



Maximum : 31°C  
Minum : 18°C  
Humidity : 45%

SUNSET  
Today 07:37 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 05:37 AM

## News Digest

### Govt Employees To Get July Salary Before Eid

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday ordered release of salary to its employees in advance for the month of July in view of Eid-ul-Adha festival. Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Financial Commissioner, Finance Department, has ordered that salary bills for the month of July shall be presented in the treasuries on July 29 for the advance payment of salary on July 30. The order has been issued on the directions of Lieutenant Governor, Girish Chandra Murmu.

### DC's Get Rs 50 Cr Under SDRF

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday sanctioned an amount of Rs 50 crores to the Deputy Commissioners of the Union Territory to fight Covid-19 pandemic. The State Executive Committee (SEC), headed by Mr. B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, Chief Secretary, J&K, met here today and sanctioned an amount of Rs.50 crore under SDRF in favour of DCs of twenty districts of the UT, for further intensifying the COVID containment efforts as well as for meeting any eventuality arising on account of any notified disaster, an official spokesperson said. The meeting was attended by A. K. Mehta, Financial Commissioner. Finance: Pawan ● P-02

### Man Held After Bank 'Robbery' Attempt

Srinagar: Police on Friday claimed to have arrested a man who made an abortive bid to carry out a bank robbery in south Kashmir's Kulgam district. During the intervening night of July 23/24, a distress call was received by the police that a pistol-borne man was threatening private security guards to open the gate of J&K Bank at Yarpura, a police spokesperson said Friday. Acting swiftly, he said a police party rushed to the spot and found the alleged robber overpowered by the security guards and his toy pistol seized. "He has been arrested" ● P-02

### Biker Dies In Head-On Collision

Srinagar: A young motorcyclist was killed in a head-on collision with a car in central Kashmir's Budgam district, reports said Friday. 26-year-old Manzoor Ahmed Wani was critically injured after his bike collided with a car near Bugroo village of Khanshab on Thursday night, reports said. The injured youth was removed to Srinagar's SMHS hospital for treatment. However, he succumbed to his injuries. Meanwhile, police have registered a case and arrested the car driver. (KNT)

### Minor Drowns In Sopore Stream

Srinagar: A minor boy died of drowning on Friday in Sopore area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district. Four-year-old Faizan Ahmad Lone drowned while taking a bath in a stream in Panzpora area of Sopore, officials said. However, the locals present there retrieved the minor in an unconscious state and rushed him to the nearby hospital where doctors declared him dead. Meanwhile, a police team rushed to the spot and took cognizance of the incident. (KNO)

## No 4G Internet In Kashmir For Now, Centre Tells SC

Agencies

**NEW DELHI-** People in Jammu and Kashmir will not be getting 4G internet anytime soon as the central government has decided to continue the restrictions in the region.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has informed the Supreme Court that the special committee constituted to look into the issue of restoring 4G internet in Jammu and Kashmir decided against resuming the services.

In an affidavit filed earlier this week, in response to contempt petition against the Jammu and Kashmir administration, the MHA said: "Based on a considered and wide-ranging assessment of the prevailing situation in this sensitive region, the committee arrived at a decision that no further relaxation of restrictions on internet services, including 4G services, could be carried out at present.

The home ministry also said situation in the union territory will be reviewed by other



File Pic

competent authorities for the next two months. If there is improvement, appropriate action would accordingly be taken.

MHA's affidavit follows a direction given on 16 July by a Supreme Court bench, led by Justice N.V. Ramana, to answer allegations of contempt raised against it in a petition by the Foundation of Media Professionals (FMP).

The FMP petition had sought action against government officials for allegedly defying the top court's order to form the

special committee. The bench had then observed that the government should have put the committee's decision, to not resume 4G internet services in J&K, in the public domain.

The bench had noted the decision on the services should have been put in the public domain.

According to the affidavit, the special committee had held two meetings, before arriving at the conclusion to not ease restrictions on internet services in Jammu and Kashmir. ● PAGE 02

**A READING OF THIS REPORT WOULD ESTABLISH** beyond doubt that there is no merit whatsoever in the allegations levelled against the respondents in the contempt petition", added the affidavit.

### HC Notice To Govt On 'Detention' Of NC Leaders

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Friday issued a notice to government on separate petitions filed by National Conference Party President and Member of Parliament from Srinagar Dr Farooq Abdullah and Vice President Omar Abdullah, challenging the "unconstitutional and illegal house detention" of party senior leaders and functionaries.

While the duo had filed sixteen petitions, thirteen ● P-02

## Passengers Await Refund On Cancelled Flight Tickets

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** In a clear violation of Supreme Court orders and the directions of the Civil Aviation Ministry, the airline companies are not refunding the passengers for the flight tickets booked since March 25 when lockdown across India was imposed to combat coronavirus pandemic.

Tens of thousands of people have been left in lurch by airline companies like Go Air, Spice Jet, Vistara, Air India and Indigo after their flights got cancelled due to the lockdown.

The airlines have failed to refund for the cancelled flights to the passengers even after a gap of four months. Many passengers allege that



Image for representation

the airline companies were resorting to dilly-dallying tactics and mischief to grab their money.

"How can an airline withhold passengers' money unendingly and force them to purchase fresh tickets?" Zamrooda Dar, a flier told Kash-

mir Observer.

Dar along with three others had booked an Indigo flight from Bangalore to Srinagar for March 31. However, the flight was cancelled due to the lockdown. She later rescheduled the flight for May 7. ● PAGE 02

## 'Non-Eligible' For Bank Jobs, Delayed Results Trigger Shutdown In Ladakh

Auqib Javeed

**SRINAGAR:** On Friday, life got crippled in the cold desert, cut from the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir last summer, after Ladakhi youth observed a complete shutdown against their "non-eligibility" in the bank jobs.

The shutdown was observed nearly a year after the abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories—Jammu Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Ever since Ladakh became a new union territory of India, the protesting youth said they have been getting anxious about their job security.



Friday's shutdown was against the "non-eligibility" of Ladakhi youth in Jammu and Kashmir Bank Recruitment for Probationary Officer, Banking Associates and delaying in result of District Service Se-

lection Recruitment Board Kargil. The shutdown call was given by All India Kargil Ladakh Students Union (AIKLSU) and supported by various religious organizations, political parties, Trade and ● PAGE 02

### CJ Okays Internship For Law Students In HC

**SRINAGAR:** Chief Justice, Jammu and Kashmir High Court, Justice Gita Mittal on Friday approved the scheme for Internship and e-Internship in the J&K High Court.

Responding to the need to put in place a proper scheme in the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir for engagement of law students (unpaid), either on a regular basis and/or e-internships, who may be remotely located as well, the Chief Justice has conceptualized this scheme, an official spokesperson said.

Under the scheme, the Chief Justice and the Judges of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir can permit internships to law students, either regular or by way of e-internship.

Pertinently, prior to the approval of this scheme, ● P-02

## Azad Pitches Statehood Demand With PM, Calls For Polls In J&K

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad on Friday demanded restoration of statehood followed by assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir during a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"I raised issue of downgrading of security of politicians and demanded security, vehicles and accommodation of all political leaders irrespective of their party affiliations," Azad told a local news agency KNS.



"I also informed Prime Minister the need for political activities in J&K. The political activities pave way for development and people participation in development increases which is not case during Governor's Administration," he added. The former Chief Minister ● PAGE 02

## Pak Ceasefire Violations Up By 60% In 2020: J&K DGP

Agencies

**UDHAMPUR:** Jammu and Kashmir's Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbag Singh on Friday said that ceasefire violations committed by Pakistan in the Union Territory have increased by 50-60 per cent as compared to last year.

"There was an increase of 70 per cent in incidents of ceasefire violations in 2019 in comparison to 2018. If we compare with the last year, there is an increase of 50-60 per cent. Pakistan and its agencies aim to send more militants while they violate ceasefire," Singh told reporters.

He, however, contended that the number of militants has reduced in the area and that the police force is committed to reduc-

ing it even further.

"The number of militants has gone down and we are committed to reducing the numbers further. The border grid has strengthened from earlier times and working better than before due to which cases of infiltration have reduced. One of our police officers lost his life in Anantnag but we have to continually engage in the battle against militancy," Singh added.

Earlier on July 13, the DGP had informed that two militants from Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) were killed by the security forces in an encounter at Anantnag.

"Both militants were killed in the Anantnag encounter. They belonged to Jaish-e-Mohammed. As per preliminary identification, one was a local and ● PAGE 02

Swati Joshi

**W**hen Acacia flowers withered in Pulwama's Khrew area this summer, Bilal Ahmad Pir decided to migrate the bee colonies to north Kashmir's Bandipora district.

But the fear of COVID and the long process to get clearance has left the beekeeper stationed at Khrew with no nectar and pollen to feed the bees.

Since June 1, Pir is struggling to feed the bees, as no natural source of food is available for them.

"We are giving them sugar every week since the acacia flowers withered," says the apiarist.

Pir was lucky to reach Kashmir when Acacia flowers were blooming, unlike other apiarists who were stuck in other states due to the coronavirus lockdown.

From November to December

he stayed in Rajasthan and then he moved to Pathankot. When he started migrating to Kashmir in mid-April, he was faced with the heat of the lockdown.

"Only one person was allowed inside the vehicle," says Pir, adding, "how can one person handle all the colonies by himself?"

It was a tall task but he managed to reach Kashmir on time when Acacia flowers were blossoming.

The apiarists migrate to different places with their bee colonies in search of blossoms and to provide a suitable environment for the bees to thrive.

The migratory beekeepers traditionally move outside Jammu and Kashmir to states like Rajasthan and Punjab, in December every year and return in March-April to



Jammu before moving to Kashmir in the last week of April.

**No Honey Takers**

The demand is less this year as

compared to last year, complains Pir who has been working as an apiarist

for 15 years.

While Pir was able to sell honey to locals in Khrew, he incurred a huge loss in Pampore, where he did not get any customers this time.

"When the market is closed, how will we earn?" questions the apiarist.

Like Pir, Muhammad Yaseen Bhat, a beekeeper based at Kathsoo, Anantnag, has incurred huge losses during the lockdown.

"I used to sell 1-kg honey at Rs. 500 and earn around 4-5 lacs per year," Bhat says, "but this year there is no customer."

While the quantity of honey produced by Bhat is better than the previous year but with no customers, his business has come to a standstill.

Jammu and Kashmir constitute one of the most important beekeeping zones. It provides suitable cli-

matic conditions and exceptionally long season during which pollen and nectar is available in one or the other parts of the region.

Migration is a very important aspect of commercial beekeeping. According to a study done by researchers, "the migratory system of bee-keeping is more economical than the stationary bee-keeping system as it not only helps in boosting income of the individual beekeeper but also helps in increasing productivity of cross-pollinated crops and generates employment."

According to the National Bee Board report 2019, J&K has 22,340 bee colonies. The lockdown has affected thousands of people who have been linked to the honey trade directly or indirectly.

**Lockdown Sting**

"Almost 2 out of 5 beekeepers either ended up with no bees or had to auction them at 1/5th of their market price because they ● PAGE 02



# Flood Fury In Assam, Bihar; Nearly 37 Lakh Affected In Total

**NEW DELHI:** There was no respite from the devastating floods in Assam and Bihar on Friday with three more deaths reported from the northeastern state, and a total of around 37 lakh people severely affected so far.

In Assam, nearly 27.80 lakh people across 26 districts have been affected by the deluge. The deaths were reported from the Barpeta, Kokrajhar and Morigaon districts. The death toll due to floods and landslides this year has risen to 122.

Nearly a million people have been affected in Bihar, where the Gandakriver breached two embankments at three places, leaving several areas inundated. There was no report of loss of life so far.

According to the state disaster management department's bulletin, a total of 9.60 lakh people have been affected by floodwaters in 529 panchayats of 74 blocks in 10 districts.

President Ram NathKovind spoke to Assam Chief Minister SarbanandaSonowal and expressed solidarity with the affected people of the state. He flagged off nine trucks carrying Red Cross relief supplies for the flood and

COVID-19 affected people of Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh from the RashtrapatiBhavan.

In Arunachal Pradesh, incessant rainfall over the past couple of days has snapped road connectivity to several districts, besides resulting in a flood-like situation, as per official reports.

Landslides triggered by continuous rains have completely destroyed important road links in various parts of West Siang district, one such report said.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said fairly widespread rainfall with isolated heavy to very heavy falls are likely in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar during July 26-28, and in Punjab and Haryana during July 27-29.

The intensity and distribution of rainfall is very likely to increase over sub-Himalyan West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh with occurrence of widespread rainfall activity along with isolated heavy to extremely heavy rainfall during July 26-29, it said.

In Bihar, the Gandak river turned turbulent following dis-

charge of 4,36,500 lakh cusecs of water from Valmikinagar barrage on July 21 due to heavy rainfall on July 19, 20 and 21 in the catchment area of Nepal.

The Gandak river water has also overtopped National Highway 28 in Gopalganj due to the breaches, disrupting vehicular movement between Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh and the districts of Muzaffarpur, East Champaran, WestChamparan in Bihar.

Thirteen teams of the NDRF and eight of the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) are involved in the rescue operations as part of which 93,891 people have been evacuated from the marooned areas so far.

The districts affected by the floods are West Champaran, East Champaran, Sitamarhi, Sheohar, Supaul, Kishanganj, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Gopalganj, and Khagaria.

Several rivers such as Bagmati, BurhiGandak, Kamlabalan, Lalbakeya, Adhwara, Khiroir and Mahananda are flowing above the danger level while the Ganga river is flowing below the danger mark at all locations, including two places at Gandhi ghat and

Dighaghat in Patna.

In Assam, Governor JagdishMukhi visited the flood-hit Chirang district to oversee the relief and rehabilitation measures.

The Brahmaputra is flowing above the danger mark at Guwahati, Dhubri and Goalpara cities, besides at Nimatighat in Jorhat and Tezpur in Sonitpur districts.

The deluge has caused death of 125 different animals, while 153 others were rescued in Kaziranga National Park, a bulletin said quoting DFO of the Eastern Assam Wildlife Division.

In the northern part of the country, partly cloudy skies kept the mercury in check in Delhi, and only sporadic rains are predicted in the next two to three days.

The weather office said widespread rains are likely in northwest India, including Delhi-NCR, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

On Friday, the Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative figures for the city, recorded a maximum temperature of 35.4 degrees Celsius, a notch more than normal.

Humidity level shot up to 94 per cent.

According to IMD data, the Safdarjung Observatory has recorded 225 mm rainfall in July so far, which is 44 per cent more than the normal of 156.4 mm.

Several parts of Uttar Pradesh received light to moderate rains as well.

Dharohra (Kheri) recorded 5 cm of rainfall; Hata (Kushinagar), Mawana( Meerut) and Shardanagar ( Kheri) 4 cm each; Bah, Dhampur ( Bijnore) 3 cm each while Dudhi (Sonbhadra), Elgin Bridge (Barabanki) and Turtipar 2 cm each, according to the weather office in Lucknow.

In Punjab and Haryana, the maximum temperatures hovered close to normal limits and the weather remained dry.

Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states, recorded a maximum of 34.9 degrees Celsius.

In Haryana, Hisar recorded a high of 34.9 degrees Celsius, two notches below the normal. Nar-naul recorded a high of 33.2 degrees Celsius, down three notches, while Ambala recorded a high of 35 degrees Celsius.

## DGCA Asks Indian Airlines To Inspect Their B737 Aircraft Following FAA Directive

**NEW DELHI:** Aviation regulator DGCA has directed Indian airlines to inspect the Boeing B737 aircraft in their fleet after the US aviation regulator FAA issued an emergency directive on this matter on Friday, officials said.

Three Indian airlines -- SpiceJet, Air India Express and Vistara -- have B737 aircraft in their fleet.

The emergency directive was "prompted by four single-engine shutdowns" that happened due to compromised air check valves in the engines of the certain B737 aircraft, said the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in its emergency directive.

The FAA asked the airlines to inspect their B737 aircraft that have not flown for seven days or more and the ones that have operated not more than 10 flights after return to service.

A senior DGCA official said the Indian regulator has asked Indian carriers SpiceJet, Vistara and Air India Express to inspect their B737 aircraft as directed by the FAA.

Another Directorate General of Civil Aviation official said inspection of some of the Indian aircraft has already been done

by their owner airlines.

Boeing, in a statement, said, "Out of an abundance of caution, Boeing has advised operators of 737 Classic airplanes (series -300 to -500) and Next-Generation 737s (series -600 to -900) to inspect an engine valve for corrosion. With airplanes being stored or used infrequently due to lower demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, the valve can be more susceptible to corrosion."

Boeing is providing inspection and replacement information to fleet owners if they find an issue, it added.

SpiceJet spokesperson said the FAA airworthiness directive (AD) applies to a small number of 737s in its fleet that have not yet completed 10 cycles on return of aircraft to service.

"They are being inspected. The majority of our planes have completed 10 cycles already and are not affected by this AD," the SpiceJet spokesperson added.

On this matter, Vistara spokesperson said, "Vistara is in compliance of the directive. The inspection of the engines of all six of our B737 aircraft has already been completed."

## No 4G Internet In Kashmir...

The affidavit added that a separate government notification was not required since the committee was formed following court's directive.

On May 15, the first meeting was held, four days after the Apex court ruling to form a panel to review internet restrictions. In this meeting, suggestions put forward by the petitioners were discussed and also the prevailing security situation along with the impact of internet restrictions in the region were looked into. No conclusion was reached during the meeting and it was decide to gather more inputs in connection with present situation on the ground.

The committee met again on June 10 to analyse the fresh inputs. "A thorough and comprehensive and consideration of all facets of the matter, including the feasibility of alternatives suggested by the petitioners as well as the recent occurrence of terrorism-related incidents in the region, was carried out" said the affidavit.

A report to this effect was duly submitted by special committee to the government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. This report comprises of details of the entire exercise carried out by the special committee, as well as considerations which weighted with its members. This report was also placed before the top court.

"A reading of this report would establish beyond doubt that there is no merit whatsoever in the allegations levelled against the respondents in the contempt petition", added the affidavit.

The top court on May 11, had the directed the government to constitute a three-member high-powered committee to examine the issue involved in restoring 4G internet services in J&K. This committee was headed by MHA Secretary, and also constituted the secretary of the Department of Telecom (DOT) and chief secretary of J&K.

The committee was asked to decide on the need to continue the restriction of mobile internet speed to only 2G bandwidth in the region.

The MHA said the Apex court order was complied "faithfully" by officials concerned of the Centre and J&K governments. The affidavit said that the contentions regarding the alleged failure to constitute this special committee through a notification or order of the government are wholly wrong and misconceived.

## Covid-19 Reaches 300 Mark...

one is from Ganderbal in central Kashmir. A 44-year-old male from Karan Bagh Satwari and 58-year-old IRP Sub-Inspector from Jammu also succumbed to the infection today, officials said.

In Srinagar, a 75-year-old man from Saderbal, a 65-year-old man from Maharaj Gunj, a 70-year-old male from Rainwari, a 75-year-old woman from Peerbagh and a 60-year-old male patient from Khanyar died of coronavirus.

An official from SKIMS said that a patient from Saderbal was admitted on July 08 with multiple ailments and he died on Friday morning.

Sources at SMHS said that a 65-year-old patient from Maharaj Gung, presently living at Kraltang Rajouri Kadal who was admitted on July 20 with bilateral Pneumonia and was tested positive on 22 July died on Friday.

They said that a patient from Sopore who was admitted on July 21 with bilateral Pneumonia died at SMHS on Thursday and was tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday.

They further added that a 60-year-old man from Khanyar who was admitted on 21 July with community acquired pneumonia died last evening and was tested positive on Friday.

The health officials said that a 60-year old lady from Dab Ganderbal who was admitted with hypertension and pneumonia on 18 July died on Friday evening.

"A 50 year old lady from Tangmarj Baramulla who was admitted on 23 July with multiple ailments died on Friday and was tested positive for covid-19 after her death," They added.

A health official at GMC Anantnag said that a 65-year-old woman from Malaknag Anantnag who was admitted on July 22 died at GMC Anantnag on Friday morning.

He said the patient was suffering from hypertension, pneumonia and other ailments.

He further added that an 80 year old lady from Sarnal Anantnag who was admitted on July 19 with bilateral pneumonia, hypertension died at GMC on Friday.

Officials from GMC Jammu said that a 58-year-old IRP Sub Inspector from Gandhi Nagar who was admitted on July 22 and tested positive for the virus, breathed his last at GMC on Friday.

He further added that a 44-year-old shopkeeper who was shifted from CD hospital to isolation ward of GMC Jammu on 23 July with fever, cough, haemoptysis and respiratory distress died on Friday at around 6:30 pm.

An official at SKIMS Bemina (JVC) said that a 75-year-old lady from Peerbagh Srinagar who was admitted on July 14 after testing positive for COVID-19 died on Friday.

An official from CD hospital said that a 70-year old man from Rainawari who was tested positive for COVID-19, died hours after he was admitted at CD hospital on Friday.

With twelve more deaths, the death toll due to COVID-19 has reached to 300 in J&K including 278 from Kashmir division and 22 from Jammu division--(with KNO inputs)

## 43 CRPF Men Among 353...

While Kashmir Valley reported 224 new Covid-19 cases, 129 persons were confirmed positive for coronavirus in Jammu division, officials said Friday.

Srinagar, the capital city reported 40 new cases, while Baramulla had 2, Kulgam 83, Shopian 59, Pulwama 4 and Bandipora had 36 fresh cases. Among those confirmed Covid-19 positive today are at least 43 CRPF men, eight minors, four pregnant women, three from Central Jail Srinagar and a Bank Official.

In Kashmir, Srinagar tops the list with 3648 cases followed by Baramulla with 1740, Kulgam 1437, Shopian 1352, Anantnag 1131, Pulwama 1132, Kupwara 1008, Budgam 984, Bandipora 561, and Ganderbal 309.

In Jammu division, Jammu district has 757 cases, Rajouri 508, Ramban 463, Kathua 433, Udhampur 386, Samba 362, Doda 210, Poonch 166, Reasi 99, and Kishtwar 96.

Meanwhile, 508 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and discharged from various hospitals including 35 from Jammu Division and 473 from Kashmir Division.

## 3,000 More Beds Added...

Jammu and Kashmir, especially in the summer capital here, have spiked in the past three weeks.

The move comes amid apprehensions in certain quarters about the shortage of beds for COVID-19 infected patients in the city.

"While our institutional efforts are on, uninterrupted since March to contain Covid spread, for backup we've created 3,000 bed capacity, adding 2,000 more soon in #Srinagar. Made good use of lockdown time for these fully equipped facilities. Please rest assured on this front," district development commissioner, Srinagar, Shahid Choudhary said on Twitter.

## HC Notice To Govt On ...

came up for hearing today before separate benches presided by Justice Rajesh Bindal, Justice Tashi Rabstan and Justice Sindhu Sharma respectively.

The petitions in which notices were issued include that of Abdul Rahim Rather, Aga Syed Rohullah, Mubarak Gul and Basharat Bukhari, Shamima Firdous, M Shafi Uri, Mohammad Shafi Shah, Abdul Majid Larmi, Nasir Sogami, Chowdhry Mohammad Ramzan, Bashir Veeri, Mohammad Irfan Shah and Saif Din Bhat.

The NC leaders have filed petitions for the release of Ali Mohammad Sagar, Abdul Rahim Rather, Nasir Aslam Wani, Aga Syed Mehmood, Mohammad Khalil Bandh, Irfan Shah and Sahmeema Firdous from illegal house detention while Omar Abdullah is challenging the detention of Mohammad Shafi Uri, Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, Chaudhary Mohammad Ramzaan, Mubarak Gul, Dr Bashir Veeri, Abdul Majeed Larmi, Basharat Bukhari, Saifudin Bhat Shutrur, Mohammad Shafi through their counsel Adv Sharif Reyaz.

"The decision to move to the court was taken as a last resort to provide relief to various party members who have continuously been under house arrest or were kept under house detention after being shifted there from detention centers," a party spokesman had said earlier.

"Shifting of the detainees from detention centers to their homes only characterized revolving-door detention practice. Quashing of the PSA on Party General Secretary Haji Ali Muhammad Sagar underscored the indefensible nature of all detentions in the court of law, leading us to believe that the administration will release all the detainees in the absence of any convincing reason behind it. Unfortunately that was not to be. The house detentions without any administrative orders are unlawful, undermining due respect to human rights and individual liberty," the party had said.

"We are hopeful that the court will come to the rescue of our colleagues, who have been suffering for no fault ever since the abrogation of provisions of Art 370, Art 35 A on Aug 05 2019. This was the only recourse left to us. We are of the firm belief that the court will uphold the civil liberties of our colleagues most of whom have not been keeping well." It added. (GNS)

## Passengers Await Refund...

"That flight too was cancelled. We again rescheduled the flight for June 10 and that too was cancelled."

Dar later booked an Indigo flight from Bengaluru to Delhi on May 27. However, that flight again got cancelled. Since airlines could not reschedule her flight on next date she was left with no choice but to purchase a new ticket for June 10 against a hefty sum. The flight finally took off bringing her home along with three of her co-passengers.

However all her pleas for refund of repeatedly cancelled previous flights has met with negative response.

"I was left in the lurch after Indigo airlines informed me that my money was put in the 'credit shell'. Meaning I have to travel again on the same flight within the validity period of the credit voucher to utilise the amount," she said.

According to the sources, airlines created over Rs 2000 crore credit shell as the flights remained grounded due to the lockdown. Initially, the passengers were offered rescheduled tickets

on the dates of their convenience.

However, after Supreme Court stepped in and asked the Civil Aviation Ministry and airlines to collectively work out the modalities for ways to refund flight tickets, the passengers heaved a sigh of relief.

But airline companies failed to provide a convincing answer to the agrieved passengers. Thousands of passengers continue to wait for their money to be disbursed by the airlines, OTP Consolidators, like Yatra, Makemytrip, Easemytrip Goibibo and travel agents.

Like Zamrooda, Saika, another passenger had booked a Vistara flight from Delhi to Srinagar on March 29 to return home. However, her flight too was cancelled. The flight which she rescheduled 15 days later also did not take off.

"We were not given any refund. We were informed by the call centre of the airliner that only a meagre amount will be refunded. Finally, I took a train to reach home," she said, adding my money stays with the airlines with little hope of early refund.

However, many officials of the private airlines claim that most of the refund to the passengers has been made either directly to the passengers, or online portals and travel agents through which they had made the bookings.

"We have refunded over 60 percent passengers after their flights got cancelled. The remaining will too be refunded soon," an official of a private airliner told Kashmir Observer. However he did not want to be identified.

The refund, he claimed, was made through travel agents, online portals and OTP Consolidators.

India imposed the first phase of lockdown from March 25 to April 14 to curb the spread of coronavirus. The second phase of lockdown was from April 15 to May 3. During which all domestic and international commercial passenger flights suspended their operations.

On July 8 the Supreme Court sought response from the Centre in a fresh petition seeking full refund on tickets for flights cancelled due to the lockdown. The petition filed by the Air Passengers Association of India will be heard along with the already pending petition filed by Pravasi Legal Cell.

## Azad Pitches Statehood...

further said that he also demanded the augmentation of capabilities and capacities for effective fight against Covi-19 in J&K.

The meeting was held regarding Kashmir specific issues only and lasted for over an hour.

## Pak Ceasefire Violations...

another was Pakistani. Arms and ammunition have also been recovered," he had said.

## CJ Okays Internship...

there was no such scheme for engagement of law Interns in the High Court of J&K.

"To be eligible for applying as an Intern, the candidate must be pursuing LL.B course from a recognized Law College/ University established by law in India and should be eligible for enrolment as an Advocate with the Bar Council of India or State Bar Councils on conclusion of the LL.B course and must have a good working knowledge of computer," the official spokesperson said.

As per the scheme, he said Law Universities/ College(s) have been authorized to make recommendation(s) for internship of a candidate. He further added that a candidate can also apply directly either to the Registrar General or to the Judge of the High Court through his/her private secretary with whom the applicant seeks to intern.

"The scheme further envisages that the Law Intern will be issued an experience certificate by the Registrar General on successful completion of internship with the approval of the Judge with whom the intern was attached," the official spokesperson said.

"With the approval of the scheme, the law students studying in various colleges/universities/law Schools and other institutions shall get an opportunity to further hone their legal skills and understand both breadth and depth of legal knowledge," he added.

## ‘Non-Eligible’ for Bank Jobs,...

Transport Unions. Talking to Kashmir Observer, one of the executive members of the students union said youth of Ladakh couldn't take the official apathy towards their careers anymore, and were forced to resort to the shutdown.

"We had applied for jobs in J&K Bank but we were shocked to know that we are not eligible," Mohammad Hussnain, executive member of students association told Kashmir Observer.

On July 8, Hussnain, a J&K Bank aspirant, received an email from the J&K Bank reading: 'Dear Candidate, kindly, note that as per the notification, candidates of UT of Ladakh are not eligible for this recruitment process including those who have already applied from Ladakh District's. Hence ignore the email/sms communication inadvertently sent for editing the details. We regret inconvenience caused. The Jammu and Kashmir Bank. Ltd.'



# MHRD announces relaxation in admission criteria for NITs, CFTIs

## Decides to do away with required 75 per cent marks

Srinagar: Following the ongoing situation of COVID-19, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has canceled the required pass percentage of 75 per cent for the admission in NITs and Centrally Funded Technical Institutions (CFTI).

MHRD said that the announcement of the relaxation in the admission criteria for NITs was taken in view of the current circumstances by doing away with the requirement of minimum 75 per cent marks in Class XII Board exams.

According to the news agency KNO, Union HRD minister, Ramesh Pokhriyal on his Twitter handle said, "For admissions in NIT's and other Centrally Funded Technical Institutions, apart from qualifying JEE Main, the eligibility is to

secure a minimum of 75 percent marks in XII Board exams or rank among the top 20 percentile in their qualifying examinations."

Pokhriyal said that due to prevailing circumstances, Central Seat Allocation Board (CSAB) has decided to relax the eligibility criterion for admissions to NITs and other Centrally Funded Technical Institutions.

"JEE Main 2020 qualified candidates will now only need to obtain a passing certificate in class XII examination irrespective of the marks obtained," he tweeted.

According to the prescribed guidelines, a 12th standard pass-out student needs to have secured at least 75 percent or should have figured in the top 20



## J&K MPs in RS to complete their term in February 2021

Srinagar: Jammu & Kashmir's four Rajya Sabha members will complete their six-year term in February next year.

The incumbent MPs in Upper House of the Parliament will complete their six-year term between February 10 to 15 next year.

While Fayaz Ahmad Mir (PDP) and Shamsheer Singh Manhas (BJP) will complete their innings on February 10, the six-year term of leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad (Congress) and Nazir Ahmad Laway (PDP) will end on February 15.

Nearly a month before formation of the PDP-BJP government in 2015, Mir, Laway and Manhas managed to win after tacit understanding between the two parties. Azad emerged victorious due to support from National Conference and independent MLAs.

With J&K presently without a Legislative Assembly, the UT could remain without representation in Rajya Sabha in absence of

an electoral college for these seats.

"MLAs of J&K UT Assembly constitute electoral college for these seats. There seems no chance of holding Assembly elections in J&K in near future due to the ongoing delimitation process. So these seats could remain vacant for some time," an official said.

It is worthwhile to mention here that J&K's representation in Rajya Sabha as well as the remaining term of its incumbent MPs was protected by The Jammu & Kashmir Re-Organisation Act enacted by the Parliament in August last year.

In March this year, the Centre had defined the Electoral College for J&K's Rajya Sabha seats by making amendments in the Representation of Peoples Act-1951.

According to the amendments notified in Jammu & Kashmir Re-Organization (adaptation of central laws) Order-2020, MLAs of J&K UT Legislative Assembly will constitute Electoral College for these seats- (KNO)

## 4 habitations of Shadipora declared Red Zones



BANDIPORA, JULY 24: Bandipora Administration on Friday declared four habitations of Shadipora village in Bandipora district as 'Red-Zones' and their surrounding localities as 'Buffer Zones', after more persons tested positive to COVID-19 virus in these villages.

Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Dr Owais Ahmed issued the orders declaring New Colony, Dacca Mohalla, Main Market and Harkar Mohalla as Red Zones.

The adjacent villages including Trigam, Gund-i-Khalil and Shahtulpura have been

declared as buffer zones and restrictions have been imposed in these areas to restrict the movement of the people.

The DC said that it has become imperative to initiate restrictive measures under section 144 CrPC for immediate prevention of danger to human life, health and safety.

According to the directions passed by the district administration, there shall be no movement of any individual for any reason whatsoever permitted in and out of these villages however for any medical emergency, individuals can contact on round the clock Control Room on 01957-225024 or 01957-225323."

Mohammad Yousuf, Lecturer HSS Gadkhud shall be the Duty Magistrate for the area while Nisar Ahmad, lecturer, HSS Shadipora shall be administrator for these Red Zones for ensuring lock down restrictions and imposition of fines on COVID-19 SOP violators.

### Mission Mode Project

## AC Approves Time Bound Program

Srinagar, July 24: The Administrative Council (AC), which met here under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor, G C Murmu, approved Labour & Employment Department's Mission Mode Project (MMP) for registration of Building & Other Construction (BOC) Workers. The registration process will be completed by 31st October, 2020.

The Mission Mode Project eases out the registration process by doing away with the physical presence of workers for registration and renewals by using latest technology for online registration through web portal / mobile app, call centre, toll free helpline numbers and help desks.

Consequent upon registration/renewal, the benefits under the Building & Other Construction Workers, Act, 1996 will be extended to the workers in terms of universal social security and welfare schemes by optimally utilizing cess fund.

MMP will also include profiling of all workers who returned to Jammu & Kashmir during the lockdown, for skill mapping to ensure their gainful employment through local jobs.

The registration under MMP will be carried out by Assistant Labour Commissioners under the supervision of District Development Commissioners of concerned districts who have been appointed as District Nodal Officers for the purpose.

## Chief Secretary reviews Independence Day preparations

SRINAGAR, JULY 24: The Chief Secretary, B V R Subrahmanyam today chaired a review meeting to take stock of preparations for celebration of Independence Day-2020, with this year's theme of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Administrative Secretaries of Departments of Health, School Education, Power Development, General Administration, Divisional Commissioners of Jammu and Kashmir, Additional Director General of Police, Secretary, Planning Development & Monitoring Department, Youth Services & Sports, and Culture along-

with HODs of concerned departments participated in the meeting.

During the meeting it was informed that as per the guidance of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India and keeping in view the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, this year's celebration will intrinsically include preventive measures such as maintaining social distance, wearing masks, proper sanitization and allowing only limited congregations. As such, it was decided that participation from students and vulnerable persons will be restricted, besides introducing technological in-

terventions toward e-celebrations.

Chief Secretary while emphasizing the importance of maintaining social distance impressed upon the concerned departments to screen recorded cultural performances through specially installed LED screens / projectors, at all historic places of Jammu & Kashmir, simultaneously.

He directed School Education and Higher Education departments to organise online quiz, poetry, essay, and similar competitions and encourage students for participation through webinars.

## I&C Deptt to establish 37 Industrial Estates across J&K

SRINAGAR, JULY 24: The Administrative Council (AC), which met here under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor, G C Murmu, approved transfer of State land measuring 9654 Kanal 01 Marla in favour of Industries and Commerce Department for establishing Industrial Estates at 37 identified locations in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Consequently, the identified areas where the new Industrial Estates are being proposed to be established, will witness a boost in the local economy, generation of employment opportunities and overall development of the area.

### From KO Archives

## Cong unlikely to extend Mufti's tenure

Observer News Service

NEW DELHI - As the date draws nearer for Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed to hand over the baton to a leader from alliance partner Congress, the party today sought to put an end to all speculation by indicating that the PDP leader would not be asked to continue.

Virtually putting at rest speculation that Congress might not be willing to take over the reins of the government after three years in November as per an agreement between the two coalition partners, a senior leader said the party would suffer if did it.

"It will not go down well in the party," the leader close to J&K affairs said when asked whether the Congress would let Sayeed continue for remaining three years of six year term as has been suggested by some reports.

When the two parties forged post-poll alliance to form government in November 2002, they had agreed that one party would lead the coalition for three years and the other for rest of the term.

Congress, with 20 MLAs in the 87-member Assembly, had then allowed junior partner PDP, with 17 MLAs, to lead the alliance in the first phase. The Deputy Chief Minister was from Congress for the first three years and from PDP for the remaining tenure.

Although some sections in the Congress are believed to be inclined to allow Sayeed to continue, the state unit of the Congress strongly disfavours any reunification move.

The state unit feels it was the much-awaited opportunity for the Congress to have its own Chief Minister and it should not be allowed to fizzle away.

On the question of whether the Congress had an appropriate leader to become Chief Minister, the party leader said there would be no problem on this count. The Congress leader, however dismissed possibility of Mohammad Shafi Qureshi or Saifuddin Soz be given the charge as had been reported in some sections of media.

The disadvantage with Soz's candidature is that he has joined the Congress only three years back after being expelled from National Conference. Qureshi also has been out of the party for a long time.

(Kashmir Observer, 25 July, 2005)

از نیات ملگم : اجلاس منساجیل احمد لون ایزکیکٹو مجنریٹ درجہ اول ۔  
مضون : درخواست منجاب محمد یوسف میر ولد ثاولہ میر سائڈ قبول مقام تحصیل آلوہ ضلع نانڈی پورہ بابت حصول  
EWS certificate یکن فرزند میر عاقب یوسف ۔  
اشہار آگاہی ہر خاص وعام ۔  
معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں پٹواوی حلقہ سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی ہے۔ بروئے رپورٹ پٹواری حلقہ سائل توکل مقام  
کا سکونت دار ہے۔ سائل کا کنبہ ۵ افراد پر مشتمل ہے اور کنبہ کی ماہوار آمدنی زرعی وغیرہ ۳۵۰۰/= تک ہے۔ سائل  
کے پاس ۵ ایکڑ سے کم رقبہ ہے۔ سائل کا مکان و زمین ۱۴۳۹sq ft رقبہ میں ہے جس میں سائل کا مکان ۳۱x۳۲  
رقبہ پر مشتمل ہے۔ سائل کی بی زمرے SC/ST/OBC/RBA سے تعلق نہیں رکھتا ہے۔  
لہذا ہر خاص وعام کو بذریعہ اشہار مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ اگر کسی بھی شخص کو مطلوبہ سبز حاصل کرنے میں کسی بھی قسم کا  
اعتزاز ہے تو وہ اپنا عز اندر سات یوم دفتر ہاذا میں پیش کریں۔ باذ معیار گزرنے پر کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

نائب تحصیلدار ملگم  
تحصیل آلوہ  
ضلع بانڈی پورہ

آج شدت سے دل چاہ رہا ہے  
بند آنکھیں کھولوں تو سامنے تم ہو

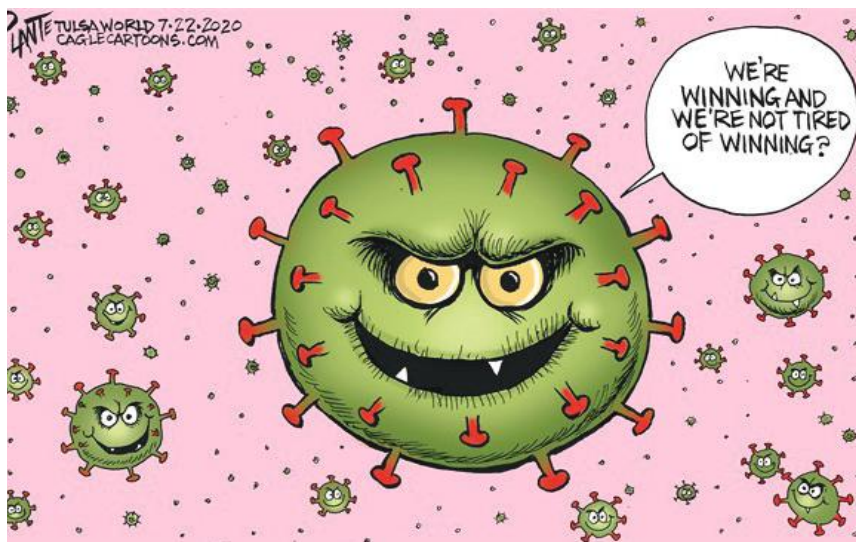
آج سے 23 سال قبل ہمارا نور چشم بشیر احمد بابا ساکنہ خانیاں سرینگر  
ہم سے ہمیشہ کیلئے جدا ہو کر چلا گیا تھا۔  
آج ان کی 23 ویں برسی پر ہم انہیں اشکبار آنکھوں سے یاد کرتے  
ہیں۔ اللہ تعالیٰ ان کے روح کو جنت میں اعلیٰ مقام عطا کرے۔  
بذریعہ: سوگواراں



KASHMIR  
OBSERVER

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

NO HOLDS BARRED



It took the Supreme Court five months to rule on this petition. All the while, the blockade continued unabated. And when the decision did come, on January 10, 2020, it did little to mitigate the damage

# Are People In J&K Citizens Or Subjects?

It's nearly a year since they have had 4G Internet and the Supreme Court has done little to enforce its writ

SUHRITH PARTHASARATHY  
GAUTAM BHATIA

The Internet is often spoken about as a great equaliser. Its evolution was meant to herald a more equal society. But the ravages wrought by COVID-19 have taught us that the web is also capable of creating new and more insidious barriers to basic goods. Across the world, despite the structural hurdles to access, the Internet has become indispensable to human freedom. School children take their lessons online, businesses cannot work without accessing the web, our courts have moved virtual, and even our leisure is inextricably bound by the system.

What this has also meant is that those without access to the Internet have suffered more than others. The pandemic has shown us a smidgen of just how reprehensible the digital divide is. There was a report, for example, of a student taking her own life, because of a lack of access to online school. Therefore, a staunching of the gateways to the web invariably strikes at the dignity of individuals.

A complete ban, and a challenge

Yet, the government feels no compunction in doing precisely just this in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Since August 4 last year, people in the region have not had access to 4G Internet. The authorities see the restriction, which was placed in the lead-up to the dilution of Article 370 of the Constitution, as unassailable. But by all means — even by the Supreme Court's own concession — a complete ban of this kind is disproportionate. It impinges on the liberty of an entire populace. Yet the Court has done little to enforce its writ, to do what the Constitution demands of it: act as an independent check on majoritarian power.

To begin with, this move to restrict 4G Internet in the region was part of an array of measures limiting communications and movement. These moves were made ostensibly out of a concern for national security, with the aim of thwarting terrorism. The blockade though, imposed as it was indiscriminately on the whole region, was challenged in the Supreme Court, in *Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India* (2020).

The petitioner there made two primary arguments. First, she pointed out that the government had refused to make public its orders blocking the Internet. This, she said, violated a basic tenet of the rule of law: that people have a right to know why



their freedoms have been constrained. Second — and more substantively — she argued that empirical evidence demonstrated that there was no link between shutting down the Internet and the state's objective of protecting security. Indeed, available materials pointed the other way: that the Internet was a valuable tool that could be used to counter the spread of incendiary rumours and fake news. Moreover, the government had at its disposal less restrictive options, such as the blacklisting of specific websites and targeted surveillance measures. It is unclear if these alternatives were even considered. Thus, the petitioner claimed that there was no justification for a blanket Internet shutdown that impacted a territory of eight million people, a vast majority of whom had nothing to do with terrorism.

It took the Supreme Court five months to rule on this petition. All the while, the blockade continued unabated. And when the decision did come, on January 10, 2020, it did little to mitigate the damage. The Court no doubt held that the ability to access the web had an instrumental bearing on a number of other fundamental rights, including the rights to free speech and freedom of business; and that therefore any limitation placed on the web must be necessary and proportionate to the goal that the State seeks to

achieve. This meant that the government now had to produce the orders on the basis of which it was shutting down the Internet. But promising as this might have looked at first blush, the Court did not hold the government accountable. It simply didn't test the blockade on the touchstone of the very constitutional principles that it said were applicable. Instead, it ordered a weekly review by a committee set up under the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services Rules, 2017.

The aftermath of the judgment brought about some alleviative measures. The prohibitory orders were published, although a perusal of those showed that the reasons remained brief and cryptic (and sometimes contradictory). In time, a few websites, through a process of "whitelisting", were made available for access. But the rest of the Internet was still out of bounds. Eventually, a few months after the verdict, 2G Internet alone was restored. But even the onset of the pandemic, which has shown us just how instrumental the Internet is in accessing critical services, didn't lead to a lifting of the ban on 4G.

In response, a second challenge was mounted in the Supreme Court, this time by the Foundation for Media Professionals. This petition pointed out that it had been eight months since the web was restricted

in J&K, and now the combination of the pandemic and a lockdown had made Internet deprivation even more unconscionable. Specific evidence was placed before the Court to show how 4G Internet was indispensable for adequate access to education, medicine, and to the courts, and how — without it — the people of J&K were placed at a significant disadvantage compared to the rest of the country.

The Supreme Court gave a ruling on May 11. Once again, it dodged the issue before it. Quite opposed to deciding on the validity of the government's actions and its impact on rights, the Court wound up creating a new three-member special committee headed by the Union Home Secretary — an exercise wholly outside the legal framework — to take stock of things. The irony here speaks for itself. The executive that was responsible for restricting access to the Internet in the first place was now tasked with reviewing its own actions.

But there's more irony to come. More than two months have passed since the judgment, but, at least ostensibly, no committee has been formed. And 4G Internet remains banned. Early in June, the petitioner again moved the Court, this time seeking to hold the government in contempt. After more than a month, the petition finally came up for hearing. In it, the government claimed that it had, in fact, constituted a committee whose decision, it said, it was ready to deliver in a "sealed envelope" to the Court. But even assuming this exercise has indeed been carried out, it still runs in the teeth of the judgment in *Anuradha Bhasin*, which demands a publication of orders restricting Internet access.

## Transformation of basic rights

By the time the case comes up for hearing again, the government is expected to file an affidavit explaining itself. But what the Court surely must now see is that the Internet restrictions in J&K are fast approaching their first anniversary. Not only has its intervention thus far been enervated, in that it has failed to answer the constitutional questions at stake, but even the few directions that it has issued have not been complied with. In the process, basic rights have been transformed into government largesse. The question that the Court must now ask itself is, therefore, this: are the people of J&K subjects to be ruled over, or are they citizens who possess rights against the State?

*The Hindu*

# The World Is Changing

The country now finds itself on a treacherous new stage. "America First" won't cut it.

JOSEF JOFFE

But China, the No. 2 power, is arming and extending its reach around the globe to try to dethrone the United States. An economic waif, nuclear Russia is only a semi-great. Still, President Vladimir Putin is superbly playing a weak hand in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

A renowned scholar of American diplomacy once slapped his 4-year-old in a fit. Coolly, she responded, "You shouldn't do this." "Why not?" he asked. "You don't have that many friends."

That's the best take on President Trump's foreign policy, especially when it comes to America's oldest friends. Mr. Trump's favorite target is Angela Merkel, Germany's eternal chancellor. But he is an equal-opportunity ruffian, who has bullied the leaders of Britain, France and more.

He has routinely clobbered them with threats of tariffs and sanctions. As if running a protection racket, he has told "obsolete" NATO: Pay up, or we pull out. Now he is withdrawing 9,500 American troops from Germany, the linchpin of the American-built European order. Possibly next in line is South Korea, where the United States expended over 36,000 lives to repel Mao Zedong's armies.

In his latest assault on Europe, Mr. Trump is going after Russian gas and Chinese mobile technology. To be fair, he has a point. The Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, slated to pump around two trillion cubic feet annually into Germany, will ensure Russian energy dominance for decades. And Huawei's bargain-priced 5G equipment might well be a Trojan horse that could enable the Chinese state to extract vital intelligence and intellectual property.

Nor is Mr. Trump the first Europe-basher. All American presidents have tried to strong-arm the Europeans over trade and defense. And after the Cold War, Europeans have been much better at slashing military spending than boosting it to counter Russian rearmament. President Barack Obama also inveighed against "free riders."

But there is a blatant difference between now and then. Before, there was never any doubt that the United States and its friends would hang together. Now this his-

toric relationship is at a tipping point. For all of Europe's backsliding, the main blame must lie with Mr. Trump.

The United States now finds itself on a treacherous new stage: Call it the "two-and-a-half-power world." America it is still on top. But China, the No. 2 power, is arming and extending its reach around the globe to try to dethrone the United States. An economic waif, nuclear Russia is only a semi-great. Still, President Vladimir Putin is superbly playing a weak hand in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

America should get with the program. To stay No. 1, it should follow four rules.

Rule 1: Keep your friends and recruit more. They may be free riders, as smaller players always are, but they add muscle, influence and cachet. "America First" does not. Bullies steal your lunch; they are never elected class president.

Mr. Trump confuses coercion with clout. For him, "Make America Great Again" does not mean leading, but exploiting the show. It isn't "win-win," but "I win if you lose." Europeans want Nord Stream 2? Then forget about doing business in America. If Berlin goes with Huawei, say goodbye to the U.S. intelligence-sharing that has foiled many a terror plot in Germany. This is not smart diplomacy.

Rule 2: Keep and increase authority by providing essential services like common security, free trade and navigation — and by upholding a rules-based order that favors mutually beneficial cooperation.

"America First" means sacrificing the future for short-term gain. The history of sanctions, Mr. Trump's favorite sport after golf, offers a nasty lesson. Victims may buckle, but they will soon sever the tie that binds. Sanctions devalue themselves by forcing nations into self-sufficiency. Ciao, America.

Rule 3: Promote your own interests by taking care of others'. What's good for them is good for America because a

supply-side foreign policy legitimizes U.S. leadership.

Yet Mr. Trump sees multilateralism as a plot against America. "America Alone" is worse. Though hungry for gas and 5G, the Europeans are a second-order headache compared with Chinese and Russian expansionism. In this two-and-a-half-power world, plus lesser upstarts like Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Turkey and Kim Jong-un's North Korea, America needs more, not fewer, friends.

Finally, rule 4: Always harness the largest-possible coalition. Coax, don't compel. Return to the diplomacy America has so wisely practiced in the past.

Remind Ms. Merkel that European 5G suppliers — Nokia and Ericsson — can also deliver. The somewhat higher price will be mitigated by the gain in common security. And if Ms. Merkel panics over losing the lucrative Chinese market to Beijing's retaliation? Then assure her that America is not out to destroy Euro-Chinese trade as such but to keep strategic industries out of President Xi Jinping's hands. America's allies will nod in assent.

## So, what are the chances?

"Europe should view Trump as an anomaly," John Bolton, Mr. Trump's defrocked national security adviser, told the German magazine *Der Spiegel* last week. "It is not going to be that hard to get back to normal." Amen.

"Home alone" has not been the American way, certainly not since 1945, when the United States took on responsibility for the liberal world order. Even Mr. Trump's base would rather be at the helm than hunker down in the hold.

*Josef Joffe is a member of the editorial council of the German weekly newspaper Die Zeit and a fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution*



# ‘Unknown’ Hall of Fame: A Collective of Creative Writers of Kashmir

SANIKA ATHAVALÉ

WEARING a light cotton shirt tucked into beige trousers, Ghulam Nabi Bhat made it to the interview seven minutes before schedule on a balmy summer day in Srinagar. He led us into a small but populated room which seemed like a cave, hidden from the pandemonium outside on the main road. Many heads turned upon his arrival, some knees straightened to greet him, and a few lips curved on seeing him.

Here, he was known as Shahid: the writer of compelling short stories, the teller of heartrending accounts, and a man whose legacy of work commanded respect.

As he walked and navigated through the room by aisles made by the chairs’ arrangement, his comrades, dressed in formals, gripping sheets of paper, pointed him to an empty seat and commenced their meeting immediately.

From stories of valiant heroes to those of poor peasants who spoke truth to power, the people in the room recited from their notes, reimagined snippets of history that touched every theme imaginable to a mind bred in existing state of affairs.

Unknown to many and unfairly unsung, the people at the meeting were the collective of the creative writers of Kashmir.

As the participants of the gathering, they took their turns to speak. Adil Ashraf’s ghazals left listeners in an intellectual maze of his own construct; Noor Shah’s stories on sexuality strangely stirred passions for freedom; Ruksana Jabeen’s poetry stunned everyone into an introspective silence; Mushtaq’s polemical tales evoked forbidden patriotism.

Albeit fictitious characters spoke to them their reality, they were engaged in the noble service of chronicling the conflict with ingenuity. Unaware and uninspired by the profit of fame, these champions of language, who haven’t found a haven of acknowledgment for their art, have been immortalising Kashmir’s literary struggle since they first picked up a pen.

A writer doesn’t belong to one community. We are everyone and everyone is us,” professed Dr Nazir Mushtaq, a 70-year-old physician from Srinagar.

He has been writing short stories in Koshur since 1964 and while his writings are soaked with Kashmiri pride, he believes that it is his job to paint a picture for his people to interpret.

The doctor is one among the plethora of writers and poets who have been burning the midnight oil, putting together gut-wrenching stories about the external influences on their homeland.

His principle of the de-communalisation of writing circles is shared by almost everyone who call themselves a member of that group.

“Please note that almost all of us are descendants of Kashmiri Pandits who embraced Islam willfully,” stressed Rafiq Raaz, a Sahitya Akademi award winner. “The sooner this is accepted and normalised, the faster divisive regimes will cease to exist.”

“We are being suffocated in the mind, body, and soul, and no human should be made to feel like this”

During his interview, Raaz reminisced how his father had fought the Pakistani Afridis in 1947 with a wooden club. Expressing his views on the politics of life in the valley, he said that his home needed space to breathe.

“Armed soldiers with loaded guns have no business in civilian areas. Their presence is unwarranted and claustrophobic. We are being suffocated in the mind, body, and soul, and no human should be made to feel like this,” Raaz remarked.

Inside their meeting room, they cheered for each other with thunderous ‘encores’. Some of these artists used the stage to perform their poetry of romanticism but most climbed up to the podium to voice their very intimate feelings about their community’s actuality.

Glutted with socio-economic issues that are not entirely of her own making, modern-day Kashmir kneels at crossroads of a territorial conflict. Craftspeople are fighting a world with no regard for handmade mastery, the back of the young ones are heavy with Ph.D. certificates in a region where their years of scholarship have no yield, some are trying to save their houses from the metaphorical and literal fire of the camo, and amidst this chaos, the writers of Kashmir, whose narratives have had the might of visualising emancipation beyond its reverberating sound, are reducing in number.

Adil Ashraf, an employee in the examination department of the University of Kashmir, opined that ‘Danga Shayaari’ has acted like a cancer to intellectualism amongst Kashmiris.

Gentle in appearance and tone, Adil is a powerhouse of fiery metaphors and a patron of the ghazal form of poetry. He is known to effortlessly inject soul-stirring pathos into his couplets, layering them with unassuming characters who eventually become heavy puzzles to solve. His ghazals are filled with tropes suggestive of the atrocities that shroud his society.

Even Rafiq Raaz claimed to be an opposer of the vintage, vociferous demand echoing in the region for decades. He says that his opinions on the conflict are always wrapped in spiritualistic metaphors.

“We are all the children of Allah and this land belongs to Him,” he strongly stated. “We are merely tenants who will cease to exist one day.” A god-fearing man by his own admission, Raaz strictly adheres to the tenants of his religion and is downcast by the meaning of ‘jihad’ propelled by mainstream media today.

“People aren’t supposed to be scared, especially writers,” Ghulam Nabi ‘Shahid’, who prides himself in being an unbiased writer, stated gloomily. “But the unfortunate reality is that there is no place we can claim as a sanctuary to protect ourselves from the aftermath of our honesty.”

Shahid—the witness—has been ardently wishing for a safe retreat where people like him can unmask bigotry and coercion with their artistic prowess.

Although consciously away from mainstream discourse, these writers live with the fear of being targeted. The constant harassment faced by Kashmiri journalists and the unquestioned trend of finishing off activists is not unknown to them.

Speaking about the horrors of a ‘lurking gun’, Dr Mushtaq said, “The term ‘unknown gunmen’ haunts me. Who are these people and how are we able to see such rampant abuse of the term for every murder? We need to call this out and it is my duty to ensure that resistance isn’t a tunnel-visioned in my writing but well rounded.”

The assassination of eminent writers and journalists such as Lassa Kaul, Ghulam Nabi Mahajan, Mushtaq Ali, Altaf Faktoo, Shaban Wakil and Shujaat Bukhari, by the forces beyond their control, have given these creative writers a real reason to fear for their lives.

Historically, every rising has seen writers and poets silently work towards unifying people for a common cause. The Indian freedom struggle, the American civil rights movement, the Russian revolution, and the anti-apartheid movement gave birth to an excess of literary artists who are now placed in the upper echelons of the world’s collection of literature. Their activism not only united people at that time but also commemorated the culture that existed then. Their memoirs of unjust and tyrannical eras act as important sources of information and are a matter of patriotic pride.

However, when the dust settles on this valley and it’s time to reclaim the nights, how will this community’s ethos be reminisced or celebrated?

Defiant literature which is meant to capture the essence of a struggle, principles of a movement, and form a unique singular identity for



Kashmir’s fiction guild is a parallel universe frequented by a bunch of wordsmiths lacking good publishers and wide readership. But that doesn’t stop them from meeting and fuelling the literary mood in the valley.

the people it represents, has barely any names that a Kashmiri commoner remembers, the writers fear.

We are being choked by two different hands simultaneously “We are being choked by two different hands simultaneously,” Shahid, an Urdu-Koshur writer, continued. “Because nobody here, civilians included, tolerates criticism.”

Lamenting over the migration of Kashmiri Pandits, he said that he began writing in 1969, after his best friend Dilip Kumar Nehru was killed in a police action.

Everything I do is for his memory but I give him no written acknowledgment because that can be a bone of contention as well,” Shahid said morosely. Not belonging to the ethnic majority but an integral part of the community, Deepak Kanwal, Sohanlal Kaul, and Khalid Hussain, are names celebrated amongst the tiny Koshur and Urdu literati of Kashmir. Based out of the valley, they have made vital contributions to its treasury of literature.

An author of many eminent Koshur books, Sohanlal Kaul left Srinagar in 1990. “Every drama or short story I write is about the conflict,” Kaul said. “If not directly mentioned, there is always an undertone.”

Using the 2014 floods as an allegory, Kaul wrote ‘Yotam Saier Paeth Gow’ (Until everything has drowned), which evokes the image of suffering at the hands of administrative apathy. ‘Abysmal’, ‘Haehshi Kath’ (One and the same), ‘Panien Panien Gunah’ (The result of our sins) are some of his other works.

The man rejects the common rhetoric steeped in whataboutery on the Pandit migration and expresses solidarity with the rare narrative that might even offend the migrated.

We were not taken away and neither were we thrown out. There was a frenzy..

“We were not taken away and neither were we thrown out,” Kaul said. “There was a frenzy that caused the community to fear its existence and compelled them to leave when it wasn’t entirely necessary.”

People must also remember, he continued, that it’s not just the Pandit community that is living in exile but the intelligentsia as well.

“Outspoken and free-thinking Kashmiris are migrating out of the valley because of the grim atmosphere here,” he added.

The collective believes that films and books on the conflict, which are imperative value-adds to the conversation, exist only in the realms of cinema and foreign lands. Best-selling books on Kashmir, which have made it in name and recognition, are largely diasporic. The native voice is hushed, they opine.

Rafiq Raaz said that freedom of speech wasn’t a rarity in the past.

His eyes gleam as he remembers Lal Ded’s verses. “She blatantly spoke against injustice and social evils. Her endeavours had really hurt the reputation of the kingdom, but she thrived. She even spoke against idolatry but her memory is still revered amongst the Hindus. However, today, if anyone dares to raise their voices against the establishment, their families may not find them the next day,” he grieved.

Best-selling books on Kashmir, which have made it in name and recognition, are largely diasporic. The native voice is hushed.

Even Adil Ashraf grumbled over the problems his circle has faced due to their work that is considered ‘unfavourable’ to the current nature of upheaval.

“It has led to the complete ignorance of our opinions,” he asserted. “There are very few takers for the ideology we preach and that is reflected in the difficulties we face during publishing our work.”

However, refusal by publishers, limited distribution, scanty wages, and poor readership isn’t new to this brigade.

“We mostly publish our books by our own means and travel one city to another trying to get it sold,” Dr Mushtaq said. “That way we can ensure ourselves of some profit because if given to the publishers we end up with no returns.”

Facing the same difficulty, Muhammad Sayeed Tramboo started publishing a monthly collection of poems and short stories called ‘Nagina’, which is Urdu for ‘gem’.

It’s been 52 years since he conceived the magazine and he has never failed to print a new edition each month. The owner of Shehanshah Palace, Sayeed Tramboo is an undeterred creative writer who uses historic parallels to explain the issues troubling the valley.

Complete with political, religious, and social symbolism, Sayeed Tramboo takes around four to six months to complete a story. He believes that the youth today is ill-informed and quick to react.

“Resistance isn’t easy and neither is everyone capable of it,” he said. “We need an overhaul in our education system because youngsters today have no grip on Kashmir’s history.”

Khalid Hussain, on the other hand, believes that the Kashmiri creative power must not be underestimated.

Ever since Akbar’s deceitful annexation of Kashmir in the 16th century, Kashmiris have opposed the incumbent rule, he said.

“Islam came into Kashmir during the 14th century and has flour-

ished ever since,” Hussain said. “Now, we need the world to know that the Mughals and Afghans, who were also Muslims, faced unabated opposition from the people. Even the non-Muslim Sikhs and Dogras were resisted unanimously by the Hindus and Muslims of the valley. This needs to be reiterated so that internal and external lobbies don’t communalise our strife for self-determination.”

Hussain made an important note as he detailed how Kashmiris have traditionally been a peaceful and patient kind of people.

We need the world to know that the Mughals and Afghans, who were also Muslims, faced unabated opposition from the people of Kashmir.

“Butchers were a taboo amongst Kashmiri Muslims,” he explained. “But look at the present situation: a community that feared to slaughter their meat is running into the jaws of death voluntarily. Surely, something is amiss. They have been pushed beyond the figurative wall.”

Small-time columnist and short-story writer Shazada Bismil also resonated with this sentiment.

Bismil is a ‘proud Kashmiri nationalist’ who expressed deep concerns over the “de-humanization” of the place.

“The government has erred and so have we,” he said admittedly, “but I wish to see Kashmir as an independent state just as it had been in history.” Most of these creative writers are men whose literary gaze misses the cause of women. Luckily for Kashmir, there are a few women wordsmiths giving their writing a holistic approach.

One such fiery woman, Ruksana Jabeen was born in 1955, in Downtown Srinagar. She is a poet fighting the patriarchal belittling of her gender and the violent dehumanisation of her people.

As a young woman growing up in ‘ultra-conservative’ times, her parents didn’t allow her to perform her poetry in public. She made excuses throughout her adolescence to escape into these writing circles, where she built her repertoire.

In 1983, due to her intelligent charm and command over Koshur and Urdu, she secured the position of a Program Executor in Radio Kashmir. “It was a job that allowed me to be creative and kept my poetic side alive,” Jabeen said. “Nevertheless, my parents were headstrong about not letting me work there. I had to tell a few white lies and mould facts so that I could be the person I wanted.”

Over the years her parents opened their minds and accepted their daughter for who she was. She even married by of her own choice, a rare phenomenon in her days, and eventually split from her husband who began developing reservations over her strong-willed poetry.

A community that feared to slaughter their meat is running into the jaws of death voluntarily. Surely, something is amiss.

“Let someone prove that I’m wrong,” she said. “My conscience is clear because I speak the truth. I am a devout Muslim, a woman by nature’s will, and Allah knows my struggle. That’s all that matters to me.”

Her colleague, Noor Shah, born in 1938, has manifested ‘the woman’ beyond her traditional gender-defined roles in his stories.

As an ally to the feminists of the valley, Shah combines the themes of romance and sensuality in his writings. He has published his stories since 1960 using the pseudonym ‘Shahzada Shireen’.

But it was only after 1990, Shah departed from his usual genre to write ‘Kashmir Kahaani’, his fictitious novel inspired by the conflict.

In a parallel universe, and in an amicable atmosphere for grooming literature in Kashmir, these writers could have been counted amongst the ranks of Darwish, Kafka, Yeats, or Tolstoy.

The ‘J&K Fiction Writers’ Guild’, as they call themselves, make it a point to meet regularly and plan their rendezvous at least once in two weeks to keep their art alive.

None of them are full-time writers due to the bad economy of the region, but between weekdays and weekends, they manage to immerse themselves in the sketches of their words.

They hope that their literary portraits aid in ending the strife without further tarnishing the dignity of Kashmir but poor reading habits amongst Kashmiris and the shrinking use of Koshur in books is another matter of concern.

However, they are determined to leave a legacy of strong literary works for their people.

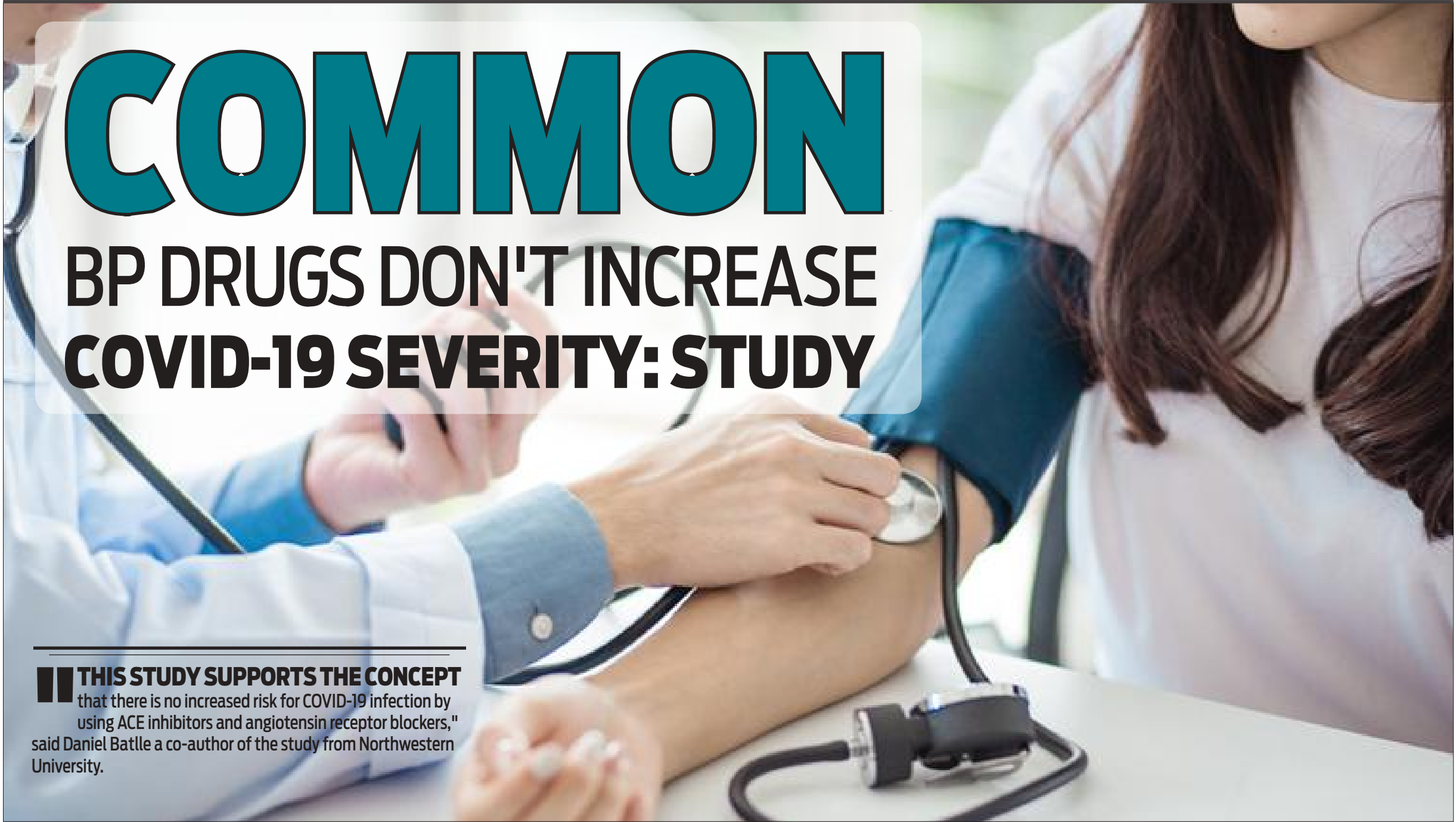
When our generation of writers departs from this world, our children will know that not everyone was a turncoat in Kashmir.

“We need more gutsy youthful writers to join our cause, only then we’ll be a force to reckon with,” Khalid Hussain said.

“Right now, we’re just a handful but it doesn’t dissuade us from writing. When our generation of writers departs from this world, our children will know that not everyone was a turncoat in Kashmir.”

As the meeting approached its end, the last performer withdrew from the microphone as his performance had concluded and led the artists into the garden outside their creative cave, to allow their freshly invigorated minds to rest with a cup of hot tea and a traditional slice of warm cake.





# COMMON BP DRUGS DON'T INCREASE COVID-19 SEVERITY: STUDY

**THIS STUDY SUPPORTS THE CONCEPT** that there is no increased risk for COVID-19 infection by using ACE inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers," said Daniel Batlle a co-author of the study from Northwestern University.

Press Trust Of India

A class of drugs that is commonly used to treat patients with hypertension, and heart disease does not increase the risk of developing severe COVID-19 as previously feared, according to a study in mice.

Scientists, including those from Northwestern University in the US, said there have been wide-spread concerns that the drugs -- ACE inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers (ARB) -- might cause an increase in the human cell surface receptor protein ACE2 which the novel coronavirus uses to enter and infect cells.

Earlier studies had cautioned that this class of drugs could possibly increase the risk for the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, infection and elevate COVID-19 severity. However, the new findings, published in the Journal of the American Society of Nephrology, revealed a decrease, not an increase, in ACE2 in mice kidney membranes, and no change in lung membranes.

According to the researchers, the study is the first to examine the effect of ACE2 and ARBs in the lungs -- considered to be the main targets for SARS-CoV-2 entry into the body -- and supports the safety of these drugs in the face of the pandemic.

"This study supports the concept that there is no increased risk for COVID-19 infection by using ACE inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers," said Daniel Batlle a co-author of the study from Northwestern University. The scientists said the ACE inhibitors and ARBs are a category of drugs called RAS blockers. They said these drugs, by different mechanisms, block the actions of a small protein that causes narrowing of blood vessels and fluid retention by the kidneys, which result in increased blood pressure.

According to the study, the drugs help blood vessels relax or expand, and decrease fluid retention, both of which lower blood pressure. In the current research, the scientists measured ACE2 in isolated kidney and lung membranes of mice that were treated with either captopril -- a widely used ACE inhibitor -- or telmisartan, an ARB which is also widely prescribed.

Since the recognition that ACE2 is the main receptor used by the virus to enter host cells, the scientists said there have been multiple studies discussing the potential risk for susceptibility and worse clinical course of COVID-19 in patients treated with these drugs. They said much of the speculation comes from previous animal studies where some RAS blockers were reported to increase the production of ACE2 in the blood vessel cells of the heart and the kidney.

## Coronavirus: Gender Inequality Increases In Media During Pandemic

Agencies

Gender inequalities in newsrooms have increased during the coronavirus pandemic according to a survey published Thursday by the International Federation of Journalists.

According to the survey of 558 journalists in 52 countries, the COVID-19 crisis had a negative impact on women's salaries as well as on their work responsibilities, career advancement and private life.

As a result, three quarters of the respondents saw their stress level increase while half of the women quizzed acknowledged that their health has been affected, mainly by sleeping problems.

"Media and unions must do much more to tackle gender inequalities and take into account the conciliation of work and private life in these turbulent times," said Maria Angeles Samperio, the IFJ Gender Council



Chair. "It is time to set up proper teleworking policies, ensure support is provided to women as family carers and provide decent work and equal pay."

The Brussels-based IFJ urged media organizations and trade unions across the globe to make gender equality their priority and improve women's working conditions.

"Such support includes providing data on women in the profession, mainstreaming gender in all activities, offering training, putting women

in leading roles in unions' own structures, setting up women committees and gender policies and negotiating better deals for women with media managers," IFJ General Secretary Anthony Bellanger said. "It is urgent to change the narrative for a strong gender new normal."

The IFJ published a study earlier this year that showed deteriorated working conditions of news reporters of both sexes, amid job losses and attacks on media freedom during the pandemic.

## 'Happy Outlook Can Do Wonders In Your Physical Well-Being'

Agencies

Good health and a happy outlook in life, though independent goals, can go hand-in-hand making a real impact on your overall physical well-being.

"Our research is one of the first randomised controlled trials to suggest that increasing the psychological well-being even of generally healthy adults can have benefits to their physical health," said Kostadin Kushlev, a professor in Georgetown University's Department of Psychology and one of the authors of the paper.

Over the course of six months, Kushlev and his colleagues at the University of Virginia and the University of British Columbia examined how improving the subjective well-being of people who were not hospitalised or otherwise undergoing medical treatment affected their physical health.

A group of 155 adults between the ages of 25 and 75 were

randomly assigned either to a wait-list control condition or a 12-week positive psychological intervention that addressed three different sources of happiness: "Core Self, Experiential Self and Social Self." The results of the new research were published in the journal Psychological Science.

The first three weeks of the program focused on the Core Self, helping individuals identify their personal values, strengths and goals. The next five weeks focused on the Experiential Self, covering emotion regulation and mindfulness. This phase also gave participants tools to identify maladaptive patterns of thinking. The final four weeks of the program addressed the Social Self, teaching techniques to cultivate gratitude, foster positive social interactions and engage more with their community.

The program, called Enduring Happiness and Continued Self-Enhancement (ENHANCE), consisted of weekly modules either led by a



trained clinician or completed individually using a customised online platform. None of the modules focused on promoting physical health or health behaviours, such as sleep, exercise or diet.

Each module featured an hour-long lesson with information and exercises; a weekly writing assignment, such as journaling; and an active behavioural component, such as guided meditation.

"All of the activities were evidence-based tools to increase subjective well-being," Kushlev noted.

When the program concluded, the participants were given individual evaluations and recommen-

dations, of which modules would be most effective at improving their happiness in the long term. Three months after the conclusion of the trial, researchers followed up with the participants to evaluate their well-being and health.

Participants who received the intervention reported increasing levels of subjective well-being over the course of the 12-week program. They also reported fewer sick days than control participants throughout the program and three months after it ended.

The online mode of administering the program was shown to be as effective as the in-person mode led by trained facilitators.

## Here's How Neurons Reshape Inside Body Fat To Boost Its Calorie-Burning Capacity

Agencies

Many previous research papers have suggested that one can lose fat by eating less or moving more. However, despite studying it for decades, the biology underlying this equation remains mysterious.

What really ignites the breakdown of stored fat molecules are nerves embedded in the fat tissue, and a new study now reveals that these fat-burning neurons have previously unrecognized powers. If they receive the right signal, they have an astonishing capacity to grow. That signal is the hormone leptin, which is released by the fat cells themselves.

In experiments with mice, results of which published in the journal Nature, the researchers found that the normally bushy

network of neural fibers within fat tissue shrinks in the absence of leptin and grows back when the hormone is given as a drug. These changes were shown to influence the animals' ability to burn the energy stored in fat.

"While the architecture of the nervous system can change significantly as a young animal develops, we did not expect to find this profound level of neural plasticity in an adult," said Jeffrey M. Friedman, a molecular geneticist at The Rockefeller University.

If confirmed in humans, the findings could advance research on obesity and related diseases, and potentially open the door to developing new treatments that target neurons in fat.

The team began by looking at what happens to mice who do not produce leptin on their own,

and how they respond when treated with it.

Discovered in Friedman's lab in 1994, the hormone relays signals between fat deposits and the brain, allowing the nervous system to curb appetite and boost energy expenditure to regulate body weight. When mice are genetically engineered to stop producing leptin, they grow three times heavier than normal mice. They eat more, move less, and cannot survive in what should be tolerable cold because their body can't properly utilize fat to generate heat.

Give these mice a dose of leptin, however, and they quickly begin to eat less and move more. But when the researchers treated them longer, for two weeks, more profound changes occurred: the animals started to break down white fat, which



stores unused calories, at normal levels, and regained the ability to use another form of fat tissue, brown fat, to generate heat.

It was this slower change that interested the research team,

including the first authors of the Nature paper, Putianqi Wang, a graduate student in the lab, and Ken H. Loh, a postdoctoral fellow. They suspected that changes in neurons outside the brain--those that extend into

fat--might explain why this part of the response to leptin took some time.

Using an imaging technique developed by the lab of Rockefeller's Paul Cohen to visualize nerves inside fat, the researchers traced leptin's effects on the fat-embedded neurons up to the brain's hypothalamus region. From here, they found, leptin's growth-promoting message travels via the spinal cord back to the neurons in fat.

"This work provides the first example of how leptin can regulate the presence of neurons in fat, both white and brown," added Cohen.

Through this pathway, fat appears to be telling the brain how much innervation it needs to function properly. "Fat is indirectly controlling its own innervation and thus function,"

Friedman says. "It is an exquisite feedback loop."

Future research will analyze the role of this pathway in human obesity and possibly provide a novel approach for therapy. Most obese people produce high levels of leptin, and show a diminished response to hormone injections, suggesting that their brain is resistant to the hormone. Thus, bypassing leptin resistance could have a therapeutic benefit for these patients.

"In the new study we see that similar to animals lacking leptin, obese, leptin-resistant animals also show reduced-fat innervation. So we speculate that directly activating the nerves that innervate fat and restoring a normal ability to use stored fat could provide a possible new avenue for treating obesity," Friedman said.



## Trump Has Just 100 Days Left To Save His Presidency

### Agencies

Washington: Donald Trump has 100 days from Sunday to save his presidency, while America tries to avoid a collective nervous breakdown ahead of one of the most divisive, tension-filled elections in US history.

Coronavirus is ravaging the economy, adding steadily to a death toll already over 140,000, while undermining national trust in government institutions at every level.

Add explosive protests against racism and police brutality, leftist-led riots, flourishing right-wing conspiracy theories, and the specter of Russian meddling – and you have a country more on edge than at any time since the cataclysmic 1960s.

At the center is real estate magnate and surprise 2016 presidential victor Trump, a man who boasts he never tires of “winning” yet faces possible humiliation on November 3.

His Democratic challenger Joe Biden, whom Trump derides as “weak,” “sleepy” and mentally incompetent, leads

by double digits in some polls.

Trump is 74, Biden 77 – a match-up of two elderly white men seemingly out of step with 2020’s uprisings against racism and sexism.

One is a billionaire born into extreme privilege, while the other, with three decades in the Senate and two terms as vice president under Barack Obama, is the epitome of the professional politician.

Yet Trump vs Biden will deliver all the upheaval a confused and bitter US electorate can stomach.

Trump’s pitch boils down to claiming Biden will have Americans “cowering to radical left-wing mobs.”

And Biden, no less apocalyptic, says he’s fighting for “the soul of America.”

### Down but not out

On Thursday, Trump cancelled the traditional, big Republican convention planned in Florida next month due to coronavirus concerns. The Democrats scrapped their version weeks ago.

## US Accuses Russia Of Test-Firing Anti-Satellite Weapon In Space

### Agencies

Washington: The United States accused Russia of test-firing an anti-satellite weapon in space, warning that the threat against Washington’s systems was “real, serious and increasing.”

US Space Command said it “has evidence” that Moscow “conducted a non-destructive test of a space-based anti-satellite weapon” on July 15.

“Last week’s test is another example that the threats to US and Allied space systems are real, serious and increasing,” the Thursday statement continued.

“Clearly this is unacceptable,” tweeted US nuclear disarmament negotiator Marshall Billingslea, adding that it would be a “major issue”

said the test consisted of Russia’s satellite called Cosmos 2543 injecting an object into orbit.

Russian state media has said that Cosmos-2543 had been deployed by another satellite, Cosmos-2542, which was launched on 25 of November 2019 by the Russian military.

The defense ministry said the satellite is meant to “monitor the condition of Russian satellites,” but state daily Rosiyskaya Gazeta said it has the ability to “get information from somebody else’s satellites.”

The system is the same one that Space Command raised concerns about earlier this year, when it maneuvered near a US government satellite, said General Jay Raymond, head of



discussed next week in Vienna, where he is in talks on a successor to the New START treaty.

The treaty caps the nuclear warheads of the US and Russia – the two Cold War-era superpowers.

Commenting Friday on the accusations, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia supports “full demilitarisation of space and not basing any type of weapons in space.”

The US Space Command

US Space Command.

“This is further evidence of Russia’s continuing efforts to develop and test space-based systems, and consistent with the Kremlin’s published military doctrine to employ weapons that hold US and allied space assets at risk,” Raymond said in a statement.

It is the latest example of Russian satellites behaving in a manner “inconsistent with their stated mission,” the Space Command statement added.



## China Retaliates Over Houston, Orders Closure Of US Consulate In Chengdu

### Agencies

Beijing, China: China on Friday ordered the US consulate in the southwestern city of Chengdu to close in retaliation for one of its missions in the United States being shuttered, capping a furious week of Cold War-style diplomacy.

The announcement of the closure followed a torrent of warnings from top American officials about the “tyranny” of China, and Chinese nationals being indicted in the United States on various charges.

Ordering the Chengdu consulate to cease operation was a “legitimate and necessary response to the unreasonable measures by the United States”, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

“The current situation in China-US relations is not what China desires to see, and the US is responsible for all this.”

The ministry emphasised the closure was directly in response to the United States on Tuesday ordering the Chinese consulate in Houston to shut down.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said this week the Hous-

ton mission was a “hub of spying and intellectual property theft”.

Republican Senator Marco Rubio called the consulate the “central node of the Communist Party’s vast network of spies and influence operations in the United States”.

China described the allegations as “malicious slander”.

The order on Houston came a day after the US Justice Department unveiled the indictment of two Chinese nationals for allegedly hacking hundreds of companies and attempting to steal coronavirus vaccine research.

The Justice Department then announced Thursday indictments of four Chinese researchers it said lied about their ties to the People’s Liberation Army, with one escaping arrest by taking refuge in China’s San Francisco consulate.

### ‘New tyranny’

The two nations have increasingly tussled over a plethora of issues, including China’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic and its efforts to quash a democracy movement in Hong Kong.

But the US administration has ratcheted up the rhetoric and taken increasingly strong actions in recent weeks, which many observers have said is part of President Donald Trump’s strategy to win votes in the November elections.

“Today, China is increasingly authoritarian at home, and more aggressive in its hostility to freedom everywhere else,” Pompeo, who has helped to lead Trump’s offensive, said on Thursday.

“The free world must triumph over this new tyranny.”

The US has an embassy in Beijing as well as five consulates in mainland China, plus one in Hong Kong.

The Chengdu consulate, established in 1985, has been at the centre of past controversy.

In 2013, China demanded the US provide an explanation for a spying programme after news reports said a top-secret map leaked by fugitive intelligence analyst Edward Snowden showed surveillance facilities at Americans embassies and consulates worldwide – with the Chengdu consulate among them.

## Erdogan joins thousands to pray for first time at Istanbul’s Hagia Sophia

### Agencies

ISTANBUL : Turkey’s President Tayyip Erdogan joined huge crowds on Friday for the first prayers at Hagia Sophia in nine decades, sealing his ambition to restore Muslim worship at an ancient site long revered in both Christianity and Islam.

After the call to prayer rang out from four minarets surrounding the mosque, whose rose-pink walls and huge grey dome have dominated Istanbul since Christian Byzantine times, hundreds knelt in prayer inside the building.

Outside, tens of thousands more prayed in a public square and on sidewalks, squeezing into spaces between cars or in cafes, joining a ceremony which many saw as righting a historic mistake when the mosque was converted to a museum in 1934 by modern Turkey’s secularist founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Hagia Sophia was the largest cathedral in the world for 900 years until its capture by Ottoman Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror in 1453, after which it was one of

Islam’s most exalted mosques for nearly another 500 years.

“This is the opening of a place of worship that was conquered by the right of the sword by the holy conqueror,” said worshipper Latif Ozer, 42. “This is a source of great pride for us, great excitement.”

That excitement has not been universally shared. Church leaders and some Western countries have sharply criticised Turkey’s move, saying the shift to exclusive Muslim worship at Hagia Sophia risks deepening religious divisions.

Pope Francis said he was deeply pained by the decision, which came after a Turkish court annulled Hagia Sophia’s status as a museum two weeks ago. Erdogan immediately issued a decree converting it once again to a mosque.

In Greece, church bells tolled in mourning on Friday. Most Greeks consider the monument central to their Orthodox Christian religion. Greek criticism of the conversion has been scathing, underscoring the countries’ tense relations.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis called Turkey a “troublemaker”, and the Hagia

Sophia conversion an “affront to civilization of the 21st century”.

Turkey’s President Tayyip Erdogan attends Friday prayers at Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque, for the first time after it was once again declared a mosque after 86 years, in Istanbul, Turkey, July 24, 2020. Murat Cetinmuhurdar/PPO/Handout via REUTERS

### “HEARTBREAK” IS ENDING

Several hundred invitees joined Erdogan for the ceremony inside the sixth-century building.

The president, his head covered by a white prayer cap, read a Koranic recitation before the head of Turkey’s religious directorate Ali Erbas addressed worshippers.

“The longing of our nation, which has turned into a heartbreak, is coming to an end today,” Erbas said from the pulpit, holding a sword in his hand – a tradition for preachers in mosques which have been captured in conquest, he later said.

“God willing, we will continue this tradition in the future,” Anadolu agency quoted Erbas as saying as he left the mosque.

## US F-15 Intercepts Iranian Passenger Plane Over Syria

### Agencies

Tehran, Iran: Two US jets flew dangerously close to an Iranian passenger plane over war-torn Syria, forcing the pilot to take emergency action and sparking panic on board, Iranian authorities said Friday.

The US military said of Thursday’s incident that an “F-15 on a routine air mission... conducted a standard visual inspection of a Mahan Air passenger airliner at a safe distance of approximately 1,000 metres (yards)”.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) issued a statement after Iranian state television aired amateur footage of passengers on board scream-

panying the footage, the state broadcaster said the military aircraft were believed to be Israeli.

“After this dangerous action by the Israeli fighter, the pilot of the commercial plane quickly reduced the altitude of the flight to avoid colliding with the Israeli fighter, injuring several passengers on board,” it said.

Iran’s official IRNA news agency said the Mahan Air pilot made contact on the radio with two US fighter planes, and that the aircraft later landed safely in the Lebanese capital.

CENTCOM, which covers the whole of the wider Middle East, insisted it was a “profes-



ing as the Mahan Air jetliner appeared to change course suddenly.

Another video apparently shot on a phone appeared to show at least two fighter jets flying beside the plane.

In an initial report accom-

sional intercept... conducted in accordance with international standards”.

“Once the F-15 pilot identified the aircraft as a Mahan Air passenger plane, the F-15 safely opened distance from the aircraft,” it said.

## Pinpointing hotspots for COVID-19 will help people start travel again

### Press Trust Of India

Testing of plane, ship wastewater for COVID-19 could help as governments and transport industries develop plans to minimise transmission associated with resuming international travel.

The research, published in the Journal of Travel Medicine says that the test provides an early warning of infection, as the virus sheds in the stools of infected passengers even before they show symptoms.

Testing of aircraft and cruise ship wastewater upon arriving at their destination for the genetic fragments of the novel coronavirus can be a valuable tool to prioritise clinical testing and contact tracing among disembarking passengers, according to a study.

“The ability to test wastewater from planes and cruise ships is another piece of the puzzle as we look to the future of travel and keeping Australians safe,” said Karen Andrews, Australia’s Minister for Industry, Science and Technology.

In the study, scientists from The University of Queensland (UQ) and Australia’s national science agency CSIRO worked with transport companies to test on-board wastewater from lavatories.

“This could provide additional peace of mind to track and manage infection and play an important role in opening

up long-haul flights or cruises resuming,” said study co-author Jochen Mueller from UQ’s Alliance for Environmental Health Sciences.

However, while the coronavirus genetic material, RNA, was detected in samples from both aircraft and cruise ship wastewater, the scientists said the concentrations were near the “assay limit of detection.”

“The study indicates that surveillance of wastewater from large transport vessels with their own sanitation systems has potential as a complementary data source to prioritise clinical testing and contact tracing among disembarking passengers,” the researchers wrote in the study.

Owing to the potential for false negatives by both wastewater testing and clinical swab testing, the researchers suggested that the two strategies could be employed together to “maximise the probability of detecting SARS-CoV-2 infections amongst passengers.”

Lead author and CSIRO researcher Warish Ahmed said the virus fragments in the wastewater were unviable, making them non infectious.

“The study indicates that surveillance of wastewater from large transport vessels with their own sanitation systems has potential as a parallel data source to prioritize clinical testing among disembarking passengers,” Ahmed added.

### NEWS MAKERS

## US flies Kuwaiti emir to Minnesota after operation at home

**D**UBAI: Kuwait’s 91-year-old emir landed in the United States on Thursday after being flown across the world in a US Air Force C-17 flying hospital, and just days after undergoing an unspecified surgery at home.

The dramatic airlift reflected the close ties between the two nations, but also raised concerns over the ruler’s medical condition.

Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah survived the 16-hour trip under the watch of US medical professionals and Kuwaitis.

Kuwait’s ambassador to the US was at the airport for the plane’s arrival.

Kuwait has not released

any information on what medical ailment Sheikh Sabah faces, other than to say he was hospitalised on Saturday and underwent a surgery on Sunday.

His condition has renewed concerns over a possible power struggle within the ruling family of Kuwait, a small Mideast nation home to some of the world’s largest oil reserves. Prayer recitations filled state television and social media, all hoping for his recovery.

Flight-tracking data showed the Boeing C-17 Globemaster III, which took off from Kuwait International Airport, landed in Rochester, Minnesota, after a brief stop-over at Germany’s Ramstein air base.



Rochester is home to the flagship campus of the Mayo Clinic, one of America’s best hospitals, and has treated Sheikh Sabah in the past. The Mayo Clinic declined to comment.

The US military uses some C-17s as airborne hospitals for medical evacuations, able

to triage critically wounded soldiers while rapidly flying them onto major bases. The aircraft include onboard oxygen and the same life-saving equipment as found in hospital emergency rooms.

The flights often include critical care air transport teams, comprising a specialised doctor, a nurse and a respiratory therapist.

Asked about the C-17 flight, US Air Force Central Command based in Qatar referred questions to the military’s transportation command, which declined to comment.

A State Department official said America provided assistance to help with the emir’s treatment, without elaborating.

## Luxury Jet Spurned By Mexico President Returns Unsold From US

**M**exico City: The luxury presidential jet Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador wants to sell returned on Wednesday to Mexico, more than 1-1/2 years after he sent it to the United States in search of a buyer.

Mexico has struggled to sell the opulent Boeing 787 Dreamliner, which the leftist Lopez Obrador has cast as a symbol of excess and corruption under previous governments in a country where around half the population lives in poverty.

Lopez Obrador early on Wednesday announced the plane’s return, and television footage showed the aircraft

landing in the afternoon at Mexico City’s Benito Juarez International Airport where it was due to enter the presi-



dential hangar.

The jet was acquired by former President Enrique Pena Nieto in 2012 and fitted with marble-lined bathrooms. Reconfigured to fly only 80 people, the plane has a “presidential suite” and a private bath.

The sale has been ham-

strung in part by Lopez Obrador’s unwillingness to accept offers below a United Nations-backed valuation of \$130 million, even as the plane was potentially losing value as it sat unused in southern California.

Lopez Obrador’s unorthodox plans to sell the plane included a raffle, where the plane was going to be the prize. Later he said the raffle would be a lottery-style event, with 100 winners getting about \$1 million each rather than the plane.

Earlier this month, the government said Mexico was considering a \$120 million bid for the jet after an unidentified prospective buyer offered to pay part in cash and part in medical equipment.



## BJP Plans Events On i-Year Of Scrapping Article 370, Banning Triple Talaq

**NEW DELHI:** BJP has written to presidents and in-charges of its state units to organise events on completion of one year of scrapping of Article 370 and the Triple Talaq Bill becoming an Act.

In August last year, the Centre revoked Article 370, which gave special status to the former state of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated the region into two Union Territories- Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

On the first anniversary of the scrapping of Article 370, from July 28 to August 3, BJP state units have been asked



to hold a rally and connect to people in their regional language. The party has also planned a virtual rally at the national level.

One national office bearer of the party will attend programmes in Jammu, Srinagar, and Ladakh on August 5, according to a letter written by BJP national general secretary Arun Singh.

In both Union Territories, the party has asked to hold events and tell people about the one-year achievements of the Centre and the respective governments.

BJP asked its state units to hold five video conferences in big states and two in other states to engage in dialogue

with intellectuals, social workers, and other learned people. "Connect with 50 learned people and social workers in each district and discuss development works done in their states with them," read the letter.

A press conference in the capital of all states is also planned on August 3 in this regard.

The party will run the #EkBharatEkatmaBharat campaign from July 28 to August 3.

On August 1 last year, President Ram Nath Kovind gave his assent to the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage), Bill, 2019, which criminalises instant "triple talaq" among Muslims and attracts a jail term of three years for the husband. With the President's approval, the Bill has become an Act.

From July 28 and August 3, BJP asked its women wing and minority wing to interact with Muslim women on the abolition of triple talaq. The party also directed state units to interact with at least 100 Muslim intellectual women.

Singh said that Muslim women have got justice after this Act and now there is 80 per cent drop in triple talaq cases.

## High Court Adjourns Hearing To Transfer Islamic Sect Chief's Case To Probe Agency NIA

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi High Court on Friday adjourned to October 9 hearing on a petition seeking transfer of the case against Tablighi Jamaat chief Maulana Saad in connection with the Nizamuddin congregation to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

A division bench of Justice Siddharth Mridul and Justice Talwant Singh adjourned the matter to October 9 in view of a similar matter pending before the Supreme Court.

The petitioner Ghanshyam Upadhyay sought the invocation of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and entrusting to the NIA, investigation in the case pertaining to allegedly organising a congregation at Tablighi Jamaat with delegates from foreign countries in violation of the orders against large gatherings to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Earlier, Delhi Police had opposed the petition stating that investigation is going on in a fine manner and added that there is no need to transfer the case to another agency.

The case is currently being probed by the Crime Branch of Delhi Police, which had recently filed several charge-



sheets in connection with the Jamaat matter involving hundreds of foreign nationals in a trial court.

The charge sheets have been filed under relevant sections of the Foreigners Act, 1946, Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, Disaster Management Act, 2005, and Indian Penal Code (IPC). The foreign nationals are being charge-sheeted for violation of visa norms.

Earlier, an FIR was registered against Tablighi Jamaat chief and others in connection with the congregation held at Markaz Tablighi Jamaat in the Nizamuddin area of the national capital, which had reportedly become an epicentre for the spread of coronavirus.



**GHOST TOWN?** Srinagar uptown remained completely shut on Friday- KO photo Abid Bhat

## Rajasthan Speaker Agrees To Call Assembly Session; Congress MLAs End Dharna

**C**ongress MLAs in the Ashok Gehlot camp on Friday ended a five-hour dharna at the Raj Bhavan after Governor Kalraj Mishra assured that he will call a session of the state assembly.

Mishra, however, wanted the government's clarification on some points before he makes the announcement, Congress leaders said as they emerged from the Raj Bhavan.

Congress leader Randeep Surjewala said these points will be taken care of at a Cabinet meeting Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot is calling at 9.30pm.

The MLAs went to the Raj Bhawan in the afternoon, complaining that the Governor was sitting on letter



that the Cabinet had sent seeking an assembly session on Monday.

## Man Receives First Dose Of Covaxin In Phase-I Of Human Trial At Delhi AIIMS

**NEW DELHI:** The phase-I human clinical trial of India's first indigenously-developed vaccine against novel coronavirus, Covaxin, began at Delhi AIIMS on Friday and the first dose of the injection was administered to a man who is in his 30s.

Over 3,500 volunteers have registered themselves for the trial at AIIMS since last Saturday, of whom at least 22 are being screened, Dr Sanjay Rai, Professor at the Centre for Community Medicine at AIIMS and the principal investigator of the study, said.

"The first volunteer, a resident of Delhi, was screened two days ago and all his health parameters were found to be within the normal range. He also does not have any co-morbid conditions.

"The first dose of 0.5 ml intramuscular injection was given to him around 1.30 pm. No immediate side-effects have been observed so far. He was under observation for two hours and will be monitored for the next seven days," Dr Rai said.

Few more participants will be given the vaccine on Saturday after their screening reports come in.

AIIMS-Delhi is among the 12 sites selected by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) for conducting the phase I and II of the randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trials of Covaxin.

In phase I, the vaccine will be tested on 375 volunteers and the



maximum 100 of them will be from AIIMS. The second phase will include around 750 volunteers from all 12 sites together, Dr Rai said.

Phase I of the vaccine trial will be done on healthy people aged 18-55 years having no co-morbid conditions. Women with no pregnancy will also be selected to be a part of the trial in the first phase.

In the second phase, 750 people will be recruited between the ages of 12 to 65 years, AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria had said.

Already, around 1,800 volunteers have registered themselves for the trial at AIIMS, he had said.

"In the first phase we see the safety of the vaccine which is of primary

importance and the dose range is also calculated," he said.

There are three formulations of the vaccine, and each subject will be given any one of the formulations in two doses two weeks apart. The first 50 will get the lowest strength dose of the vaccine. If it is found to be safe in them, then it will be given to another 50 patients in high doses, according to Dr Rai.

COVID-19 vaccine candidate Covaxin, developed by the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the ICMR and the National Institute of Virology (NIV), had recently got the approval for human clinical trials from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).

## US-China Conflict To Impair Global Trade Which Is Vital For India: Raghuram Rajan

**NEW YORK:** As the US presidential election draws near, the conflict between America and China will escalate, impairing global trade which is "extremely important" for emerging markets like India and Brazil that are re-opening amid COVID-19 pandemic, former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan has said.

Cautioning that there will be "deeply damaged firms" in the economy, Mr Rajan said the post-pandemic recovery has to be accompanied by a process of repair.

"There's going to be enormous bankruptcies in the United States certainly and quite possibly in Europe also as we repair the economy, reallocate resources, restructure capital structures," he said on Thursday at the Pan-IFT USA virtual conference titled 'The New Global Economic Norm: Post CoVID-19'.

"Certainly as we get closer to the US election, the conflict between the US and China is going to increase and that impairs global trade, which is going to be extremely important going forward, especially for emerging markets like India, Brazil, Mexico, which are going to be significantly impaired by the virus and need some source of demand to pull them out as they start opening up again," he said.

Former Chairperson of the State Bank of India and Salesforce India CEO Arundhati Bhattacharya also addressed the event.

"Global trade is going to be an important factor if they can jump on to it, whether it's trade in goods and services or trade in digital services, it's going to be very

important and our countries desperately need an open world," Mr Rajan said.

Mr Rajan, an IIT Delhi graduate and the Katherine Dusak Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance at University of Chicago Booth School of Business, said that containment of the coronavirus in countries like the US and India has not happened despite lockdowns, while in some countries containment has been a 2-2.5 month process and virus cases have been brought down to the single digits leading to re-openings.

"There are countries, of



course the United States being a prime example, but also India as well as Brazil, Mexico where the containment has not happened despite lockdowns, despite enormous costs. As a result, the cost of the virus is going to be significantly greater than for the countries that have been successful," he said.

Mr Rajan said that for countries like India and the US that are still battling the virus, the main issue right now is to contain the virus, even as he asserted that "unfortunately the spread has become significant enough that containment is going to be very difficult".

## Coffee Day Owed \$472 Million By Founder Vg Siddhartha's Firm: Report

**BENGALURU:** An entity linked to V.G. Siddhartha, the founder of Coffee Day Enterprises Ltd owed the coffee chain 35.35 billion rupees (\$472.5 million), an investigation report released by the company showed on Friday.

Founder V.G. Siddhartha was found dead in Netravati river near Hoige Bazaar in Mangaluru last July in an apparent suicide amid speculation that he was under intense financial strain.

The Bengaluru-headquartered company had then appointed an investigator to scrutinize its accounts and the circumstances leading to the statements made in a letter purportedly written by Siddhartha.

Mysore Amalgamated Coffee Estates Ltd, an entity linked separately to Siddhartha and involved in a business relationship with Coffee Day, owed Coffee Day \$472 million as of July 31, 2019 - the day V.G. Siddhartha's dead body was found by authorities - the synopsis of the investigation report released by Coffee Day to stock exchanges showed on Friday.

About \$360 million of that amount still needed to be addressed, the report said.

A significant portion of the amount may have been spent to buy back shares from private equity investors, repay loans and funding investments outside the scope of the investigation, the report said. As a result, the amounts may not be precise, it added.

Coffee Day, which also exports coffee, sells coffee-

vending machines and houses a logistics business called Sical, currently had a debt of 32 billion rupees (\$427.7 million), it said.

It is country's largest coffee chain with more than 1,000 cafes that brew cappuccinos and lattes for booming moneyed class, and competes with the likes of Starbucks Corp, Barista and Coca-Cola Co-owned Costa Coffee.

The company, whose revenue has taken a hit in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, is in the process of selling off more assets to raise cash and cut debt, it added.



### NEWS MAKERS

## Govt Rubbishing My Warnings On Covid-19, China: Rahul Gandhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday attacked the Narendra Modi government over the rise in COVID-19 cases and Chinese aggression in Ladakh, saying it continues to rubbish his warnings.

He said even though he kept warning the government on COVID-19, "disaster" has followed.

"I kept warning them on COVID-19 and the economy. They rubbished it. Disaster followed. I keep warning them on China. They're rubbishing it," he said on Twitter.

India saw a record single-day spike of 49,310 COVID-19 cases taking the country's tally to 12,87,945 on Friday,



while the recoveries surged to 8,17,208, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The death toll mounted to 30,601 with 740 new fatalities reported in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8am on Friday showed.

Since February, Rahul Gandhi had claimed the Modi

government should pay more attention to the COVID-19 pandemic. The government had then dismissed his tweets. Rahul had also demanded transparency from the government on the situation with China on the Ladakh border, even before the clash at Galwan on June 15.

## 8Th Nizam Of Hyderabad Wants "Clean Break" From Funds Battle In UK

**LONDON:** The titular eighth Nizam of Hyderabad, Prince Mukarram Jah, says he wants a "clean break" from a decades-old legal fight over funds lying in a UK bank account belonging to his ancestors, as he waived his right to a share in the estimated 400,000 pounds leftover after an English High Court order from last year.

At a hearing in the High Court in London on Wednesday and Thursday, held remotely via Skype, Justice Marcus Smith dismissed an attempt by members of the Nizam's extended family to stake claim over the total amount of around 35 million pounds held in the London bank account dating back to Partition in 1947.

The bulk of those funds

were legally divided up between Prince Jah, his younger brother and India after an October 2019 court order dismissed Pakistan's claim over that money.

However, a part of the sum accrued to the late seventh Nizam of Hyderabad's English estate, which is believed to be around 400,000 pounds.

"This litigation has lasted almost the entire lifetime of our client, HEH VIII Nizam of Hyderabad. He wishes to have a clean break," said Paul Hewitt of Withers LLP, who have acted for the eighth Nizam since proceedings were issued in the case in 2013.

That, he proposes that whatever remains of the 400,000 pounds can be distributed to the wider mem-



bers of the family, waiving his right to claim that money as well on the basis of the customary law which dictates that the seventh Nizam's estate passed to his heir HEH eighth Nizam," he said.

During the hearing this week, Justice Smith had dismissed attempts by Najaf Ali Khan, president of the Nizam Family Welfare Association, and Himayat Ali Mirza to challenge his October 2019 judgment in favour of India and Prince Mukarram Jah and his brother in the 70-year-old legal dispute with Pakistan.

The two princes and India had reached a confidential agreement, which meant that the funds have been shared between them on pre-agreed terms.

They also reached a confidential agreement with Christopher Lintott, the court appointed administrator of the late seventh Nizam's English estate, by which an additional sum passed to the late Nizam's estate and of which an estimated 400,000 pounds remains.

At the end of the two-day ruling this week, Justice Smith approved Lintott's application to appoint a trust company to be the new personal representative of the remaining funds.

The new representative will now establish who is entitled to what remains after legal costs of the 400,000 pounds,

to which Prince Mukarram Jah has agreed not to lay any claim. It is now for the PennTrust to conduct an inquiry and allocate what remains of the funds in light of the eighth Nizam's offer to the wider family.

Appearing via Skype, the titular eighth Nizam's relatives, claiming to be among 117 heirs of the late seventh Nizam, had targeted Lintott for entering into the confidential agreement with India and the princes, saying that he should have secured more money for the estate of the erstwhile seventh Nizam.

The judge pointed out that the confidential agreement was approved by another High Court judge, which makes the prospect of a claim against Lintott succeeding remote.