasiveness, each of which is associated with the ability to metastasize.

According to the researchers, this study is significant because current therapeutic options for castration-resistant prostate cancer are limited and focus primarily on suppressing prostate tumour cells that rely on androgen receptor signalling. “As prostate tumour cells become resistant to therapy, their reliance on androgen receptor signalling is reduced and alternative signalling mechanisms are activated. Out of this complex mixture, the metastatic cells arise,” the study authors wrote.

## Covid-19: Scientists Re-Emphasise Use Of Face Masks As Virus Cases See Spike

Agencies

Amid the continuous surge in the number of coronavirus cases and deaths globally, the scientists have time and again reiterated the necessity of wearing a mask. Wearing a mask is “one of the most urgent things we can do to get our country [US] under control,” Melanie Ott, director of the Gladstone Institute of Virology, was quoted as saying by The Wall Street Journal. “We’re all waiting for the vaccine, we’re waiting for therapeutics, and we’re not there.” “We have masks, we have social distancing, and we have testing,” she said while adding “But there’s not much more in the toolbox here.” Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was also quoted as saying that the pandemic could be brought under control over the next four to eight weeks if “we could get everybody to wear a mask right now.” As the N-95 masks are dedicated for the healthcare workers amid the pandemic, The Wall Street Journal recently cited a study published last month in the journal Physics of Fluids stating that the researchers at Florida Atlantic University have found a well-fitted homemade stitched mask comprising two layers of cotton quilting fabric most effective in reducing the forward spread of droplets. The researchers used a man-



nequin’s head, an air compressor and a smoke generator that mechanically simulated a cough to conduct the study. According to the study, aerosol-size droplets expelled from the mannequin with the double-layered cotton mask travelled forward about 2.5 inches on average, and most of the leakage escaped from gaps between the nose and face. However, the loosely fitting facial coverings, including a folded cotton handkerchief with ear loops, as well as a bandana were less helpful as with those masks the droplets travelled on average about 1.25 and 3.5 feet, respectively. Meanwhile, the study found droplets travelled about 8 inches on average with cone-shaped mask. “It was surprising in a good way to see that a homemade mask could do so well...that we don’t have to get a very fancy mask,” Dr Siddhartha Verma, one of the two authors of the study was quoted as saying. “A cotton mask can be washed at home and dried. Reusability is

becoming important as we go into this for the long haul.” The study’s authors – Siddhartha Verma and Manhar Dhanak – said they are still studying the leakage from a common disposable surgical mask. Meanwhile, Amy Price, a senior research scientist at Stanford’s Anesthesia Informatics and Media Lab, was quoted as saying that rubbing the outer layer of the mask with a latex glove before wearing it creates static electricity. According to the Stanford researchers, the static electricity better prevents virus particles from passing from the mouth to outside of the mask. The Wall Street Journal reported the University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) as saying that the death toll due to COVID-19 in the US would rise to more than 224,000 by November 1 if the norms are continued to be relaxed. As per the Johns Hopkins University, about 140,000 people have succumbed to the disease in the US so far.

## Fake COVID-19 Kits Seized In International Trafficking Crackdown From 77 Countries

### Agencies

Lyon, France: Police have seized 17,000 fake COVID-19 testing kits discovered in raids against illicit food and drink products across dozens of countries, Interpol said Wednesday.

Officials seized \$40 million (34.5 million euros) worth of fake or substandard products in 77 countries, and arrested 407 people in the operation, carried out from December 2019 to June 2020.

The products included contaminated dairy products, meat from illegally slaughtered animals and food products falsely labelled as medicinal cures, said Interpol, based in the southeastern French city of Lyon.

But police also intercepted thousands of fake medical products as countries worldwide rushed to secure supplies while locking down to curtail the coronavirus pandemic.

“As countries around the world continue their efforts to contain COVID-19, the criminal networks distributing these potentially dangerous products show only their determination to make a profit,” the agency’s secretary general Jurgen Stock said in a statement.

Besides the fake COVID-19 tests, the raids uncovered disinfectants and even a shipment of seafood in South Africa, originating from Asia, that was falsely declared as personal protective equipment.

“Other illicit products recovered included cosmetics, footwear, clothing, handbags, car parts, electronics, tobacco and medicines, worth an estimated \$3.1 million,” Interpol said.

It was the agency’s ninth year of coordinated Opson raids against counterfeit or substandard food and drink, which regularly seize thousands of tons of fake and potentially harmful products.

## HCQ, Chloroquine Do Not Show Antiviral Effect Against Coronavirus, Studies Reveal

### Agencies

Berlin: Chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine, either alone or in combination with the antibiotic azithromycin, do not show any notable antiviral effect against infections with the novel coronavirus in macaques or human lung cells, according to two new studies in the journal Nature.

Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and chloroquine, two drugs, commonly used for the treatment of malaria, have been investigated for their potential to treat CO-

VID-19 in more than 80 registered clinical trials, and have been shown to inhibit the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2 infection in cell cultures, the scientists said.

However, they said, the effectiveness of these drugs in the treatment of patients with COVID-19 has been debated.

In one of the studies, scientists including Roger Le Grand from the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research, assessed the effects of HCQ treatment in cynomolgus macaques, a non-human primate model of SARS-CoV-2 infection in humans.

They found that HCQ showed no substantial antiviral activity,



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They found that HCQ showed no substantial antiviral activity,

regardless of the timing of treatment initiation, either before infection, soon after infection, or late after infection.

According to the study, using the antimalarial drug in combination with azithromycin, an antibiotic, had no notable effect on virus levels in the macaques either.

In the other study, Stefan Pohlmann and his colleagues from the Leibniz Institute for Primate Research in Germany found that chloroquine has no antiviral activity against SARS-CoV-2 in human lung cells.



## US Wants To Build Coalition To Counter China’s ‘Disgraceful’ Menace, Says Pompeo

### Agencies

LONDON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Tuesday the United States wants to build a global coalition to counter China as he accused Beijing of exploiting the coronavirus pandemic to further its own interests.

US President Donald Trump identifies China as the United States’ main rival, and has accused President Xi Jinping of taking advantage over trade and not telling the truth over the novel coronavirus outbreak, which Trump calls the “China plague”.

Pompeo, on a visit to London, lauded Prime Minister Boris Johnson for ordering a purge of Huawei gear from its 5G mobile phone network, saying it was the right decision as data could have ended up in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.

The secretary of state cast China as an aggressor, saying it had made illegal maritime claims, bullied Himalayan countries, covered up the coronavirus

outbreak and exploited it to further its own interests in a “disgraceful” way.

“We hope we can build out a coalition that understands the threat and will work collectively to convince the Chinese Communist Party that it is not in their best interest to engage in this kind of behaviour,” Pompeo told reporters alongside British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab.

“We want to see every nation who understands freedom and democracy ... to understand this threat that the Chinese Communist Party is posing to them,” Pompeo offered no evidence of how China had exploited the coronavirus.

As Britain toughens its stance on China due to its handling of the coronavirus epidemic and a crackdown in the former British colony of Hong Kong, Pompeo’s visit is an attempt to stiffen Johnson’s resolve and dangle the potential reward of a post-Brexit free trade deal, diplomats say.

Pompeo said a deal could be finalised before too long.

“A third round (of negotiations) scheduled for later this month, a primary focus for the United States is to see that we can make progress on this and bring this to a closure just as quickly as possible,” Pompeo said, adding that he had discussed this with Johnson.

Beijing says the West — and Washington in particular — is gripped by anti-Chinese hysteria and colonial thinking about the communist state.

China, whose \$15 trillion economy is five times the size of the United Kingdom’s, says the decision to exclude Huawei, the world’s biggest telecoms equipment manufacturer, will hurt Britain’s economy, set back trade and discourage investment.

Pompeo is also due to meet Hong Kong democracy activist Nathan Law and the last British governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten.

## US Orders China To Close Houston Consulate As Tensions Soar

### Agencies

Washington: The United States has ordered China to close its consulate in Houston and accused it of ramping up spying operations, dramatically escalating diplomatic tensions between the feuding superpowers.

Wednesday’s announcement infuriated Beijing, which vowed to retaliate as the two countries squabble over a slew of issues ranging from trade to the coronavirus pandemic — and China’s policies in Hong Kong, Xinjiang and the South China Sea.

“We have directed the closure of PRC Consulate General Houston in order to protect American intellectual property and Americans’ private information,” State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortugas told reporters during a visit by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Denmark.

She added that under the Vienna Convention, states “have a duty not to inter-

fere in the internal affairs” of the receiving state, but there were no further details about the reasons behind the decision.

In another statement, the State Department said China has engaged in massive spying and influence operations throughout the United States for years.

“These activities have increased markedly in scale and scope over the past few years,” it said.

Before the news emerged, firefighters and police were called Tuesday evening to the consulate building in Texas on reports that documents were being burned in trash cans in the courtyard, according to local media.

The Twitter feed of the Houston police force said smoke was observed, but officers “were not granted access to enter the building”.

In Beijing, foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said China was told Tuesday that the consulate would have

to close, calling it an “outrageous and unjustified move which will sabotage China-US relations”.

“China urges the US to immediately withdraw its wrong decision, or China will definitely take a proper and necessary response,” Wang said at a press briefing.

“It is a political provocation unilaterally launched by the US side, which seriously violates international law... and the bilateral consular agreement between China and the US.”

### Diplomatic row

The Chinese Consulate in Houston was opened in 1979 — the first in the year the US and the People’s Republic of China established diplomatic relations, according to its website.

The office covers eight southern US states — including Texas and Florida — and has nearly one million people in the area registered there.

There are five Chinese consulates in the US, as well as an embassy in Washington.

## Dubai expatriates race for new jobs after virus layoffs

### Agencies

DUBAI: Mustafa, a hipster Pakistani graphic artist, has a month to find a new job or be forced to leave Dubai among an exodus of expatriates whose futures have been upended by coronavirus.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) — made up of seven sheikhdoms including the oil-rich capital Abu Dhabi and free-wheeling Dubai — has become a hub for young professionals and a safe haven in a region blighted by political turmoil and poverty.

But the pandemic has set in motion a global economic crisis that one study said could see some 900,000 jobs lost in the UAE — among a population of under 10 million — and force 10 per cent of its expatriate residents to leave.

“What’s the point of staying?”: Gulf faces expatriate exodus

In a country where permanent residency is not generally offered, even for those who have spent decades in the UAE, as the redundancies begin to mount, many are being forced to sell up their things and make a quick exit.

“We all know how the UAE is a temporary place and, one day or another, we all have to go back home or elsewhere,” said Mustafa, who before the crisis earned a good salary with a sports marketing firm.

Without a new job, in a market where openings are few and applicants are many, the 30-year-old will have no choice but to return home to Pakistan — a prospect he feels gloomy about.

“Here I worked with luxury hotel brands, airports, car brands, extreme sports. They don’t have a big market share there,” he said about Pakistan, adding that even if he did find a job, the salary would be “half of what you get paid in Dubai”.

### ‘Expats, not migrants’

Expatriates, who make up about 90pc of Dubai’s population of more than 3.3 million, have helped create and operate its mega malls, attractions and five-star hotels, and turn it into a global hub for tourism, banking and services.

But with global travel only just emerging from a standstill, and lockdown measures still in force in many countries, all these industries have taken a heavy hit.

Scott Livermore, chief economist at Oxford Economics Middle East, said the Gulf system, however, is designed to keep foreigners as “expats rather than migrants”, with welfare state support reserved for citizens.

“Expatriates then return to their country of origin or move on to another country,” Livermore told AFP. “It is a conscious, designed policy.”

## Shootout At Funeral Leaves 14 Wounded In US

### Agencies

Chicago, United States: A shootout outside a funeral left 14 people wounded Tuesday in Chicago, as President Donald Trump threatens to send federal agents to a handful of US cities led by Democratic mayors.

The episode started when occupants of a vehicle “began firing at attendees of a funeral. At that time the attendees of the funeral exchanged fire,” Chicago deputy police superintendent Eric Carter told reporters.

Shootings have become breathtakingly normal this summer across the United States. A total of 63 people were shot and 12 killed over the weekend in Chicago in ongoing gun violence, according to local media.

Carter said 14 people were

white Minneapolis police officer in May.

After the Department of Homeland Security deployed scores of Border Patrol police and federal marshals — many in combat fatigues — to Portland, Oregon last week, Trump said he could do the same in other Democrat-led cities like Chicago and New York.

According to reports, DHS was preparing to send 150 paramilitary personnel to Chicago after police there clashed with demonstrators seeking to tear down a statue of Christopher Columbus.

Trump called the move necessary, even claiming Chicago was “worse than Afghanistan.”

The president has also singled out Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore and Oakland as potential cities for sending federal agents.



wounded in Tuesday’s shooting, but did not specify the degree of severity.

Trump’s threat to send more military-garbed law enforcement to US cities has mainly been in response to the anti-racism protests rocking the country following the death of African-American George Floyd at the hands of a

On Monday, the mayors of six major cities — Atlanta, Washington, Seattle, Chicago, Portland and Kansas City — said in a letter to Homeland Security Acting Secretary Chad Wolf and Attorney General Bill Barr that the uninvited paramilitary deployments violate the Constitution.

## NEWS MAKERS

## Biden pledges to undo ‘Muslim ban’ on first day in office



were altered during a series of court challenges and some non-Muslim countries, such as North Korea and Venezuela, were also added to the list. The order was eventually upheld by the US Supreme Court.

The US media dubbed the order a “Muslim ban” because Mr Trump had previously called for temporarily ban-

ning Muslims from entering the United States. The president argued that the restrictions were necessary to protect Americans from future terrorist attacks.

In his speech to the Muslim advocacy group, Mr Biden accused President Trump of continuing to fan the flames of hate that led to kids being bullied in school and an increase

in hate crimes. “Under this administration, we’ve seen an unconscionable rise in Islamophobia,” he said.

Mr Biden also accused Mr Trump of appointing open advocates of Islamophobia in key positions in the Defence Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

During its day-long proceedings, the group vowed to bring one million Muslim voters to the polls on Nov 3. Its chairman, Khurram Wahid, said the group would work in swing states like Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Florida to persuade Muslim voters to support Mr Biden.

“We want to partner with you to fix the societal harm of this Trump presidency,” he said.

Mr Biden said that Muslim communities in America were the first to feel Donald Trump’s assault on minority groups, with this ‘vile Muslim ban.’

## Burger King Wins Dismissal Of Vegans’ Lawsuit Over Impossible Whopper

A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit accusing Burger King of deceiving vegan, vegetarian and other customers into thinking it cooked the plant-based patties for its “Impossible Whopper” on different grills than those used to cook beef and chicken.

In a decision on Monday, US District Judge Raag Singhal in Fort Lauderdale, Florida said the seven plaintiffs failed to show that reasonable consumers were deceived into paying higher prices because of Burger King’s actual cooking methods.

He said the plaintiffs did not ask about Burger King’s cooking method or request an alternative to satisfy their dietary requirements, and that the company’s advertising did



not promise cooking on a different surface. [nLN2A0194]

“Burger King promised a non-meat patty and delivered,” Singhal wrote. The judge also found the plaintiffs’ claims “too individualized” to justify a class action.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs

did not immediately respond on Tuesday to requests for comment. The plaintiffs can amend most of their claims if they wish.

Burger King is a unit of Toronto-based Restaurant Brands International Inc. <QSR.TO>

WASHINGTON: Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden has said that he would overturn President Donald Trump’s Muslim ban on his first day in office and partner with Muslims to undo the social harms caused by such measures.

In a speech to Engage Action, an advocacy group for Muslim Americans, on Monday afternoon, the former vice president also said that Muslims were the first to suffer attacks under the Trump administration.

“Donald Trump has fanned the flames of hate in this country across the board through his words, his policies, his appointments and his deeds,” he said. “I will undo the Muslim ban on day one.”

During his first month in office in January 2017, President Trump restricted travel from seven Muslim-majority countries. The restrictions

## Gold Breaches Rs 50,000-Mark For The First Time

Gold prices in the national capital hit a new record high rising Rs 430 to Rs 50,920 per 10 gram on Wednesday, reflecting gains in the international prices of the precious metal, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, gold had closed at Rs 50,490 per 10 gram. Silver was also in huge demand as its prices zoomed Rs 2,550 to Rs 60,400 per kg, from Rs 57,850 per kg on Tuesday.



"Spot gold prices for 24 karat in Delhi hit a new record high rallying by Rs 430, reflecting gains in international prices," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said. In the international market, gold was trading higher at \$1,855 per ounce and silver at \$21.80 per ounce.

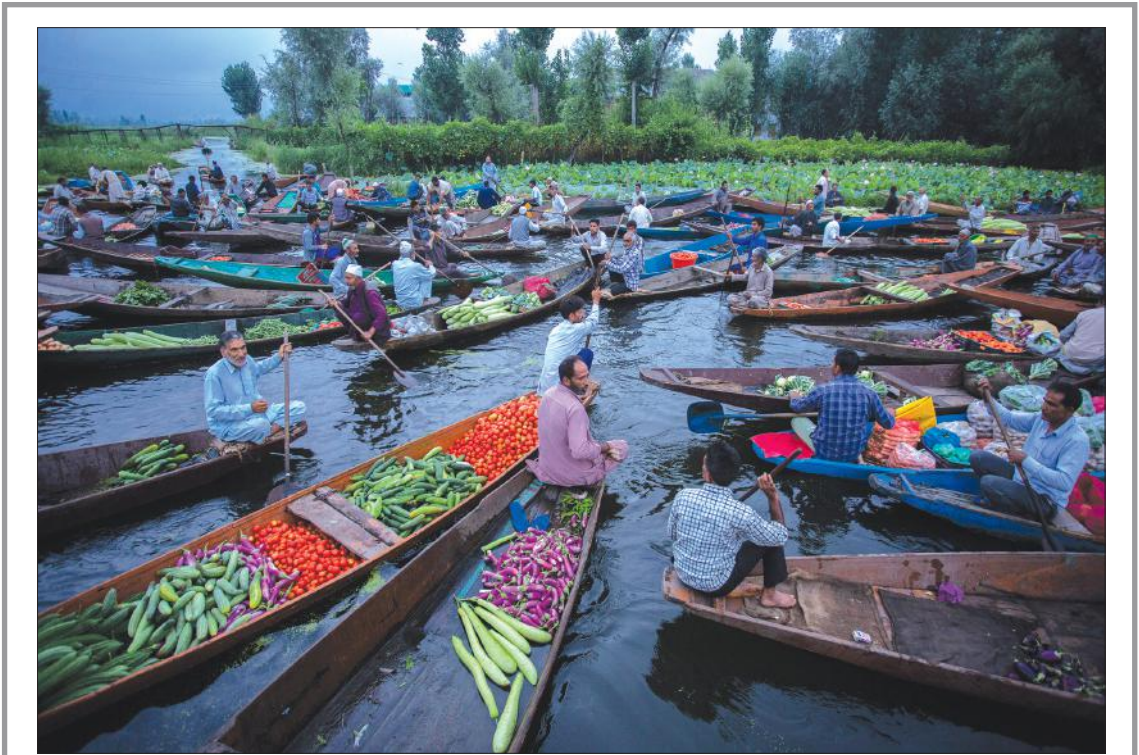
**SPOT GOLD PRICES FOR 24 KARAT** in Delhi hit a new record high rallying by Rs 430, reflecting gains in international prices," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said. In the international market, gold was trading higher at \$1,855 per ounce and silver at \$21.80 per ounce.

## Mathura Court Awards Lifer To All 11 Cops Guilty Of Killing Bharatpur Scion



**MATHURA:** All 11 former policemen from Rajasthan convicted for killing Raja Man Singh of the erstwhile Bharatpur royal family and his two colleagues over 35 years ago in Deeg area of the state were awarded life sentence by a court here on Wednesday. The convicts, who were sentenced to life term by Mathura District Judge Sadhna Rani Thakur, include former Deeg Dy SP Kan Singh and local police station in-charge, sub-inspector Virendra Singh, who had led a police team in killing Raja Man Singh and his two colleagues Sumer Singh and Hari Singh on February 21, 1985 in an encounter. The other policemen sentenced for the crime are Sukh Ram, Jeevan Ram, Jag Mohan, Bhanwar Singh, Hari Singh, Chhatar Singh, Sher Singh, Daya Ram and Ravi Shekhar. The encounter had taken place in Deeg grain market

a day after Raja Man Singh, then contesting the state Vidhan Sabha election as an independent candidate, had allegedly banged his jeep into former Rajasthan's chief minister Shiv Charan Mathur's helicopter. According to the prosecution, he was also accused of damaging some publicity material and a stage set up for Mathur to address an election rally in favour of the Congress candidate Brajendra Singh, a retired IAS officer, the prosecution had told the court. Days after the killings of the royal family chief and his two colleagues, the case was transferred by the then central government to the CBI on February 27, 1985. The trial was later shifted from a Jaipur special court to Mathura in Uttar Pradesh by the Supreme Court in November 1989 on the plea of complainant Vijay Singh, a son-in-law of the slain chief of the erstwhile riyasat.



**EARLY MORNING** floating vegetable market in Dal waters near Saida Kadal, Srinagar is a lifeline for city dwellers. KO photo Abid Bhat

## Court Dismisses Plea Challenging Extension In Services Of Baseer Khan

**SRINAGAR:** A Division Bench Wednesday dismissed a plea challenging extension in services of incumbent Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmed Khan terming it in-fructuous. A Division Bench of the State High Court comprising Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice Sanjay Dhar through video conferencing after hearing Advocate Sheikh Shakeel Ahmed through virtual mode taking note of the submissions made by Advocate S.S. Ahmed directed that the instant application having been rendered in-fructuous is hereby dismissed. When this matter came up for hearing through virtual mode Advocate S.S. Ahmed according to news agency KNT invited the attention of the Division Bench to a PIL wherein the petitioners challenged order vide number 26014/1/2019-AIS-II dated June, 30, 2019 whereby Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India accorded approval to the extension



in service of Baseer Ahmed Khan (IAS) as Divisional Commissioner Kashmir for a period of one year as a special case beyond the date of his superannuation. Advocate S.S. Ahmed submitted that this application has been rendered in-fructuous with the efflux of time as Baseer Ahmed Khan (IAS) has further been appointed and elevated to the post of Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor Jammu and Kashmir and the cause projected in the instant application does not serve any purpose. The Division Bench headed by Chief Justice Gita Mittal taking note of the submissions made by Advocate S.S. Ahmed directed that the instant application having been rendered in-fructuous is hereby dismissed. The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed by social activist Sheikh Muhammad Shafi.

## Indian Job Seekers Slowly Losing Interest In Opportunities In US: Report

While the US remains the favourite destination for Indians looking for jobs overseas, there has been a substantial fall in the number of searches looking for employment opportunities in America, a report by global job portal Indeed has said. According to the Indeed data, job searches for the USA fell to 42 per cent in June 2020 from a high of 58 per cent in January 2019. However, the US remained the favourite destination for Indians looking at jobs abroad, the report noted. A downward trend that predates impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and corresponds instead with uncertainty around and tightening of the US immigration policy, it added. The data for this report is compiled and analysed from job searches on the Indeed platform. Indian job seekers remained keen to explore work opportunities across the globe, making up a significant fraction of those employed in various sectors such as technology, administration and management, sales and consumer marketing, among others internationally, the report said. Over the same period, there was a



rise in searches for these roles in Canada, the UAE, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Australia and Qatar, it added. As a group, Indian job seekers are highly focused on tech in their job searches almost nine of the top 10 clicked jobs by Indians to the USA are related to tech roles. While looking for employment abroad, there is greater demand for jobs in this sector, especially for niche roles, including full-stack developer, development operations engineers, business analysts. "India is a unique market, not only

in terms of its large and youthful labour pool but also in the way that it is woven into the global economy. It is one of the few countries in the world that has a very high rate of mobility. People from India are willing to work in different parts of the world and return home for opportunities as well," Indeed India MD Sashi Kumar said. This two-way migration connects India to the global labour force and means India holds tremendous potential in terms of supplying the world's talent, he added.

## ED Raids Premises Of Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot's Brother

**NEW DELHI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided the premises of Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's brother on Wednesday as part of countrywide searches in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged fertiliser scam, officials said. ED sleuths were assisted by personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), who were seen standing guard at the farmhouse and residence of the Gehlots' in Mandore area of Jodhpur district. The searches come at a time when a political slugfest is currently on between CM Gehlot and his former deputy Sachin Pilot. Pilot, a former Union minister, was recently sacked as the deputy CM and PCC chief of the state. Officials said the raids are being carried out against Ashok Gehlot's elder brother Agrasain Gehlot, who is the promoter of a seeds and fertiliser company identified as Anupam Krishi. Responding to the raids, Congress leader Randeep Surjewala told reporters in Jaipur, "Prime Minister Modi has created 'raid raj' in the country but we are not going to be scared."



When the Centre's "gimmicks" failed to topple the Congress government in Rajasthan, ED raids started at the premises of Gehlot's elder brother, he said. The agency, officials said, is searching at least six locations in the desert state including at the premises of a former Congress MP, who is alleged to have business ties with Agrasain Gehlot. They said the raids are being conducted by the central probe agency at 13 places in the country including Rajasthan, West Bengal (2), Gujarat (4) and Delhi (1). The action came after the agency filed a criminal Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR), ED equivalent of a police FIR, in a 2007-09 Customs department case of alleged irregularities in the supply of subsidised Muriate of Potash (MOP) to farmers and investigation in this case was finalised in 2013. The ED complaint under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) has been filed after studying the FIR and chargesheet filed by the Customs and its specialised probe arm Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), they said. The raids are aimed to collect evidence in this scam case which is stated to be worth about Rs 60 crore, officials said. Officials of the agency are carrying out the searches under the provision of the PMLA. Sources alleged that Agrasain Gehlot and his company have been slapped with a Customs penalty of about Rs 7 crore in this alleged fertiliser supply scam. The ED is also probing an alleged forex law violation case against a Jaipur-based businessman Ratan Kant Sharma, who is alleged to have had business ties with Ashok Gehlot's son Vaibhav in the past. The Income Tax Department on July 13 had carried out multiple raids at over 40 premises of three Rajasthan-based business groups on tax evasion charges and officials had said it seized about Rs 12 crore cash and vital documents. The premises linked to two state Congress leaders and a business group stated to be close to the top party leadership of Rajasthan were searched.

## 98 Delhi Mosque Event Foreign Attendees Pay Fine, Allowed To Walk Free

**NEW DELHI:** A Delhi court Wednesday allowed 98 Indonesians to walk free on payment of different fines, after they accepted mild charges under the plea bargain process, related to various violations including visa norms while attending Tablighi Jamaat congregation during the COVID-19 lockdown. Metropolitan Magistrate Saema Jameel allowed the Indonesians to walk free on payment of a fine of Rs 5,000 each, said advocates Fahim Khan and Ahmed Khan, appearing for them. Sub-divisional magistrate of Defence Colony, who was the complainant in the case, Assistant Commissioner of Police of Lajpat Nagar, Inspector of Nizamuddin said they have no objection to the plea bargain. Two Indonesians however did not plead guilty to the charges against them and claimed trial before the court. Under plea bargaining, the accused plead guilty to the offence praying for a lesser punishment. The Criminal Procedure of Code allows for plea bargaining in cases where the maximum punishment is 7-year imprisonment; offences don't affect the socio-economic conditions of the society and the offence is not committed against a woman or a child below 14 years. The foreigners were chargesheeted for attending the religious congregation at Nizamuddin Markaz event in the national capital by allegedly violating visa conditions, indulging in missionary activities illegally and violating government guidelines, issued in the wake of Covid-19 outbreak in the country. They were granted bail earlier by the court on a personal bond of Rs 10,000 each.



### NEWS MAKERS

## Ex-Indian Footballer Quits Politics Within 24 Hours Of Joining BJP

**KOLKATA:** A day after joining the BJP, former Indian footballer Mehtab Hossain on Wednesday said he was not associated with any political party. Mr Hossain, known as the "Midfield General" in the Kolkata Maidan, said it was a personal decision to quit politics as he was left shattered by the pain and feelings of his family and well-wishers over his sudden move to join a political party. The former East Bengal captain was handed the BJP flag by the party's state president Dilip Ghosh on Tuesday at its Muralidhar Sen Lane office amid chants of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai". "I am not associated with any political party from today. I apologise to all my well-wishers for this decision of mine," Mr Hossain said in a Facebook post.



"No one has forced me to take this decision. This is completely my personal decision to stay away from politics," he added. Mr Hossain, who has played 30 matches for India and scored two goals, said he joined politics as he wanted to reach more people. "In these trying times, I wanted to be with the people. Those helpless faces have taken away my sleep. That is why I suddenly joined politics.

"But the people for whom I wanted to serve as a politician said I should not have joined politics. They did not want to see me as a politician," he said. Mr Hossain, who quit football after playing for Mohunbagan in the 2018-19 season, said even his wife and children were hurt as he joined politics. "My family (wife) Moumita and children Zidan and Zavvi, none supported this sudden decision of mine. They too

were hurt by my decision like my friends and supporters. All of them are part of my family and I was left shattered looking at their sad faces. "The "Midfield General" title given to me by my fans is much closer to me than any other position. There is no hatred for anyone, no anger or animosity," he said. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alleged that Mr Hossain's U-turn was due to "threats and intimidation" from the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal. "This is the result of the TMC's threat-and-intimidation politics. We have seen such things before as well. But more the TMC indulges in such tricks, more it would lose public support," BJP secretary general Sayantan Basu said.

## Pilot Sends Notice To MLA Over Bribery Allegation; Demands Apology, Re 1

Sachin Pilot has demanded one rupee and a written apology from the Congress MLA who alleged that he was offered crores to switch to the BJP, a charge the dissident leader has described as a bunch of lies. Bari MLA Giriraj Singh Malinga had recently claimed he was made that offer at Pilot's home, by the now sacked deputy chief minister himself. Pilot, who is involved in a power tussle with Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, has served a notice to the MLA, giving him seven days to act on it. "We on behalf of our client call upon you to pay to our client a sum of Re 1 and to tender a written apology before the press for issuing a false and frivolous allegation, within seven days of the receipt of this



notice," his advocate wrote. The notice said legal pro-

ceedings will begin against the MLA if he fails to do so. "You have alleged that my client had offered you monies to switch to the BJP in the month of December 2019. It is surprising

**YOU HAVE ALLEGED THAT MY CLIENT HAD OFFERED you monies to switch to the BJP in the month of December 2019. It is surprising that you had remained silent for a period of over seven months and suddenly raked up the bunch of lies solely with a purpose to malign the impeccable reputation of my client,"** the notice said.

ceedings will begin against the MLA if he fails to do so. "You have alleged that my client had offered you monies to

switch to the BJP in the month of December 2019. It is surprising that you had remained silent for a period of over seven months and suddenly raked up the bunch of lies solely with a purpose to ma-

Malinga was one of six Bahujan Samaj Party MLAs who joined the Congress as a group after the 2018 assembly polls.