



Maximum : 33°C
Minimum : 20°C
Humidity : 52%

SUNSET
Today 07:26 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 05:47 AM



News Digest

Jawan Found Dead In Reasi

Jammu: A 32-year-old security force jawan was found shot dead at a security camp at Poni in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir under mysterious circumstances, sources said on Thursday. The incident occurred on Wednesday night when other jawans heard a gunshot sound and rushed towards its direction where they found a jawan lying in a pool of blood with a revolver lying nearby, they said. He was shifted to hospital, **● P-02**

Geelani Not Covid-19 Positive: Family

Srinagar: The family members of former chairman of Hurriyat Conference (G), Syed Ali Geelani on Thursday rubbished media reports claiming that the ailing leader has tested positive for coronavirus. "My father has not tested positive for COVID-19. He is absolutely fine by the grace of Allah," Geelani's son, Syed Naseem said. Earlier, some media reports suggested Geelani had tested positive for the deadly virus. **● P-02**

Pak Fired Shell Diffused In Poonch

Jammu: Security forces destroyed a live mortar shell fired by the Pakistan Army, targeting a village along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Thursday, sources said. The villagers informed the security forces about the live shell in the Mankote forward area in Mendhar sector, they said. Troops rushed to the spot **● P-02**

Minor's Body Fished Out From Jhelum

Srinagar: Rescue team of Police army on Thursday recovered body of a boy from river Jhelum in Baramulla district, a day after he drowned while bathing. Body of 10-year-old Muhammad Momeen, of Ravathpora, Sillkote in Uri was recovered from the river on Thursday after hectic efforts by the rescue team of police, army and SDRF, officials said. The body was handed over to **● P-02**

Pak Shelling Along LoC in Poonch

Jammu: Pakistani troops violated ceasefire on Thursday by heavily shelling forward areas in two sectors along the LoC in Poonch district, prompting the Indian Army to retaliate, officials said. A few structures were damaged in the shelling, they said. At about 2000 hours, the Pakistan Army fired with small arms and shelled mortars in Balakote and Mendhar sectors along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said. **● P-02**

BSF Man Sacked Over Smuggling

Chandigarh: A BSF constable, who was arrested by the Punjab Police in a cross-border drugs and weapons smuggling case, has been dismissed from service, said an official statement of the BSF on Thursday. Border Security Force Constable Rajendra Prasad was held along with two others by the Punjab Police on July 28 from his native place at Srinaganagar in Rajasthan. "As per the Punjab Police investigation report, Constable Rajendra Prasad **● P-02**

Senior BJP Leader Manoj Sinha Is New LG Of J&K

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Manoj Sinha, former union minister and senior BJP leader from Uttar Pradesh, was on Thursday appointed as the new Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. He is the first political leader to take charge as the LG of the union territory.

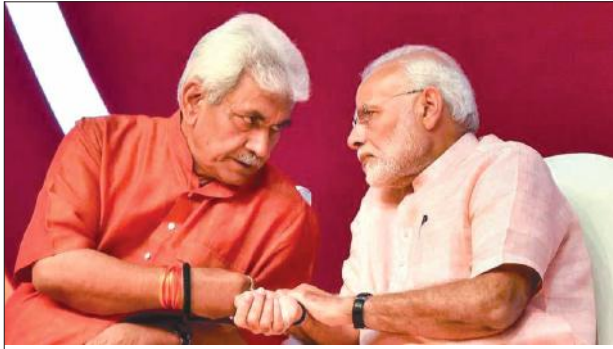
The 61-year-old, who is known for his massive connect with the people of rural areas, comes in place of former IAS officer Girish Chandra Murmu who hurriedly tendered his resignation on Wednesday night.

Sinha arrived here in a state plane and was likely to be administered the oath of office and secrecy on Friday by Jammu and Kashmir Chief Justice Gita Mittal at the Raj Bhavan, located on the foothills of the Zaberwan range.

He was received by Advisors to the previous LG including Farooq Khan, Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam and top brass of the police and civil administration. A guard of honour was accorded to him at the airport.

Later he held an informal meeting with the four advisors, the Chief Secretary and senior police officials.

Among the priorities in hand for Sinha would be to end factionalism within the bureaucracy in the union territory, with **►PAGE 02**



LG Designate Manoj Sinha with PM Modi. File Pic

Oath Ceremony Likely Today

Jammu and Kashmir's Lieutenant Governor designate Manoj Sinha arrived here on Thursday following his appointment to the Raj Bhawan, officials said. Sinha was received at the airport by Chief Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam and Director General of Police Dilbag Singh, **● P-02**

'Strange Coincidence' Says Omar

National Conference leader Omar Abdullah on Thursday saw a "strange coincidence" in the resignation of Girish Chandra Murmu, saying the last Jammu and Kashmir governor and its first Lieutenant Governor have been "removed" from Raj Bhavan when they least expected it. **● P-02**

GC Murmu Appointed New CAG

The government on Thursday appointed former Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Girish Chandra Murmu as the new Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India. "...the President has been pleased to appoint Shri Girish Chandra Murmu to be the Comptroller and Auditor General of **● P-02**

Bureaucratic Tussle, Talk On Polls, 4G

What Led To Sudden Exit Of GC Murmu?

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: The 'unceremonious' exit of Girish Chandra Murmu, the first Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Jammu and Kashmir, has come as a surprise here with many observers linking his ouster to the remarks he made recently.

Till Wednesday afternoon there was no such talk in the J&K secretariat. It was business as usual at the Raj Bhawan as well as Murmu met a number of people as per schedule, including GOC-in Chief of the



Northern Command.

Later in the evening a few scheduled meetings were how-

ever cancelled at the last minute. With the sun set the news about Murmu's resignation started doing rounds on social media.

The resignation of Murmu, a 1985 batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Gujarat cadre comes days after the Election Commission took an exception to his comments to the media on the timing of Assembly elections in Jammu & Kashmir. In a strongly-worded statement, the EC said all decisions on the conduct and timing of elections are its "sole remit". In an interview **►PAGE 02**

Many Positive Changes Reflect Normalcy Return To JK: MEA

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Several positive changes have taken place in terms of development in Jammu and Kashmir in the last one year which reflect return to "complete normalcy", the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday.

The assertion came after the Chairman and Ranking Member of the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs in a letter to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar expressed concern over the situation in Jammu and Kashmir one year after Article 370 was abrogated and the state was bifurcated into Union territories.

Asked about the reference to

Jammu and Kashmir in the letter, MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "Regarding the specific issue, there have been several positive changes in the UT of J and K over the past one year, be it in terms of ensuring good governance or socio economic development or justice to the disadvantaged sections of the population."

Elections have been held to block development councils in October 2019, the first ever 'Khelo India' winter games were held in March 2020, schools have re-opened, new educational facilities are being established, there are provisions of better healthcare with new health facilities coming up, **►PAGE 02**

'Dictatorship' In J&K For Past One Year: Priyanka

NEW DELHI: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Thursday attacked the BJP government for treating her party leader Saifuddin Soz as a "prisoner", and alleged Jammu and Kashmir has been under a dictatorship for the past one year.

"Saifuddin Soz has played a big role in strengthening the process of Indian democracy. By treating him like a prisoner, the BJP is trampling democracy. Dictatorship is continuing in J&K for the last one year. I want to remind the government that India is a democratic republic," she said in a **● P-02**

BJP Sarpanch Shot Dead In Qazigund

SRINAGAR: Suspected militants on Thursday shot dead a BJP Sarpanch at Vessu village in Qazigund block of south Kashmir's Kulgam district.

Official sources said the militants fired upon the Sarpanch identified as Sajad Ahmad Khan-day near his residence at Vessu around 9:30 am, leaving him critically injured before fleeing.

Khanday was immediately rushed to a GMC Anantnag where he was declared brought dead, they said. This is the second attack of its kind in less than 48 hours as a BJP Panch Arif Ahmad was critically wounded after militants fired upon him at Akhran Qazigund on the evening of August 4. **● P-02**

India Asks China To Disengage Fully

NEW DELHI: India on Thursday said it expects China to work with it "sincerely" for "complete" disengagement and de-escalation in eastern Ladakh as decided by their Special Representatives last month even as Army Chief Gen MM Naravane reviewed the force's preparedness along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal sector.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava while replying to questions on the face-off in eastern Ladakh referred to decisions taken by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese **● P-02**

504 Separatists 'Signed Good Behaviour Bond': DGP

Press Trust of India

SRINAGAR: As many as 504 separatist leaders, who had been detained following the abrogation of Article 370 provisions a year ago, were released after they signed bond of "good behaviour", Jammu and Kashmir Police chief Dilbag Singh said on Thursday.

Singh also said out of the 350 separatist leaders and stone pelters who had been sent to jails in other states, only 50-60 continued to remain behind bars and the rest were released.

"A total of 504 separatist leaders belonging to Hurriyat Conference and Jamaat-e-Islami (JK) and others have

Covid-19 Claims 15 More Lives In J&K, Toll 443

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: At least fifteen more people, including a CRPF personal and a revenue official died due to Covid-19 in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, raising the total number of fatalities due to virus in the Union Territory to 443.

Deputy Commissioner Shopian Yasin Choudhary said that the 55-year-old Naib Tehsildar, Wachi lost his battle against Covid yesterday at SKIMS here.

Two of the deaths were reported from Kupwara and include a 75-year-old from Rawalpore Kralgund who admitted at SMSH Hospital Srinagar where he died while other— a 70-year-old from Bagath Mohalla Drugmulla who tested positive today and died near Pattan while he was being shifted to Srinagar

hospital on referral for further treatment by a local hospital, a senior official said.

Three deaths were reported from Pulwama district and include a 70-year-old from Monghama Tral was sampled on July 27 and tested positive subsequently, a 58-year-old woman from Gusoo and 60-year-old from Kadlabbal Pampore.

Two of the victims belong to Jammu and one to Rajouri district who had died few days back at SKIMS Soura and was included in today's list.

Regarding one of the victims from winter capital, sources said that a 44-year-old man from Jhullaka Mohalla who was suffering from multiple ailments and had **►PAGE 02**

Covid-19 Crosses 23K Mark With 499 New Cases

At least 91 travellers and 41 security personnel were among 499 new cases reported in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, as the total number of infected persons in the Union Territory crossed 23000 mark.

While 426 new cases were reported from Kashmir Valley including 34 from CRPF, two from BSF and six from BB Cantonment, remaining 73 were confirmed positive by officials in Jammu province. Giving district wise breakup, sources **● P-02**

Top US Lawmakers Voice Concern Over Kashmir Situation

SRINAGAR: Two powerful United States lawmakers have expressed concern over the prevailing situation in Jammu and Kashmir in the backdrop of abrogation of special status by the government of India in August last year.

"As champions of the US-India relationship, we have been delighted to see our countries' close cooperation on issues from defense to climate change. It is because of our support for the bilateral relationship that we note with concern that conditions in Jammu and Kashmir have not normalised one year after India's repeal of Article 370 and the establishment of **● P-02**

...BANK FRAUD CASE ED Raids NC Leader's Son Hilal Rather

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday launched multiple raids in four cities in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged bank fraud probe against Hilal Rather, son of National Conference (NC) leader Abdul Rahim Rather, officials said. They said the raids were carried out at 16 locations in Kashmir, Jammu, Delhi and Ludhiana.

The exercise has been undertaken to collect evidence, they said.

The central probe agency has filed a money laundering case against Hilal Rather and others, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), taking cognisance of a CBI FIR **● P-02**

Author, Filmmaker Sadia Dehlvi Dies At 63

NEW DELHI: Noted Delhi-based writer and activist Sadia Dehlvi has passed away at her home on Wednesday after a prolonged battle with cancer. She was 63.

"Sad to hear about the tragic demise of Sadia Dehlvi, a well known cultural figure of Delhi, a dear friend and a wonderful human being. Rest in Peace," tweeted eminent historian Irfan Habib.

Ms Dehlvi, who hailed from the royal 'Shama' family, edited Bano, an Urdu women's journal. Her grandfather, Hafiz Yusuf Dehlvi, founded Shama in 1938, which is an iconic Urdu film and literary monthly. A well-known food connoisseur, she wrote a book on Delhi's culinary history in 2017, titled 'Jasmine & Jinn: Memories and Recipes of My Delhi'. **►PAGE 02**



Swati Joshi

RECENTLY #NayaKashmir was trending on Twitter to amplify how the abrogation of Article 370 has benefited Kashmir. A majority of the tweets claimed that the move by the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has resulted in development in the valley but the ground reality is very different.

Article 370 was abrogated on August 5, 2019, by the Centre and since then the economy, tourism, travel and tourism in the valley have come to a grinding halt.

According to the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), the economy has suffered a loss of about Rs 40,000 crore since 2019.

The KCCI in its earlier report, released last year claimed that 4,96,000 jobs have been lost in 120 days since the abrogation of Article 370.

Economy One Year After Article 370: 'We Are Totally Paralyzed'

"The borrowers of financial institutions have lost their capacity to fulfill their commitments and a substantial number of accounts are likely to turn bankrupt, many business establishments have closed down or are contemplating closure," suggested the report.

According to KCCI, within four months after the abrogation of Article 370, the valley suffered a loss of Rs 17,878.18 crore.

Troubled Tourism
According to the Preliminary Economic Loss Assessment Report by the KCCI which took into account 10 districts for 120 days from August 5, 2019, to December 3, 2019, the tourism sector has incurred a loss of Rs 1056.3264 crores.

"I am jobless since August 2019,"



Kashmir Observer

said Ayoub Rather, owner of Premier tour and travels.

According to him, from 2015 to 2020, only 2018 was a good year for

tourism in the valley.

The travel agent's only source of livelihood was tourism which was affected badly, leaving him and his

family in a state of distress.

Rather was hoping for a good business during the spring season. "I received many bookings from November," said the travel agent, hoping he would be able to achieve his target for the current year and might cover the loss he faced in the last year.

Riyaz Ahmed who runs a homestay in Nigeen Lake compared the Kashmir of 2019 with the Stone Age. There was no income and he was burdened with loans.

"There are 15 members in my family," said Ahmed, adding, "how can I feed them when I have no source of income?"

Ahmed's family is associated with the tourism business for centuries but the prevailing conditions have forced him to think about

changing the trade.

Hoteliers, ponywalas, dhabawalas, restaurants, shopkeepers, guiding personnel, labours were completely shattered after the nullification of Article 370 and the coronavirus lockdown in the valley.

The imposition of the pandemic lockdown was aimed to prevent the spread of the virus but on the other hand, this industry has completely given up since last year.

"We are totally paralyzed," said Anwar Wangnoo, owner of Wangnoo Sheraton Group.

He claimed that the houseboats which used to host around one thousand people have received no guests in 10 months. "There is no fun to have a houseboat without tourism," said the owner.

The Wangano Sheraton group has a chain of houseboats and they deal with international clients.

"Since 2014 we are **►PAGE 02**

From Front page...

Senior BJP Leader Manoj Sinha...

some senior IAS officers recently found to be publicly indulging in verbal spats. The other aspect would be to revisit the state intelligence department which has been failing in anticipating the situation off late. In the last three days there have been two attacks on Panchs and Sarpanchs in South Kashmir's Kulgam district. Earlier in the day, a Rashtrapati Bhawan communique said Murmu's resignation has been accepted.

The communique issued by the President's press secretary Ajay Kumar said, "The President has been pleased to appoint Manoj Sinha to be the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir with effect from the date he assumes charge of his office" in place of Murmu. Known as 'vikas purush' (man involved in developmental work), Sinha is a three-time Lok Sabha MP who held charge of the Communication Ministry as a Minister of State in 2016 when the telecom industry was engaged in the sale of spectrum.

A B.Tech in civil engineering from the Institute of Technology (now known as IIT-BHU), Sinha has been credited with overcoming the menace of call dropping by holding widespread consultations with telecom operators. Elected to Lok Sabha in 1996 for the first time, Sinha, an agriculturist, is the first politician to be elected as LG of the union territory. Earlier, the Centre had appointed Satya Pal Malik, a politician, as governor of the erstwhile state before it was bifurcated into two union territories -- Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir -- on August 5 last year. Sinha, who was elected to Lok Sabha in 1999 and 2014, was front runner for the post of Uttar Pradesh chief minister after the party walked away with 265 seats in the 403-member assembly. Born in Mohanpura of Ghazipur district of eastern UP, he began his political career after being elected the president of the Banaras Hindu University Students Union in 1982, and has been actively involved in working for the backward villages.

Murmu, a 1985 batch IAS officer, had abruptly submitted his resignation on Wednesday night on the day the Union Territory marked the first anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution thereby scrapping Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

On Wednesday afternoon Murmu had flown in a helicopter to Jammu, cancelling all his appointments including meetings with journalists which were slated on the occasion of one year of the revocation of the special status. The 60-year-old former IAS officer of Gujarat cadre had on October 29 last year taken over as the first LG of the union territory after the state of Jammu and Kashmir was downgraded and split into two UTs.

Highly-placed sources said Murmu was likely to be given a new assignment at the Centre. The recent statements of Murmu, who flew out of Jammu Thursday afternoon in a special plane, on elections and 4G internet had come under the scanner especially after the Supreme Court had remarked about his interview on the subject of high speed internet to a national daily. The Centre was asked by the top court to come out with a clear stand after Murmu's interview, in which he stated that the UT administration had no problem in extending 4G to Jammu and Kashmir.

The Election Commission had in the last week of July taken exception to Murmu's remarks on the timings of polls in the union territory, saying that in the constitutional scheme of things only the EC is authorised to decide on the poll schedule. Murmu had said the polls would be held after the delimitation exercise was completed in the union territory. The LG had only stated what was enshrined in the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, passed by the Parliament last year.

Oath Ceremony Likely Today...

the officials said. They said Sinha, who is likely to take oath as the second lieutenant governor of Jammu and Kashmir on Friday, drove straight to the Raj Bhawan from the airport.

The 61-year-old former minister of state for railways will succeed Girish Chander Murmu who resigned from the post late on Wednesday night.

Murmu served as the first lieutenant governor of Jammu and Kashmir after the Centre revoked the special status of the erstwhile state and sliced it into two union territories.

Murmu, who is tipped to be the next Comptroller and Auditor General of India, served in the office for just over nine months.

'Strange Coincidence'...

Murmu had abruptly submitted his resignation on Wednesday night, following which senior BJP leader from Uttar Pradesh Manoj Sinha was on Thursday appointed the new Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, the first political leader to take charge as the LG of the union territory. "In a strange coincidence both the last Governor of J&K state & the 1st Lt Governor of the Union Territory of J&K have been removed when they least expected it. They both had a full schedule of meetings planned when they got the order to pack & leave rather unceremoniously," Abdullah tweeted. He said the present government at the Centre can be trusted to pull a surprise contrary to the expectations.

"Last night, there were one or two names that people were circulating as a done deal & this name wasn't among them. You can always trust this government to pull an unexpected name out of the hat contrary to anything the 'sources' had planted earlier," the former chief minister added. Earlier, the Centre had appointed Satya Pal Malik, a politician, governor of the erstwhile state before it was bifurcated into union territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir on August 5 last year.

GC Murmu Appointed New CAG

India with effect from the date he assumes charge of his office," a notification by the Department of Economic Affairs said. Earlier in the day, President Ram Nath Kovind accepted Murmu's resignation as the Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. Former union minister and senior BJP leader from Uttar Pradesh Manoj Sinha was appointed in his place.

What Led To Sudden Exit...

to The Indian Express, Murmu had emphasised that President's Rule in J&K cannot be in place indefinitely and that "elections would not be very far."

In a separate interview, Murmu had commented on the restoration of 4G internet in J&K. He was quoted as saying that he is "not afraid how people of Kashmir will use" the internet. He had said the J&K administration had been making representations for restoring 4G internet services which have remained suspended for a year. "We have been representing this thing (restoration of 4G). It will not be a problem," Murmu had said in an interview to The Indian Express. Sources said that this stand may not have gone down well as the Ministry of Home Affairs has been opposed to the restoration of the internet over fears of 'misuse'.

Besides it, the lobbies in the power corridors in Srinagar are also believed to be one of the reasons for Murmu's resignation. Murmu reportedly had serious differences with some of the bureaucrats in the UT administration. By bringing in a political face like Manoj Sinha, the Centre may be trying to fill the political vacuum and at the same time hoping that the administrative functioning will be smooth now. However, according to the National Conference leader, Mustafa Kamal, people coming in will be no different because they are all just appointees of the government. "Let us, however, hope that this new change is in the right sense. Whatever they did is to hide their own mistakes. You see they have had to face embarrassment two days back on the August 5 anniversary with the kind of hartal we saw," he added.

BJP Sarpanch Shot Dead...

Meanwhile, a police spokesperson said that the Sarpanch had gone to his house from his accommodation in a secured migrant camp without informing the police. "Police has registered a case in this regard under relevant sections of law. Investigation is in progress and officers continue to work to establish the full circumstances of this crime. Area has been cordoned off and search is going on," the police spokesperson added.

India Asks China To Disengage...

Foreign Minister Wang Yi on complete disengagement of troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) during their telephonic talks on July 5. Doval and Wang are Special Representatives for boundary talks. "The two Special Representatives had agreed that early and complete disengagement of the troops along the LAC and de-escalation from India-China border areas in accordance with bilateral agreement and protocols and full restoration of peace and tranquility was essential for the smooth overall development of bilateral relations," Srivastava said. He said India remains committed to this objective. "We also expect that the Chinese side will work with us sincerely for complete disengagement and de-escalation and full restoration of peace and tranquility in the border areas," he said.

Srivastava's comments came amid indications that disengagement of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in eastern Ladakh has not moved forward since mid-July in friction points like Pangong Tso and Depsang as

wanted by India. Asked whether India was reviewing operation of China's Confucius Institutes in India, he said the government has laid down specific guidelines for such centres and indicated that any violation of norms may invite action. He said the MEA had in 2009 issued detailed guidelines for establishment and functioning of foreign cultural centres and these norms apply to any cultural centre that is supported or sponsored by an autonomous foreign organisation, including any Confucius Centre.

"Under these guidelines, approval of MEA is required for any MoU/ agreement that such centres might wish to enter into with an Indian organisation. Naturally, if any Indian institution were to enter into or has entered into an arrangement which would come under the purview of these guidelines, then it would require the approval of the government," he added. "And as a corollary if the approval was not taken when establishing such centres then it was not in conformity with the guidelines," he said. Amid China's aggressive posturing along the LAC, India has initiated several measures against Chinese entities. In June, the government banned 59 China-based apps. It was followed by a ban on 47 more Chinese apps which primarily acted as clones of some of the banned apps.

Gen Naravane visited the Army's Tezpur-based headquarters 4 Corps and carried out a comprehensive review of its preparedness along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh, official sources said. The Army chief was given a detailed briefing by senior army officials about deployment of troops and weaponry along the LAC, the de-facto border between India and China.

In view of the tense border row with China in eastern Ladakh, the army has significantly ramped up deployment of troops in all sensitive areas along the nearly 3,500-km-long LAC including in the Arunachal and Sikkim sectors. With the disengagement process not moving forward, the army is preparing to maintain the current strength of troops and weapons along the LAC during the winter months as well, the sources said.

"The Army Chief carried out a comprehensive review of military preparedness in the Arunachal sector," said a source. The 4 Corps based in Assam's Tezpur town is tasked to keep a vigil on the LAC in Arunachal sector.

Gen Naravane is scheduled to return to Delhi on Friday. India and China have held several rounds of diplomatic and military talks aimed at disengagement of troops from friction points in eastern Ladakh.

On August 2, the two armies held the fifth round of Corps command-level talks with an aim to expedite the disengagement process.

At the talks, the Indian side insisted on complete disengagement of Chinese troops at the earliest and immediate restoration of status quo ante in all areas of eastern Ladakh prior to May 5 when the standoff began following a clash between the two armies in Pangong Tso.

The Chinese PLA has pulled back from Galwan Valley and certain other friction points but the withdrawal of troops has not moved forward from the Finger areas in Pangong Tso since mid-July, sources said.

India has been insisting that China must withdraw its forces from areas between Finger Four and Eight. The mountain spurs in the area are referred to as Fingers. The formal process of disengagement of troops began on July 6, a day after Doval and Wang held telephonic talks.

Covid-19 Claims 15 More Lives...

tested positive for COVID-19 died last night in the GMC Jammu. "Admitted on August 5, the man was diagnosed with Hypertension, TYPE 2 diabetes mellitus and bilateral pulmonary infiltrates, a senior doctor at GMC Jammu said. Among others, the others victims include a 55-year-old patient from Chitragam, an 82-year-old man from Nowgam Srinagar, an 80-year-old male from Malbagh Srinagar and a 75-year-old man from Bandipora who was operated for Stomach Cancer died at SKIMS Bemina. "Admitted on Aug 4, he was also suffering from pneumonia and was shifted to ICU yesterday and died today at 6.00 p.m.," a senior doctor

A 33-year-old paramilitary CRPF trooper from 179 Battalion who was admitted on August in "critical condition of severe Pneumonia and respiratory failure" died today at 4.30 p.m. at the hospital, one among the exclusive facilities for the management of the covid-19 patients. Two deaths were reported from Baramulla district including a 63-year-old man from Baramula who was having hypertension, community acquired pneumonia. Admitted on July 31, the sexagenarian died today at SMHS hospital, a senior doctor there said. Regarding other death from the north Kashmir district, sources said the victim was a 60-year-old from Dogba Sopore and died at local SDH. She was admitted on July 31 with "hypertension, T2DM, and with bilateral CAP" and died due to "cardiopulmonary arrest" at 9 p.m. today. Also a 65-year-old man from Budgam died to the virus, the officials said. With these deaths, the overall tally has risen to 443 in J&K, 34 in Jammu and 409 in Kashmir. (with GNS inputs)

Covid-19 Crosses 23K Mark...

said Srinagar reported 113, Baramulla 44, Pulwama 9, Kulgam 20, Shopian 8, Anantnag 73, Budgam 52, Kupwara 17, Bandipora 49, Ganderbal 41, Jammu 51, Rajouri 5, Ramban 1, Kathua 6, Udhampur 2, Samba 5, Poonch 1 and Kishtwar 2. In Kashmir, Srinagar tops the list with 5699 cases followed by Baramulla with 2041, Pulwama 1743, Kulgam 1572, Shopian 1500, Anantnag 1490, Kupwara 1181, Budgam 1438, Bandipora 914, and Ganderbal 703. Jammu division, Jammu district has 1412 cases, Rajouri 751, Ramban 575, Kathua 565, Udhampur 595, Samba 467, Doda 299, Poonch 252, Reasi 198 and Kishtwar 159. With the new cases, the tally overall has risen to 23454--18181 in Kashmir and 5273 in Jammu. Meanwhile, 464 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals--105 from Jammu Division and 359 from Kashmir Valley.

504 Separatists 'Signed Good...

behaviour bond" are bound to maintain peace and not indulge in any violent or separatist activities after being released from jails or home detention. The Director General of Police (DGP) said after the abrogation of Article 370 provisions on August 5, 2019, a total of 5,500 youths were detained by security forces and all of them were let off after three-four days following counselling and taking assurance from their parents that they would not indulge in any violent acts like stone pelting in future.

However, he said, cases were against 1,200 other youths for indulging in violent acts. Singh said about 144 boys, who were under 18 years old, were also detained last year for indulging in violence and currently just 17 of them are in remand homes set up under the Juvenile Justice Act.

He said at least 16 youths, who joined the ranks of the militants, have returned after persuasion of police and family members and no action has been taken against them as they were not involved in any violence so far. Referring to those who were sent to jails outside Jammu and Kashmir, the police chief said about 300 were released as their custody period under the Public Safety Act (PSA) was over and it was felt that their further detention was not required. "We will review the cases of other 50-60 people when their prison terms come to an end," he said. Talking about the future strategy to deal with militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, Singh said there was a need to enhance technical surveillance along the border with Pakistan so that militants could not enter India and efforts should be made for de-radicalisation of the youth.

In addition, there should be programme for skill development for the youth and all development aspirations gaps should be filled, he said.

'Pak Trying To Send...

Jammu and Kashmir Police Dilbag Singh said on Thursday. He also said less than 200 militants are currently active in Jammu and Kashmir, and just 26 militants could enter the Union Territory from across the border so far this year.

"Pakistan has been trying to send arms and ammunition to militants through drones (UAVs). We have detected several such incidents in the past," Singh told PTI here. The police chief said such incidents of Pakistani UAVs carrying weapons were detected in Kupwara, Heera Nagar, Kathua and Rajouri. Another modus operandi of Pakistan to dispatch weapons through trucks to Jammu and Kashmir was unearthed in Punjab in the past, he said.

"There has been a huge shortage of weapons for the militants operating here," the police chief said. The DGP said Pakistan has intensified cross-border firing this year so that militants could be pushed into Jammu and Kashmir. "There has been 75 per cent more firing from across the border in the first seven months of 2020. There were 487 incidents of firing from Pakistan till July this year in comparison to 267 such incidents in the same period in 2019. The firings are cover to infiltrate militants. So far, just 26 militants could infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Singh said due to sustained anti-militancy operations, the security forces have been able to curtail the number of active militants in Jammu and Kashmir to less than 200 now from 300 to 350 militants a few years ago. Referring to local youths joining militancy, the DGP said 80 such youths have joined different militant groups this year of which 20 are now active and the self-life of such militant is now a maximum of 90 days.

"Eighty local youths have joined militancy this year so far of which 38 were killed and 22 arrested. Just 20 of those who have joined militancy are active now," he said. The police chief said as many as 150 militants were killed in 2020 so far, of which 30 are foreigners and another 39 are top com-

manders. "The militant groups are leaderless and facing a huge shortage of weapons," he said. Claiming success of the anti-militancy operations in last two years, the DGP said it has happened as the security forces have gone against the militant support structure -- the Jamaat-e-Islami (JK), Hurriyat and their members and the Over Ground Workers (OGWs).

Most of the leaders of the Jamaat and Hurriyat and OGWs are under custody and their funding has been halted, he said. Singh said a Terror Monitoring Group (TMG) has been set up with representatives from the Jammu and Kashmir Police, Enforcement Directorate, Income Tax Department and a few other organisations, and the body is continuously working to curb funding of militants and their supporters.

"Almost all links of sending money through hawala, western union money transfer and in tiffin boxes of couriers were shut," he said. The police chief said security grade has been improved along the International Border and the Line of Control and as a result, six encounters have taken place along the borders so far this year. He said there were 76 casualties and 107 injuries in the security forces in first seven months of 2019 in Jammu and Kashmir, while there were just 36 casualties and 102 injuries in the security forces in the same period in 2020. Militancy incidents were also down by 70 per cent -- from 198 in first seven months of 2019 to 124 in the same period in 2020, the DGP said.

Top US Lawmakers Voice...

Jammu and Kashmir as a Union Territory," Eliot Engel, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Michael T McCaul, its Ranking Member wrote in a letter to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on August 5. "We acknowledge the ongoing serious security and counterterrorism concerns in the region and look forward to working with your government to address these concerns while upholding our shared commitments to the democratic values and freedoms on which our countries' bond was built," the lawmakers wrote in the letter which was tweeted by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The two top American lawmakers also said that close partnership between the two countries assumes significance in view of the "aggression" that New Delhi faces from Beijing.

"As Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi said in February of this year, our ties 'are no longer just another partnership. It is a far greater and closer relationship'", reads the letter "This closer relationship is all the more important as India faces aggression from China along your shared border, which is part of the Chinese government's consistent pattern of unlawful and belligerent territorial aggression across the Indo-Pacific," it adds.

Their remarks came amid the border face-off between India and China in eastern Ladakh. Twenty Indian army personnel were killed during the clashes with Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh's Galwan Valley on June 15. The Chinese side also suffered casualties in the clashes but it is yet to give out details. The United States will remain steadfast in support of India's efforts to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, read the letter.

"As Prime Minister Modi said earlier this year, 'Unity in diversity and unity's vibrancy is the key to a strong relationship between India and America'. We look forward to working with you to continue to strengthen and advance this vibrant and consequential relationship," Engel and McCaul wrote.

Many Positive Changes...

infrastructure development has taken place and long pending projects have been completed, he said, listing the positive developments in Jammu and Kashmir in the past one year. "So, all this certainly reflects return to complete normalcy. We continue to be engaged with and brief our interlocutors including the (US) Congress in this regard and we will be happy to brief the (US) Congress," Srivastava said at an online media briefing. Srivastava said the letter reflects a strong bipartisan support for India in the US. On August 5 last year, the Centre announced its decision to withdraw special powers of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcate the state into two union territories. To a question on whether India has briefed friendly countries on Jammu and Kashmir around the first anniversary of the Centre's decision to revoke the special status of the region, Srivastava said Indian envoys in various countries keep meeting their interlocutors and briefing them. "During their briefings, they brief about the socio-economic changes and the development that has taken place in J&K. Briefings are given on important steps taken by our government in the sectors of education, health and infrastructure development and in other sectors which have brought about a change in the lives of the common people," he said. To a separate question on businessman Vijay Malya's extradition from the UK, Srivastava said the Indian side was in constant touch with the UK side on the issue of his early extradition to India.

'Dictatorship' In J&K...

tweet in Hindi. Soz, a leader of the Congress and a former Rajya Sabha member, has been alleging that he has been imprisoned in his own house and is not allowed to meet people freely. The J&K administration, however, recently told the Supreme Court that Soz was never under detention. Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram called upon all political parties to think about the "virtual prison" that Kashmiris are living in for the past one year, since the abrogation of provisions of Article 370 on August 5 2019. "Today is August 6. Will all political parties and right-thinking citizens please spare a thought for the virtual prison in which 7.5 million Kashmiris are living for the last one year?" he said in a series of tweets. "The world is watching the brazen denial of human rights in India. India's proud record as a free and democratic country is diminished every day," he said. He alleged former J&K chief minister Farooq Abdullah was not allowed to hold a pre-announced meeting with leaders of other democratic parties. Is this the new 'democracy' that is visualised by the BJP, the former union minister asked. "If you question the government, they will tell the Court that no one is under house arrest. This is post-truth India."

He said placing someone under house arrest is an abuse of power" and is a "completely illegal instrument" that has no sanction under the Code of Criminal Procedure. "We must all raise our collective voice and demand that Ms Mehbooba Mufti be released forthwith and all those placed under house arrest be allowed the freedom they are entitled to under the Constitution. The government on August 5 last year announced its decision to withdraw special status of Jammu and Kashmir by abrogating Article 370 of the Constitution and divided the state into two union territories.

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Qureshi Asks OIC To Stop...

of the Islamic countries that are ready to stand with us on the issue of Kashmir," he threatened. A major reason behind the OIC's inaction has been Saudi Arabia's reluctance to accept Pakistan's request for one specifically on Kashmir. Riyadh's support is crucial for any move at the OIC, which is dominated by Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. During a virtual meeting of the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir held "on the request of Pakistan" on June 22 also, Qureshi had urged the grouping to "step up its efforts" to resolve the Kashmir issue.

ED Raids NC Leader's Son...

and Income Tax Department probe against him that pertains to a Rs 177-crore alleged bank fraud. The CBI has alleged that Hilal Rather entered into a criminal conspiracy with the then officials of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank to get loans of about Rs 177.68 crore in alleged violation of rules and guidelines. His father, a former finance minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, is a National Conference (NC) leader.

"The loans that were sanctioned for construction of flats were allegedly diverted and misappropriated by the accused using the bank accounts of his employees," the CBI had alleged. It was further alleged by the CBI that the accused submitted forged certificates and bills to the bank.

In a charge sheet filed before special court in Jammu this March, the CBI had named the then branch heads of J&K Bank, New University Campus branch, Iqbal Singh and Arun Kapoor apart from Hilal Rather. Detailing alleged omissions on part of bank officials, the CBI had said they "did not" verify certificates and helped Rather in siphoning off the loan amount and laundering of money. The I-T Department too had raided him in June last year on charges of alleged tax evasion. "During the search, it was detected that the tax evader (referring to Hilal and his group) has been given illegal benefit of Rs 60 crore by J&K Bank. His outstanding loan of Rs 190 crore was settled at Rs 130 crore, although he did not deserve any concessional treatment," the Central Board of Direct Taxes had then said in a statement. The CBDT is the policy-making body for the I-T Department.

Referring to Hilal, the CBDT statement has alleged that "he is also holding and operating a foreign bank account". "Neither his interest in the Dubai company nor the foreign bank account has ever been disclosed by him in his tax returns," it said. It added that Hilal and his group "sold/booked part of his real estate project of Paradise Avenue near Jammu against unaccounted cash."

Author, Filmmaker Sadia Dehlvi

A woman of many talents, Ms Dehlvi also produced and scripted documentaries and television programmes, including "Amma and Family" (1995), starring Zohra Sehgal, a veteran stage actor. She was a close friend and confidante of the late author Khushwant Singh. Mr Singh dedicated his book "Not a Nice Man to Know" to her. He wrote, "To Sadia Dehlvi, who gave me more affection and notoriety than I deserve." Mr Singh's book "Men and Women in my Life" has Ms Dehlvi's photo on its cover and the book has a chapter dedicated to her. Ms Dehlvi produced the television show "Not a Nice man to Know" with Mr Singh interviewing women from various fields. She is survived by her son Arman Ali Dehlvi.

Economy One Year After Article

dealing with overseas tourists from Malaysia and Thailand. This year we were going to approach Vietnam but luck is not with us," said Wangnoo. People working in the tourism sector were considered to be the richest in the valley, said Sameer Teli, "but those days are a dream now".

The hotelier is struggling to feed his family and take care of his kids. "I am not able to provide medicines to my family because of cash crunch," complained Teli. "I am leaving them to die because of my helplessness."

In 2018, Kashmir had received 316,434 tourists between August and December. In 2019, this number fell to 43,059 for the same period, a decline of 86%, according to the data maintained by J&K Tourism Department. However, to promote tourism in the valley post abrogation of Article 370, J&K Tourism Department provided financial assistance to organize 12 promotional events in various cities across India, claimed Mushtaq Reshi, General Secretary of Domestic Tour Operators. Domestic Tour Operators are tourism associations that are linked with the J&K tourism department. These associations are headed by an executive body. If there is any issue with tourism in the valley, the members of the association can talk to the higher authorities. Reshi who is also a Managing Director of Essence Holidays Pvt. Ltd. organized a promotional event in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. It was the best event out of the 12 events organized by the associations, claimed the general secretary. The promotional event was meant to create tie-ups with travel companies who in return will send people to Kashmir for tourism. The event which took place on February 6 was aimed to bring more people in the valley but it turned out to be a "wastage of money" due to the onslaught of the contagion, complained Reshi.

The association, he said, had spent Rs. 9.35 lakh for the event out of which Rs. 7 lakhs were to be paid by the government.

Business Brakes

Majid Imtiyaz started his dream project of opening a café at Sopore, Baramulla, in 2017. He rented a feasible spot and took loans from the bank to bear the expenses. Hampered by the frequent lockdowns and limited resources, his dream project was completed in August 2019. To advertise the café, he organized a pre-opening event "Coffee & Qalaam" which had a good turnout. Unknown of the unfortunate time that lay ahead Imtiyaz decided to open his café "Mann te Salva" on August 8, 2019.

Just three days before the opening of the café, the government revoked the special status of Kashmir that resulted in curfew, slowdown, and internet blockade leaving the valley halted and stagnant. Imtiyaz was shattered and decided to go to Delhi. The owner of the café started working in a call center to earn some money. In January he got a call from his family, reassuring that the condition in Kashmir has started stabilizing. He went back to his hometown and finally his dream project was live on February 8. Little did he know that there was another lockdown hovering over Kashmir. "Mann te Salva" was closed after a month obeying the lockdown rules set by the government to limit the spread of the pandemic. Imtiyaz was again left in despair with hefty expenses.

"This is the story of almost all the restaurants, cafes, food joints and hotels especially in Kashmir," emphasized Imtiyaz. Like Majid, Insha Rasool who started her organic farm in 2019 had to face a backlash because of the clampdown in the valley post abrogation of Article 370. "Around 7-8 months went by without any work," said the self-made farmer.

But she started working once the conditions normalized and the result was satisfactory, said Rasool. Due to 2019 clampdown, Kashmir's world-famous handcraft also suffered huge losses.

According to KCCP president Sheikh Ashiq, "The annual turnover of the handicraft sector has fallen from Rs 2000 crore to Rs 900 crores in the last few years. The handicraft sector is struggling to pay to their artisans."

Travel and Trek

Saddam Hussain who runs a trekking company Mountain and Dreams in Sonmarg incurred a loss of approximately Rs 4 lakh when the valley was put under a political lockdown last year.

The peak season for trekking starts in July and Hussain had bookings of 22 groups consisting of 15 each people for the treks.

"As soon as the trekking season started, Article 370 was removed," he said, "resulting in canceling of all the bookings."

Since August last year, the business is in a complete loss, said Saif Ahmad, who is associated with the paragliding company the Karakoram Explorers. Most of the pilots hired by him were from Himachal Pradesh and they were paid four-month salary in advance. He had to send them back after the lockdown. He also had to refund the amount to his customers who canceled their bookings. "It was a nightmare," admitted Saif, who started the paragliding business in 2015.

Kashmir doesn't have big malls or industries but it has a natural beauty that is praised worldwide, said Anayat Hussain, General Secretary at Jammu & Kashmir Society for Trekking and Environmental Preservation. "Trekking is a big chain," emphasized Hussain, adding, "not only hotel and dhabawalas are benefited from it but also small vegetable vendors, porters, rickshaw and many more people are attached to this business." Valley's Halted Wheels A majority of tourists in the valley relied on taxi service for the journey. With continuous lockdown, taxi companies are burdened with loans. Unable to pay his installments on time, Wasim Ahmed Bhat, owner of Kashmir Tourism Cabs, has to pay a double amount to the bank. Bhat has employed many local people through his taxi service but with the lockdown in the valley, his business has come to a standstill. "Locals don't take Fortuner or Innova for travelling," said Bhat, adding, "these cars are meant for tourists." But with the lockdown, these cars are resting in the garage.

Jawan Found Dead In Reasi...

where he was declared dead, they added. The jawan was married on July 10, they said.

Geelani Not Covid-19 Positive...

Pertinently, the 91-year-old leader recently resigned as the Hurriyat Conference (G) chairman. He, however, continues to be under house arrest at his Hyderpora residence since past more than eight years--(KNO)

Pak Fired Shell Diffused...

and destroyed the live mortar shell, the sources added.

Minor's Body Fished Out...

the family after completion of legal formalities, they said. The minor had drowned on Wednesday after when he was taking a bath in river Jhelum. Soon after the incident, a rescue operation was launched to trace him. However, the operation was suspended due to darkness and resumed this morning.

Pak Shelling Along LoC...

He said the Indian Army is retaliating befittingly. Pakistani troops violated ceasefire 51 times last month and shelled areas along the LoC in Rajouri, Poonch, Kupwara and Baramulla districts on a daily basis.

BSF Man Sacked Over...

the charge of collusion with smugglers. "Subsequently, on August 4, under the zero-tolerance policy, Constable Rajendra Prasad (was) dismissed from the service under the provision of the BSF Act and Rule with effect from August 4," according to an official release issued by the BSF (Punjab Frontier). Prasad, posted at a border outpost in China village in Taran Tam district, was found to be the part of cross-border drugs and weapons smuggling racket that was busted by the Punjab Police. A 30 bore pistol, along with five live rounds and Rs 24.50 lakh in cash were recovered from Prasad and two other accused-- Sumail Singh and Gurjant Singh, the police had said. According to the Punjab Police investigations, Prasad had allegedly helped the gang in getting 17 kg of heroin and two foreign-made pistols in May. During questioning, Sumrail and Gurjant had revealed that they were working with a cross-border smuggler, Satnam Singh alias Satta, a resident of Taran Tam district. Satta was closely linked with Pak-based smugglers in smuggling heroin and weapons from Pakistan. They also disclosed that BSF constable Prasad was also involved in the smuggling racket.

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A Year Without School

On August 5 also, the schools in Kashmir completed one year of closure. After COVID-19 pandemic plunged Kashmir into a lockdown within a lockdown. Kashmir was already under a lockdown since August 2019, when New Delhi revoked the region's autonomous status. This makes Kashmir's lockdown one of the longest in the world. The consequent disruption in activity has hit the economy hard with some of the sectors being completely wiped out. But the education has been one of the biggest victims. Schools had reopened just for a fortnight when the region ran into Covid-19 lockdown.

Making education further difficult is the government's refusal to restore the high-speed mobile internet. Though the internet too was shut since August last year, in February the government allowed people a grudging access to only a slow-speed 2G internet. As a result, children in Kashmir can only study online with difficulty. Schools have struggled to get the online coaching or lectures to the students. Jammu and Kashmir has more than 2.5 million students with more than 10,000 schools.

Though, according to a statement by the director school education the education department is broadcasting video lessons for class 6-12 on a regular basis, and more than 400,000 students have benefitted. The government, he said, is planning to establish a full-time community radio station that will cater to primary and secondary-level students.

But this is unlikely to make any redeeming difference. In the absence of a high speed mobile internet, the education can only be restored if the schools reopen and this is something that is unlikely to happen anytime soon. It is not that the government hasn't tried to do so. In June, the Director (Finance) in the school education had directed schools to ensure safety measures to arrest spread of coronavirus to students and staff. He had asked the directors of School Education in Kashmir and Jammu to instruct heads of all government schools to provide a pair of reusable masks and a pair of gloves to every student and ensure availability of 1000 ml hand sanitisers and 1200 ml liquid soap at entry point of each government school. But the order became a source of some contention in J&K with no less than Union Minister of State in the Prime Ministers Office Dr Jitendra Singh asking the local administration to defer reopening of schools. Similarly, the National Conference's provincial president Devender Rana asked the UT Government to take a decision regarding reopening after consultation with parents.

The best way out for the government under the circumstances would be to restore 4G so that the students could properly study online. But for reasons that carry little conviction with people, the government has consistently refused to do so for the past one year.

OTHER OPINION

Big Tech Overreach

Recently top executives from four of the largest technology companies in the US appeared remotely for a House of Representatives hearing in Washington, where they were met with a barrage of questions from lawmakers across the political spectrum. Some of the legislators claimed that for years Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google have flexed their muscles to stifle competition while amassing vast amounts of data, growing far too rich, powerful and unaccountable in the process.

Even as the chief executives defended their firms, it has become amply clear that in the digital age, there is an urgent need for governments – the US, as well as others – to regulate “Big Tech” and keep the force it exerts over our lives in check. At the same time, though, it is important that regulators do not stifle the tech industry's creativity, which has reshaped the world.

There is little doubt that information technology, by and large, has been a force for freedom, education and untold prosperity. It has contributed to the edification of humanity, and enhanced the speed and efficiency of our economies. It has given us a platform from which to communicate, in an instant, with millions of people living far away. And aside from providing us with an array of products and services, it has truly globalised our world by bringing down linguistic, geographical – and in some cases – even cultural barriers. This is truer than ever since the outbreak of Covid-19, which has ushered in remote learning and working from home.

There are, however, more sinister aspects to transformation at such a scale. The internet has ushered in the gradual breakdown of societies and industries around the world. Social media has become a tool that people use with increasing sophistication to engineer human behaviour, polarise societies, generate propaganda and misinform. The exploitation of personal data, whether by tech firms or governments, has gradually chipped away at once-familiar concepts of individual privacy, as seen by the fall-out from repeated scandals involving user data from the likes of Facebook and Twitter. Tech firms have also been accused of being ruthless in their desire to edge out other market players, with behemoths like Amazon and Google in effect monopolising entire industries and putting hundreds of thousands out of work.

The overreach of Big Tech has also been aided by their tax arrangements in the jurisdictions from which they operate while many of the industries they overrun have been squeezed by over-taxation and over-regulation. Aside from tax revenues being crucial for public services (now more than ever), there is also something to be said for economic justice when it comes to taxing Big Tech. In a fair market, everyone should have to play by the same rules. This is where some European countries have taken the lead, a notable case being France's decision to impose a 3 per cent digital tax on Facebook and Alphabet, Google's parent company, last year.

Tech companies have created a world in which boundaries are fading, and fostered a culture of ambivalence towards regulation. But, as many lawmakers in this week's hearings in Washington rightly argued, not all boundaries ought to be done away with. Globalisation and the expansion of markets are hallmarks of progress, but manipulating and monopolising markets are not.

The National



A year after the repeal of Article 370, the choices in Kashmir are now starker than ever before

August Stared At Us, Aghast

A year after the repeal of Article 370, the choices in Kashmir are now starker than ever before

RIYAZ WANI

Loss of the autonomy has wiped out the space for political concessions that lent meaning to engagement and dialogue among the stake-holders in Kashmir issue: New Delhi and Kashmiri dissident groups, Pakistan and India. It has now become a choice between accepting the new status quo or fighting to change it. More than anything, this troubling new dynamic will determine where the situation in Kashmir goes from hereon

Looking back at the days of lockdown following the revocation of Article 370 on August 5 last year, one of the distinctive images that comes to a Kashmiri journalist's mind is that of Srinagar's Media Facilitation Centre from where they were supposed to file their stories. Initially located at a hall of a prominent hotel in Sonawar, the centre was started with just four computers with wifi connection for around three hundred journalists from local, national and international media outlets. Journalists got just enough time on a computer to check and send mail. Rest of Kashmir Valley was under a complete security lockdown and communication blockade. Even the local newspapers didn't have internet access. They download most of their content at the Centre on USB sticks and reproduced the same with some skeletal reports on the local situation.

Pro-establishment politicians who had always stood for India in Kashmir and participated in elections were also detained, so were around ten thousand others comprising civil society leaders, potential protesters including even minors, not to mention the separatist leaders and activists.

Did any protests take place during the lockdown? They did, albeit they were largely invisible to media. According to an AFP report at the time, there were 722 instances of protest during the first month following the August 5 move that averaged out around 20 protests a day. Nearly 200 civilians and 415 security forces had been wounded, the report said. The protests were largely centered in main city of Srinagar, Baramulla and Pulwama. The biggest of them all, comprising around ten thousand people, erupted at Anchar in Soura. In fact, for some weeks Anchar emerged as the spearhead of the opposition to annulment of Article 370. But the protests subsequently tapered off and eventually were quelled after a stricter lockdown was put in place at the sites of resistance. From

thereon, the Valley plunged into uneasy silence.

A year on, the situation has changed but little. That is, apart from the militancy that has again hurtled itself to the centre stage since January. There has been a drastic spike in the violence as a result. The armed forces have killed 155 militants up to July 31, most of them in South Kashmir. This is the highest number of militants killed in the comparable period of a year in a decade. In June alone, 48 militants were killed in 17 gunfights.

But the silence on the ground is only getting louder by the day. That too despite the release of many a political leader. It has now been a year since Kashmir has witnessed any visible political activity: a rally, a party meeting, a call for some kind of a public response to the Article 370, or at least a coinage of a new slogan – albeit, some politicians including the former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, PDP leader Naeem Akhtar and Mehbooba's daughter Iltija Mufti did give interviews and write for some publications.

It is true, that the J&K administration has forbidden them from carrying out any activity. For example, the administration, according to Omar, didn't let mainstream leaders meet at the residence of his father Dr Farooq Abdullah on August 5. But it is also true, the leaders who have been freed have been guarded in their statements. More so, in case of Omar who, in his recent interviews, has come across as a leader who is more concerned about carving some sort of space for his politics than guiding people how to better respond to the loss of the political autonomy. And he has also made it clear that he is not the person the people in Kashmir should look for such a guidance. Though the detained PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti has through the tweets issued by her daughter on her behalf given all the indications that she will take the fight against loss of Article 370 to the street. But it remains to be seen how she will act once and if at all she is released.

Until then the nature of the political response to August 5 move will depend on the statements and activities of Omer, his father Dr Farooq Abdullah and the other released leaders, among them the People's Conference chief Sajad Gani Lone.

Where do we go from here? There is no easy answer to this question. Ever since the withdrawal of Article 370, Modi government has embarked on a series of far-reaching measures to remake Kashmir in its own image. And to this end, Hindutva juggernaut is working overtime to alter everything from demography to political representation in the region. And to ensure this grand project meets least resistance, New Delhi hasn't let its guard down as far as the lockdown in the Valley. Apart from a brief partial relaxation in between, the Valley has been under an uninterrupted lockdown – one in the wake of August 5 move followed by the one occasioned by Covid-19. But the Covid-19 lockdown remains a siege within a siege, a seamless blend of the security and healthcare-related restrictions.

But despite use of all this force, New Delhi seems nowhere near pacifying Kashmir, ironically the rationale for the withdrawal of Article 370. Though the public protests and stone pelting have momentarily disappeared, this is due more to the all-encompassing lockdown and the arrests of leaders, activists and the protesters than to any reconciliation or a sense of resignation among the people.

But one thing is certain. A year after the repeal of Article 370, the choices in Kashmir are now starker than ever before. Loss of the autonomy has wiped out the space for political concessions that lent meaning to engagement and dialogue among the stake-holders in Kashmir issue: New Delhi and Kashmiri dissident groups, Pakistan and India. It has now become a choice between accepting the new status quo or fighting to change it. More than anything, this troubling new dynamic will determine where the situation in Kashmir goes from hereon.



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Duty of men to share household chores

People have been staying in their homes for months due to the Corona pandemic. Today, due to lack of work and loneliness at home, the feeling of sadness has a direct impact on people's mental health. Some research institutes are saying that this has more impact on men, others are contending that women suffer too. They are also worried about the future of their male partner's work. I liked the second thing more than the first, and perhaps the same is true.

In our country women are treated like goddesses. They are praised in scripture, posters.

If we look at developed and developing countries, men everywhere consider the task of handing over the responsibility of household chores and children to women. Even in de-

veloped countries, the situation is no different. And when everyone is locked in the house due to Corona, the gender roles should adapt to the new reality. But when it comes to kitchen work and taking care of the children, then the “Sahibzadas” do not like this. The man inside them raises his head somewhere and asserts itself, whether the woman in that house is illiterate or an officer.

The matter is about the mental health of women due to Corona. Yes workload has increased in every household, due to which the physical work has increased for women. The main reason for this is the domination of men in the twenty-first century. Even today, in all the countries of the world, it is believed that even if a woman does outdoor work with great vigor, she is made for domestic work.

Is it not the duty of men to share their household chores in their spare time? Scientific researches have never told that men will do this work and women will do that. The truth is that this difference comes from society and family. From the beginning, it is understood to associate the pride of the family with boys who are called the future head, while the girls are considered skilled in household chores. Girls are told that a good man is considered to be good only when he doesn't do household chores.

Social thinker Tony Parker has said that this masculinity is imparted to boys in such a way that their masculinity continues to dominate women throughout their lives and girls continue to grind in stove-chores all their lives. The same situation exists in every country in the world. Men have to

understand that when women can get out of the house and earn, they can't be expected to work in the kitchen too.

The modern man has to stand for equality than just define equality. Only then will the woman achieve true equality. In this dreadful time of Corona, a woman is forced to work at home all day. This stresses her psyche. We have to be a friend of a woman. Only then will this disease go and there will be a wave of happiness in every house.

Now the time has come for women to take responsibility from men and extend the hand of friendship. As much as the house belongs to the women, it belongs to men also, so they should too help in household chores.

-Dr. Satyavan Saurabh
Independent journalist and columnist
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Kashmir's Social Animals and Covid-19

Riyaz Kazmi

In a place like Kashmir, everyone is a frontline worker right now. We need to realise that our precautions are going to aid someone else. Beat yourself up, if you need to, for not following protocols because the only way to survive this pandemic is to wear a mask, maintain personal hygiene, self-care, self-discipline, and social distancing.



On a rainy night in the fifth month of this fateful year, I experienced horror. The windows I used to open to steal a sight of the skies and hear the morning giggles of my neighbours was hostile. I couldn't keep my heart from listening to the haunting silence interjected by spontaneous wailing from my mourning neighbours. It is then that I could mentally picture Covid-19 knocking every door.

The pain of families who witnessed strange deaths of their loved ones by what appeared to be a common flu is unsettling. The realisations should ideally suffice for us to take precautions. Unfortunately, that has not been the case here. Through the eyes of someone who would have undergone the horrors of this disease, our recreational activities tantamount to dancing on the pit of death.

What have we given up for the sake of precautions? We've continued with our business of barbe-

cue parties on boulevard. We climb over the shoulders of one another at the groceries, pharmacies, and chicken and meat shops to shout and vouch for our turn. Even sports can't wait. Young people throng playgrounds and throw caution to the wind.

Our culture of socialising have compromised everyone's safety. We still hunch over on the shop fronts (Waneh Pyaend) to gossip and discuss the politics around us and the obvious failures of administrators. Our sense of entitlement has even validated us attacking our frontline workers and blaming them for what actually is an institutional failure to provide good healthcare. With the same face we doll up to attend wedding parties without any care or caution. Our mubarakbaadis in person can be postponed but we've stooped so low on wits as a community that even a pandemic cannot get us to question our ways.

With each passing day the caseload is exploding with a whooping increase in deaths. Our hos-

pitals are under-equipped and overburdened. We do not even have a decent healthcare infrastructure and manpower to handle the pressure of Covid-19 emergencies.

In a place like Kashmir, everyone is a frontline worker right now. We need to realise that our precautions are going to aid someone else. Beat yourself up, if you need to, for not following protocols because the only way to survive this pandemic is to wear a mask, maintain personal hygiene, self-care, self-discipline, and social distancing.

If we don't wear mask or simply put it on a chin to fool around; we are inviting trouble and digging graves not only for ourselves but for others as well. When you flout SOPs, remember that carelessness is going to cost you and yours before anyone else.

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My Beloved Beirut — Not Quite A Requiem, Not Yet!

Like the mythical Phoenix, Beirut will always rise from the ashes

Mohammed Almezal

Like many of my generation, I fell in love with Beirut before I saw her. Years before I saw her, walked on her streets, sat in her cafés or spent a quiet night gazing at the mountains from one side of the city to other.

And when I first visited the city in the late 1980s, I fell in love with her even more, although the city looked like an unhappy place then.

It was 1988 and the civil war was raging, especially in the south and the north of the country. Beirut was licking its wounds following the Israeli invasion and the constant shelling by the rival Muslim and Christian militias.

In the past two decades though, I never missed a chance to drop by my beloved Beirut. I would go and check on her almost every year. Her mesmerising beaches, welcoming nights, cosy restaurants, her bookshops with their distinct history-filled smells.

I adore its summers, when the city looks as gorgeous as a bride on her wedding night. Beirut in the summer is a different place as hundreds of thousands of 'Beirutophiles' like myself rush to the city from around the world, even in the toughest of times.

A city of paradoxes

For me, Beirut is a city of paradoxes. She endured so many wars, disasters and miseries. At the same time, it remained a place of love, arts and poetry. And no poet loved Beirut more than Nizar Qabbani, the Syrian literary genius who lived most of his life in Beirut. He even lost his wife there in 1981 when the Iraqi embassy (where she worked) was destroyed by a powerful car bomb.

His love poetry is celebrated in the Arab world. But he saved his most beautiful love verses for Beirut. During the worst days of the civil war (1975-1990), he pleaded with his beloved city:



Beirut has evolved under the influence of various civilisations but it has remained a place of love, arts and poetry

Today, Beirut mourns her dead sons and daughters. More than 100 innocent lives were lost in the port blast on Tuesday. The toll may go up. Today, the city is sad and, again, under a state of emergency. As I watch the news and social media videos, I feel numb. Nothing but pain. My Beirut deserves better than this. However, I wouldn't rush to lament the death of Beirut. This is not quite a requiem. As fragile as Beirut is, she still is resilient. The Lebanese trace their roots to the Phoenicians. And like the mythical Phoenix, Beirut will always rise from the ashes.

Rise like a poem of roses
Or you can rise like a poem of fire
Before you, there was nothing

After you, there is nothing
And there is nothing like you
You are the conclusion of our lives

Rise for love, for the poets
Rise for the bread, for the poor
Love calls on you, the prettiest of all

queens
God calls on you, the mistress of all
queens

I have always wondered what Nizar, who died in London in 1998, away from his beloved Beirut, would say today if he would see her succumbing to the rule of the militias and the corrupt former warlords.

Beirut is a beautiful idea

But even then, Beirut lives in us. It is more than a city, the building or even the shopping malls that have sprung everywhere recently. It remains an idea. A romantic idea. One's first rendezvous, the Almond's season, Antoine library, the Medina theatre, the Wimpy cafe, the Concord Cinema, and of course Fairuz, the angelic voice that sang for Beirut and lovers for decades.

It is hard to find an Arab whose day, everywhere on this planet, that doesn't begin with Fairuz. Perhaps because we all like to imagine that we are having our morning coffee in Beirut's Al Hamra Street.

Today, Beirut mourns her dead sons and daughters. More than 100 innocent lives were lost in the port blast on Tuesday. The toll may go up. Today, the city is sad and, again, under a state of emergency. As I watch the news and social media videos, I feel numb. Nothing but pain. My Beirut deserves better than this.

Years of corruption and conflicts have sadly ripped off Beirut's joy. Today, we miss the playful city. I am not sure how she will endure probably the worst bombing ever in Beirut's history. And the city has seen quite a few since 1975. This time, it wasn't from a foreign enemy or because of a war though. It was a criminal act from within.

However, I wouldn't rush to lament the death of Beirut. This is not quite a requiem. As fragile as Beirut is, she still is resilient. The Lebanese trace their roots to the Phoenicians. And like the mythical Phoenix, Beirut will always rise from the ashes.

SOME OF THESE JOBS May Be Gone For Good Due To Covid-19, EVIDENCE SHOWS

“WE’RE KIND OF PAST THE STAGE WHERE WE’RE quickly recalling workers to their old jobs,” Davis said, “and getting to the stage that people will need to get new jobs at new companies or in new industries.”

Agencies

Stark evidence of the damage the resurgent viral outbreak has caused the US economy could come Friday when the government is expected to report that the pace of hiring has slowed significantly after a brief rebound in the spring.

As the coronavirus continues to transform a vast swath of the economy, it's becoming evident that millions of Americans face the prospect of a permanent job loss that will force some to seek work with new industries or in new occupations. If so, that would lead to a slower recovery in the job market than if restaurants, hotels, bars and retail shops were able to fully reopen and recall all their laid-off employees. Few expect that to happen.

On Friday, economists expect the government to report that employers added 1.6 million jobs in July, according to data provider

FactSet, and that the unemployment rate declined from 11.1% to a still-high 10.5%. At any other time, a million or more jobs would constitute an unheard-of increase. But July's expected gain would fall way short of June's 4.8 million increase and would signal that hiring has sharply slowed. It would also mean that the economy has regained barely 40% of the jobs that fell to the coronavirus.

The pandemic has lasted far longer than most Americans expected, with likely profound consequences for the economy. Traditional retail stores will probably never regain their pre-pandemic levels of sales or employment as consumers increasingly turn to internet purchases. Online health care will likely eliminate some doctors' office jobs. And online videoconferencing will replace some portion of business travel. Those changes alone could destroy millions of jobs.

Michelle Holder, a labor econo-

mist at John Jay College, said it's unlikely that many retail workers and others whose jobs are gone for good will find work this year, given that the viral outbreak will hold back hiring until a vaccine is widely available. "It's definitely going to be a drag on the economy," she said. Steven Davis, an economist at the University of Chicago, estimates that even after the virus has been brought under control, the proportion of people working from home will triple compared with pre-pandemic levels. That could result in the shuttering of many restaurants, coffee shops and other downtown businesses.

The real estate data firm Zillow said last week that most of its 5,400 employees will now be allowed to work from home indefinitely. "This recession is unusual in the extent of permanent (job) reallocation that will ultimately result," Davis said.

He and two co-authors have estimated that up to 40% of layoffs in March through May were

permanent. That figure will likely rise, he said, the longer the pandemic squeezes the economy.

"We're kind of past the stage where we're quickly recalling workers to their old jobs," Davis said, "and getting to the stage that people will need to get new jobs at new companies or in new industries."

It is a trend that points to a grinding, sluggish recovery.

Allegra Troiano initially thought her layoff in May from a company that provides English language instruction would last only through the summer and that she'd be recalled as the school year began. But as the months have gone by and with few school systems fully reopening, the company — ELS Language Centers — has made clear that's not the case. Just 10 of the 30 centers it operated before the pandemic have reopened, not including the one in Milwaukee, which Troiano managed.

Troiano has tried to look for

other jobs. But at 64 and with an autoimmune disease, she is reluctant to take work that would require public interaction. She also fears that her age makes a job hunt more difficult.

"I am feeling that this is the end of my career," she said. "The fortunate thing is I go on Medicare this January."

Many other companies are giving up and closing their doors. Dunkin' Donuts said last week that it will close 800 stores this year, about 8% of its total. Lord & Taylor, America's oldest retailer, and the parent company of Men's Wearhouse and Jos. A. Bank both said Monday that they would file for bankruptcy protection. Last month, Brooks Brothers, another men's chain deeply hurt by the decline in formal business clothes, sought bankruptcy protection.

One-third of bars and lounges have permanently closed nationwide, up from about one-quarter in late June, according to the

small business data analysis firm Womply. So have one-fifth of restaurants and 12% of retailers.

The Partnership for New York City, a business group, projects that one-third of the city's small businesses will close for good. In California, mass layoff notices filed with the state now show that about half the job cuts are permanent, up from 17% in May.

And a survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research in July found that nearly half of those who have lost jobs during the pandemic say those jobs are gone for good. By contrast, in April, 78% had thought their layoffs would prove only temporary.

Business shutdowns have fallen disproportionately on Black-owned businesses, which are more than twice as likely to close as white-owned small companies, according to a report from the New York Federal Reserve. Black-owned business are more often located in coronavirus hot

spots and are in service industries like restaurants and retail that have been hit hardest by the outbreak, the New York Fed said.

Looking toward Friday's report, researchers at the St. Louis Federal Reserve have analyzed data from Homebase, a provider of scheduling software to small businesses, and concluded that job growth weakened in July compared with June. Hiring has slowed much more in states with heavy viral outbreaks, including Arizona, Florida, and Texas, they said.

Jane Oates, a former Labor Department official who is president of the nonprofit WorkingNation, said that widespread school closings this fall could also depress job gains in future months because some parents will have to quit jobs to watch their children.

"I worry about what that means for women, who are most often in that role," Oates said. "That's going to be disruptive."

Blueberry-Enriched Diet May Help Women's Muscle Growth, Repair: Study

Agencies

A new research study investigated how serum from subjects consuming a diet enriched with blueberries would affect the cells responsible for muscle growth and repair.

The emerging study, "Consumption of a blueberry-enriched diet by women for six weeks alters determinants of human muscle progenitor cell function," was conducted at Cornell University. The results of the study were published in the Journal of Nutrition.

The study was conducted over six weeks with 22 women, 12 aged 25-40 and 10 aged 60-75. For the blueberry-enriched diet, participants consumed the equivalent of 1.75 cups of fresh blueberries/day, given as freeze-dried blueberries (19 g in the morning and 19 g in the evening), along with their regular diet. Participants were also asked to avoid other foods rich in polyphenols and anthocyanins.

Serum was obtained from the participants 1.5 hours after consuming the morning dose of blueberries. The researchers then investigated how the serum would affect muscle progenitor cell function through proliferation or cell number, capacity to manage oxidative stress and oxygen consumption rate or metabolism.

The results showed the six-week blueberry-enriched serum obtained from the women aged 25-40 increased human muscle progenitor cell numbers in culture. There was also a trend toward a lower percentage of dead human muscle progenitor cells, suggesting resistance to oxidative stress, as well as increased oxygen



consumption of the cells. There were no beneficial effects seen in the muscle progenitor cells treated with serum from participants aged 60-75 who consumed the blueberry-enriched diet.

"The consequences associated with the deterioration of skeletal muscle are a loss of mobility, decreased quality of life, and ultimately, loss of independence. Currently, research on dietary interventions to support skeletal muscle regeneration in humans is limited. This preliminary study of muscle progenitor cell function paves the way for future studies to develop clinical interventions," said Anna Thalacker-Mercer, Ph.D., the study's lead investigator. "While the results cannot be generalised to all populations, this study is an important step in translating findings from cell cul-

ture and rodent studies to a potential dietary therapy for improving muscle regeneration after injury and during the ageing process."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), muscles lose strength, flexibility, and endurance over time. Muscle mass decreases three to five per cent every decade after 30 years of age, and that rate increases over age 60. Therefore, strategies to improve muscle progenitor cell proliferation and lower oxidative stress may also benefit muscle regeneration during the ageing process.

Research on the role that blueberries may play in promoting good health is ongoing across multiple areas, including cardiovascular health, diabetes management, brain health, exercise and the gut microbiome.

'1 In 4 People Likely To Move House In Next 12 Months Due To Covid-19'

Agencies

One in four people worldwide are more likely to move home in the next 12 months as a result of COVID-19 pandemic with most of them seeking a different property in the same location, according to the Knight Frank Global Buyer Survey released on Wednesday.

Some 26% of the respondents said they are willing to move to a different property elsewhere in the same country and 34% of those considering a move are considering a purchase abroad, highlights the survey representing the views of over 700 clients across 44 countries.

The United Kingdom, Spain and



France top the list of preferred destinations to purchase a home followed by Australia, Canada, Switzerland and the United States.

All countries that offer a good quality of life, political stability, a secure currency, excellent education systems and in normal

times are easily accessible. New Zealand, Portugal, Malta and Norway also ranked highly.

Significantly, improved access to quality of healthcare is now the second most important motive behind a property purchase. Besides, buyers

expect property prices to decline over the next 12 months although 53% of respondents say their budget has remained the same or increased since the start of the crisis. Over a quarter of respondents say they are more likely to buy a second home as a result of the pandemic. Over half of respondents have either travelled abroad already or will do so within three months of borders reopening.

"The crisis has fundamentally changed the way we live our everyday lives with the home now a hub from which we work, exercise, learn, socialise and relax," said Kate Everett Allen, Knight Frank's head of international residential research.

Artificial Intelligence-Enhanced ECGs May Speed Up Cardiac Failure Diagnosis, Treatment

Agencies

When people seek emergency care for shortness of breath, a routine electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG) enhanced by artificial intelligence (AI) is better than standard blood tests at determining if the cause is heart failure, according to new research.

The research was published in Circulation: Arrhythmia and Electrophysiology, an American Heart Association journal.

"Determining why someone has shortness of breath is challenging for emergency de-

partment physicians, and this AI-enabled ECG provides a rapid and effective method to screen these patients for left ventricular systolic dysfunction," said Demilade Adedinsowo, M.D., M.P.H., lead author of the study and chief fellow in the division of cardiovascular medicine at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida.

The left ventricle supplies most of the heart's pumping power, so it is larger than the other chambers and essential for normal function. In left ventricular systolic dysfunction (LVSD), the left ventricle



is weakened and must work harder to maintain adequate blood flow to the body.

In a typical year, about 1.2 million people go to emergency departments because they are short of breath. This year, the numbers are far higher because difficulty breathing is

one of the hallmark symptoms of a COVID-19 infection. When heart problems are suspected, patients in the emergency department usually have an ECG performed — a quick, 10-second recording of the heart's electrical activity.

"An abnormal ECG raises concern about underlying cardiac abnormalities but is not specific for heart failure," Adedinsowo said. Emergency department physicians also rely on blood levels of natriuretic peptides. These biomarkers are elevated in the blood when heart failure is present.

The Attack On Hiroshima
Remembering The
Dead, Praying For Peace

Agencies

Hiroshima : Bells have tolled in Japan's Hiroshima for the 75th anniversary of the world's first atomic bombing, with ceremonies downsized due to the coronavirus pandemic and the city's mayor urging nations to reject self-centred nationalism and commit to nuclear disarmament more seriously.

Though thousands usually pack the Peace Park in central

of peace."

He called on Japan's government to heed the appeal of survivors and sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and urged the world to come together to face global threats.

"When the 1918 flu pandemic attacked a century ago, it took tens of millions of lives and terrorised the world because nations fighting World War I were unable to meet the



Hiroshima to pray, sing and lay paper cranes as a symbol of peace, entrance to Thursday's memorial ceremony was sharply limited, with only survivors, relatives and a handful of foreign dignitaries allowed to attend.

Participants, many of them dressed in black and wearing face masks, stood for a moment of silence at 8:15 am, the exact time that the atomic bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy", exploded on August 6, 1945, obliterating Hiroshima and killing 140,000 of an estimated population of 350,000.

Thousands more died later of injuries and radiation-related illnesses.

"On August 6, 1945, a single atomic bomb destroyed our city. Rumour at the time had it that 'nothing will grow here for 75 years,'" Mayor Kazumi Matsui said in a speech afterwards.

"And yet, Hiroshima recovered, becoming a symbol

threat together," he said.

"A subsequent upsurge in nationalism led to World War II and the atomic bombings. We must never allow this painful past to repeat itself. Civil society must reject self-centred nationalism and unite against all threats."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in his speech at the ceremony, said Japan is committed to nuclear weapons ban but said a nuclear-free world could not be achieved overnight and that it has to start from dialogue between opposite sides.

"Japan's position is to serve as a bridge between different sides and patiently promote their dialogue and actions to achieve a world without nuclear weapons," Abe said.

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe offers a silent prayer for the victims of the 1945 atomic bombing, at Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan

US To Slap New
Sanctions Against Syria To
Force Regime Change

Agencies

BEIRUT, LEBANON : In an article on Wednesday, The New York Times said Washington intends to tighten sanctions against Syria to change power there, but many experts question the effectiveness of this U.S. measure.

According to the article, officials in the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump are determined to impose new restrictions on the basis of the "Caesar Act".

This was reportedly included in the American military budget for fiscal year 2020, and it gives the U.S. administration the right to impose sanctions against institutions and individuals providing direct and indirect assistance to Damascus, as well as the various groups operating in the country. The article quoted the words

of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Middle East Affairs Joel Rayburn, who stressed that sanctions "will not end" until "the Syrian regime and its allies" agree to a change of power in the country.

As the newspaper notes, many experts have expressed doubts that such an approach would allow the United States to achieve the desired goals, without making active efforts in the diplomatic field.

"The sanctions alone cannot solve the problem," John Smith, the former director of the U.S. Treasury Department's Foreign Assets Control office, was quoted as saying.

He added, "It is difficult to understand what the U.S. government can do as well, other than putting a group of Syrian regime officials on a list that only provokes indifference on their part."



People attend a vigil for the victims of the explosion in the Lebanese capital.

Lebanon Mourns Victims Of Devastating
Blast, Searches For Missing

Press Trust Of India

Beirut: Lebanon mourned on Thursday the victims of the most powerful blast to hit the country that was already being crushed by an economic crisis, as rescuers searched for those missing since the explosion that flattened Beirut port and devastated the city.

French President Emmanuel Macron, making the first visit by a foreign leader since Tuesday's blast which killed at least 137 people and injured 5,000, was due to arrive in Beirut later on Thursday along with specialist rescue personnel and equipment.

Dozens are missing and up to a quarter of a million people were left without homes fit to live in after shockwaves smashed building facades, sucked furniture out into streets and shattered windows miles inland.

Officials expect the death toll to rise.

Prime Minister Hassan Diab declared three days of mourning from Thursday for victims of the explosion, the most devastating ever to hit the city that is still scarred by civil war three decades ago and reeling from a financial meltdown and surge in coronavirus cases.

Officials have blamed the disaster on a huge stockpile of

highly explosive material held for years at the port in unsafe conditions. The government has ordered port officials to be put under house arrest, ministerial sources told Reuters.

But Lebanese, who have lost jobs and watched savings evaporate in the financial crisis, blamed politicians who have overseen and benefited from decades of state corruption and bad governance.

"They will scapegoat somebody to defer responsibility," said Rabee Azar, a 33-year-old construction worker who came to the port on Thursday morning to try to start repairs. "This explosion was final bullet to kill off the country." "Nothing will come of the investigation. Nobody will believe them," said Azar, speaking near the smashed remains of a grain silo where tonnes of wheat was scattered on the ground.

'NEGLECTANCE'

President Michel Aoun said 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate, used in fertilisers and bombs, had been stored for six years at the port after it was seized. He promised a thorough investigation and to hold those responsible to account.

An official source familiar with preliminary investigations blamed the incident on "inaction and negligence", saying "nothing was done"

to remove hazardous material.

Some local media reported sightings of drones or planes flying in the area shortly before the explosion and some Beirut residents said they saw missiles fired. But officials have denied the incident was the result of an attack.

A Lebanese security source said the initial blaze that sparked the explosion was caused by welding work.

White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said the US government had not ruled out the possibility that Tuesday's explosion was an attack and was still gathering intelligence.

People who felt the explosive force said they had witnessed nothing comparable in years of conflict and upheaval in Beirut, which was devastated by the 1975-1990 civil war and since then has experienced big bomb attacks, unrest and a war with Israel.

"First we heard one sound. Seconds later there was a big explosion. All hell broke loose," said Ibrahim Zoobi, who works near the port. "I saw people thrown five or six metres." He said those in the port district "were burned or charred".

Health officials reported that hospitals were running out of beds and equipment to attend to the injured.

Zarif criticizes Google for 'glitch' in
translation of condolences to Lebanese

Agencies

Tehran: Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has criticized Google for mistranslating "condolences" to "congratulations" when Persian speakers want to translate their expressions of sympathy with the Lebanese people over a devastating explosion in Beirut.

In a tweet on Wednesday, Zarif snapped at Google over a "technical glitch" that occurs when translating condolences from Persian to Arabic or English.

Zarif retweeted a video showing Google Translate turning the phrase "condolences to the Lebanese people" in Persian into "congratulations" in Arabic and in English, while the translation is accurate when someone wants to write

"condolences to the Israeli/American people."

"When Persian speakers want to express their condolences to the Lebanese in Arabic or English, Google translates it as 'congratulations,'" Zarif wrote in his Twitter account.

"Yet there is no such 'technical glitch' if one wishes to condole Israel or the US," he tweeted. "What gives @Google?"

Google, however, fixed the Persian-to-English translation following Zarif's tweet.

The Tuesday explosion, the biggest to ever hit the Middle East, has killed at least 135 people and injured about 5,000 others, with the figures expected to rise.

Dozens are still unaccounted for.

The blast, which took place in port warehouses that stored highly explosive material near central Beirut, was felt as far away as Cyprus, leveling the whole port and large section of central Beirut and turning successive apartment blocks into masses of debris and twisted metal. Some 300,000 people have also been displaced from their homes.

Lebanon has announced three days of national mourning for the victims of the deadly incident and declared a state of emergency across the country for two weeks.

Facebook Deletes Trump Post
For Spreading Misinformation
About COVID-19

Agencies

WASHINGTON : Facebook has deleted a post by President Donald Trump for violating its policy against spreading misinformation about the coronavirus.

The post in question featured a link to a Fox News video in which Trump says children are "virtually immune" to the virus.

Facebook said Wednesday that the "video includes false claims that a group of people is immune from COVID-19 which is a violation of our policies around harmful COVID misinformation."

A few hours later, Twitter temporarily blocked the Trump campaign from tweeting from its account, until it removed a post with the same video. Trump's account retweeted the video. The company said in a statement late Wednesday that the tweet violated its rules against COVID misinformation. When a tweet breaks its rules, Twitter asks users to remove the tweet in questions and bans them from posting anything else until they do.

Social media provides a megaphone for fake news like never before, researchers say the number of hyper-partisan or misinformation websites has doubled over the past six months.

Twitter has generally been quicker than Facebook in

recent months to label posts from the president that violate its policies against misinformation and abuse.

This is not the first time that Facebook has removed a post from Trump, Facebook said, but it's the first time it has done so because it was spreading misinformation about the coronavirus. The company has also labeled his posts.

Several studies suggest, but don't prove, that children are less likely to become infected than adults and more likely to have only mild symptoms. But this is not the same as being "virtually immune" to the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said more than 240,000 children have contracted COVID-19 worldwide.

Children do seem to have more mild symptoms than adults and their death rate is much lower. Click here for CDC's death statistics by age for people in the United States.

A CDC study involving 2,500 children published in April found that about 1 in 5 infected children were hospitalized versus 1 in 3 adults; three children died. The study lacks complete data on all the cases, but it also suggests that many infected children have no symptoms, which could allow them to spread the virus to others.

Germany Plans To Dim Lights
At Night To Save Insects



Agencies

BERLIN: Germany is planning to ban floodlights from dusk for much of the year as part of its bid to fight a dramatic decline in insect populations, it emerged on Wednesday.

In a draft law, the country's environment ministry has drawn up a number of new measures to protect insects, ranging from partially outlawing spotlights to increased protection of natural habitats.

"Insects play an important role in the ecosystem...but in Germany, their numbers and their diversity has severely declined in recent years," reads the draft law, for which the ministry hopes to get cabinet approval by October.

The changes put forward in the law include stricter controls on both lighting and the use of insecticides. Light traps for insects are to be banned outdoors, while searchlights and sky spotlights would be outlawed from dusk to dawn for ten months of the year.

The draft also demands that any new streetlights and other outdoor lights be installed in such a way as to minimise the effect on plants, insects and other animals.

The use of weed-killers and insecticides would also be banned in national parks and within five to ten metres of major bodies of water, while orchards and dry-stone walls are to be protected as natural habitats for insects.

The proposed reforms are part of the German government's more general "insect protection action plan", which was announced last September under growing pressure from environmental and conservation activists. Attention will now turn to the agriculture ministry, which is under pressure to deliver on promises such as an overall reduction in the use of pesticides. Most notably, Germany said last September that it would phase out the controversial weed killer glyphosate as part of the insect action plan.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir

Office of the Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Handwara.

M/S High Tech Group of Engineers,

R/o: Handwara.

Upgd. of Shahlala inner links by way of nallah muck in patches/stretches and WBM G

Whereas, tender for construction of above mentioned work were invited vide this

Whereas, you are the 1st. Lowest bidder for the above captioned work.

Whereas, the rates quoted by you are unbalanced i.e 17.88% below of the adv. Cost.

Whereas, you were directed to submit the original Additional Performance security deposit within one day vide this office No. 3757

Whereas, you were further directed to start the work as the work stands approved under District Plan.

Whereas the work stands allotted to you vide this office letter of intent No. 3757

date of start of work was 03

whereas the AEE has reported that you have failed to complete the vide his letter No. 46/SDRJ

Now, you are finally directed through print media to submit the CDR Additional performance security within one day from the issuance of this letter for issuing of formal allotment and complete the work In c shall be put to fresh tenders at your risk and cost and your CDR shall be forfeited, also you shall be debarred from the tendering for one f

DIPK-3824/20

Executive Engineer
R&B division Handwara

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PW (R&B) DIVISION SHOPIAN

e-mail:- rnbddivisionshopian@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

NIT No:- 48/2732-41/SPN/RnB/e-Tendering/2020-21

Dated:- 06/08/2020

For and on behalf of the Governor, J&K State, e
ate Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:

from approved and eligible Contractors

Upgrd. of Mantribugh Tengpora road I/C Kilbal B.W.O mm thick wet mix , 50mm thick macadam ,25mm thick semidense and 6mm thick seal coat (Aggr length 570 Mtr) Phase									
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The work shall be completed during the current financial year
completed in all respects. Otherwise the contract shall get cancelled automatically

The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quanti
and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website

Date of issue of Tender Notice		
Date & time of opening of Bids		

Bidders must upload the requisite cost of Tender document in shape of e challan /Treasury Challan Receipt / and Earnest Money /Bid security in shape
of CDR/FDR/B.G pledged to **Executive Engineer R&B Division Shopian (Tender receiving authority).** responsive bidder (L1) must
submit the original CDR /FDR/B.G /Additional Security deposit to the tender allotting authority before issuance of LOI/formal

The date and time of opening of technical Bids shall be notified on W
mail address. The Financial bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive
Engineer R&B Division Shopian (tender receiving authority)

In case bid of the lowest bidder is found unbalanced, the successful bidder shall have to produce additional performance secu
only within (03) days after opening of price bids, as per following break

Upto and including 15% below	Additional Performance security
Greater than 15% and upto 20% below	
Greater than 20% and upto 25% below	
25% and upto 30% below	

(The above instructions for unbalanced bid shall apply for all the tenders (Except for CRF Works) this is as per Chief Engi

All terms and Conditions can be had from Detailed NIT NO.1 uploaded on Departmental Website (

DIPK-3833/20

PW(R&B) Division Shopian

Trust For Building Mosque On 5-Acre Land In Ayodhya To Be Set Up In 10-12 Days



LUCKNOW: The Trust constituted by the Uttar Pradesh State Sunni Central Waqf Board to construct a mosque on five acres of land in Ayodhya is in the process of setting up an office in the state capital, an official said today.

He said the office of the Trust - Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF) - will be functional in 10 to 12 days.

"Our Trust has been formed. As per rules, we have applied for a PAN card in its name and awaiting its delivery, after which we will be meeting online and pass a resolution for opening a bank account of the Trust," IICF Secretary Athar Hussain told news agency PTI.

"We had met last month online. As of now, we have identified office space and renovation work is going on there. It will take 10-12 days for the work to complete. After which our office will be functional," he said.

The state government has allotted five acres of land in Ayodhya's Dhannipur village for the construction of the mosque on the directive of the Supreme Court. The IICF will oversee the construction of a mosque, Indo-Islamic research centre, library and hospital in the land.

A member of the Trust said, "Ayodhya District Magistrate Anuj Kumar Jha has formally handed over the possession of the land for the mosque to the Trust members. We have got a certified copy of the revenue record."

The Supreme Court had in November last year paved the way for the construction of a Ram Temple by a Trust at the disputed site in Ayodhya, and directed the Centre to allot an alternative 5-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board for building a new mosque at a "prominent" place in the holy town in Uttar Pradesh.

The residents of Dhannipur, where the land has been allotted, are eagerly waiting for the Trust to start construction of a mosque.

Mohammad Izhar, a resident of Dhannipur village, said, "It's good that the land was allotted here. We are happy and hope that the work will start soon. Finally, our village will develop. We hope so."

Another resident, Mohammad Imran also expressed similar views saying it is good that besides a "mosque we will also get a hospital".

The Trust will have 15 members, of which names of nine have been declared and rest will be finalised soon. "We will co-opt the remaining six trustees. The secretary of the Trust will also be its official spokesperson," a member of the Trust said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday laid the foundation of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. The programme was organised by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust.

Centre Releases 890 Crores As Second Instalment Of Covid Package To States

NEW DELHI: The Central Government on Thursday released Rs 890.32 crores as the second instalment of the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package to 22 States and Union Territories (UTs).



The COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March this year.

The amount of financial assistance is based on the COVID-19 caseload in various States/UTs.

These include Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim.

"As part of this package, States/UTs have been strengthened with 5,80,342 isolation beds, 1,36,068 oxygen supported beds and 31,255 ICU beds. Also, 86,88,357 testing kits and 79,88,366 Vial Transport Media (VTM) have been procured by them. As many as 96,557 human resources have been added in the States/UTs and incentive has been given to 6,65,799 human resource. The pack-

age has aided provision of mobility support to 11,821 staff," the health ministry said in a statement.

According to the health ministry, this financial aid, as part of the second instalment, will be used for strengthening of public health infrastructure for testing including procurement and installation of RT-PCR machines, RNA extraction kits, TRUENAT and CBNAAT machines.

It will also help in the development of ICU beds, the installation of oxygen generators, cryogenic oxygen tanks, and medical gas pipelines in hospitals.

The fund will also help to engage, train, and for capacity building of healthcare workforce and volunteers such as ASHAs, on COVID duties.

The first instalment of Rs 3,000 crores was released in April 2020 to all States/UTs to aid and enable them to ramp up testing facilities, augment hospital infrastructure, conduct surveillance activities along with procurement of essential equipment, drugs, and other supplies.



AFTER REMAINING fully shut for three days Srinagar witnessed some life on Thursday-Ko Photo Abid Bhat

India-US Strategic Partnership Will Be Central To Times Ahead: Envoy

WASHINGTON: As India approaches the 75th year of its Independence, it relentlessly pursues the process of nation-building, the expansion of individual liberty, and of economic and political empowerment, a top Indian diplomat has said, reaffirming that the strength of India's strategic partnership with the US will be central to the times ahead.

In an op-ed in Newsweek magazine, India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu wrote on Wednesday that India's natural partnership with the US will be a source of strength.



"As India approaches the 75th year of our democracy, we remember the genius of our founding fathers - many of whom were inspired by the ideals of the American Constitution," he said.

"That moment was not an end, but rather the beginning, of a relentless process of nation-building, of the expansion of individual liberty and of India's economic, social and political empowerment. In renewing that commitment, India's natural partnership with the United States will be a source of strength," Mr Sandhu wrote in his op-ed. The op-ed 'Overcoming Challenges, Building Partnerships: the Promise of a New India' was retweeted by Congressman George Holding, Co-Chair of the House of Representatives Caucus on India and Indian Americans.

Observing that the green shoots of

an economic rejuvenation must be nurtured with the support of friends and partners, Mr Sandhu said that the strength of India's strategic partnership with the US will be central to the times ahead.

"Through the pandemic, we have worked together to maintain the integrity of our product supplies, under stress from shortages or dependency on single country sources," he wrote.

As a responsible pharmaceutical manufacturer and stakeholder, India has kept open medical supply chains and made sure that essential medicines from India reached the US and other partner countries. As the world moves towards a vaccine, India's research labs and vaccine manufacturing facilities are part of the global efforts - at least three of them are direct products of India-US collaboration, he wrote.

"And when the vaccine will be ready for distribution, Indian companies with expertise and capabilities in manufacturing and vaccine delivery will step up to the plate and play an important role in public health outreach across the world, including in Africa and Latin America," Mr Sandhu said.

The India-US collaboration in health is only one example of the range and depth of the partnership, the ambassador said.

"Already, we are witnessing renewed interest in India from US digital and innovation giants - in the last three months, more than USD 40 billion has been pledged as investments that will spur economic growth and create jobs in both countries, leveraging our complementarities for mutual benefit," he wrote.

"Those are not stand-alone events: from biotechnology to artificial intelligence, defense to renewable energy, fighting against terrorism to cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, there is no area of human endeavour that has not benefited from our binational cooperation," he said.

High-skilled professionals and students from India bring in important skill sets and bridge technological gaps, enabling US companies to be globally competitive while generating more jobs, Mr Sandhu wrote, adding that this innovative lot will play an even more significant role in post-COVID economic recovery in America.

Plea In SC Seeks Postponement Of JEE (Main), NEET-UG Exams Amid COVID-19

NEW DELHI: A plea in the Supreme Court on Thursday sought postponement of JEE (Main) April 2020 and NEET-Undergraduate examinations, which are scheduled to be conducted in September, amid spurt in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country.

While referring to the coronavirus pandemic, the plea has sought quashing of July 3 notices issued by the National Testing Agency (NTA), by which it was decided to conduct Joint Entrance Examination (Main) April 2020 and National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)-Undergraduate exams in September.

The plea, filed by 11 students belonging to 11 states, said that the authorities be directed to conduct these exams only after the normalcy is restored.

As per the public notices issued by the NTA, JEE (Main) April 2020 is scheduled from September 1-6, while NEET UG 2020 exam is scheduled for September 13.

The plea, filed through advocate Alakh Alok Srivastava, has also



sought direction to the authorities to increase the number of examination centres for these exams.

"Conducting the aforesaid examination across India at such perilous time, is nothing else but putting lives of lakhs of young students (including petitioners herein) at utmost risk and danger of disease and death. The best recourse at this stage can be to wait for some more time, let COVID-19 crisis subside and then only conduct these exams, in order to save lives of the students and their parents," the plea said. It claimed that NTA, which conducts entrance exams for admission in higher educational institutions in India, has decided to conduct JEE (Main) April-2020 through online mode and NEET UG-2020 exams through offline mode at 161 centres across India.

It alleged that NTA has indefinitely postponed the National Council of Hotel Management Joint Entrance Examination-2020, which was scheduled to be conducted on June 22, in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"While deciding to conduct the aforesaid JEE (Main) April-2020 and NEET UG-2020 exams in the month of September, 2020, the respondents (NTA and others) have overlooked that many states have refused to allow conducting of any professional or non-professional exams in their states at this stage and hence the same is likely to cause unimaginable harassment to the petitioners and other similarly situated students," it said. "It is respectfully submitted that the students who are well equipped with computer and strong internet connection will give online exams while in other hand the students who are unable to give and arrange online exams, will have to come to exam centres by risking their lives.

No Benefit Of Plasma Therapy To Reduce Covid Mortality Risk: AIIMS Trial

NEW DELHI: Convalescent plasma therapy did not show benefit in reducing mortality risk among COVID-19 patients, according to an interim analysis of a randomised controlled trial done at AIIMS in Delhi to assess the efficacy of this mode of treatment.

The therapy involves taking antibodies from the blood of a person who has recovered from COVID-19 and transfusing those into an active coronavirus infected patient to help kickstart the immune system to fight back the infection.

AIIMS Director Dr Ran-deep Guleria told news agency PTI on Thursday no clear mortality benefit of convalescent plasma therapy was seen during a trial conducted among 30 COVID-19 patients.

During the trial, one group of patients was given convalescent plasma therapy along with the standard supportive treatment while the other group only received standard treatment. The number of fatalities recorded in both the groups was equal and there was not much clinical improvement in the condition of patients, he said.

"However, this is just an interim analysis and we need to do a more detailed evaluation to see if any sub-group may benefit from plasma therapy," Dr Guleria said.

He also underlined that plasma has to be tested for its safety and should have sufficient antibody to be useful to COVID-19 patients.

The efficacy of convalescent plasma therapy in moderate to severe coronavirus-infected patients was discussed in the third National Clinical Grand Rounds (CGR) on COVID-19 held on Wednesday.

"Plasma is safe. As far as its efficacy is concerned, we do not have a green signal yet. So the clinical use has to be very judicious and within the ambit of national guidelines," Dr Monish Soneja, additional professor in the Medicine department at AIIMS, said at the webinar.

Convalescent plasma therapy has been listed as an investigational therapy for off-label use in coronavirus infected patients because as of now there is no conclusive evidence for its efficacy,



Dr Soneja said.

About the initial findings of the randomised controlled trial, Soneja said, "Convalescent plasma is not a magic bullet."

It may be used particularly in early moderate stage of the disease. There may be a subset of patients with certain characteristics who may benefit from plasma, he said, adding, "This is a work in progress as we do not know those characteristics."

The findings highlight that relatives of the patients should not insist on plasma therapy until and unless the treating doctor considers the patient fit for it and where he may think that the mode of treatment would be beneficial, Dr Neeraj Nischal, associate Professor in the department of medicine at AIIMS, said.

He said even if the therapy has some role, then that is in the early stage of the disease. But for plasma therapy to be effective, plasma must contain a sufficient amount of neutralizing antibody against that infection, the doctor said.

"This therapy also carries risks such as inadvertent transfer of blood-borne infections and reactions to serum constituents, including immunological reactions such as serum sickness, that may worsen the clinical condition," Dr Nischal said.

According to the Clinical Management Protocols for COVID-19 issued by the Union Health Ministry, off-label convalescent plasma may be considered for COVID-19 patients with moderate disease who are not improving, which means oxygen requirement is progressively increasing, despite the use of steroids.

The use of off-label convalescent plasma for treating coronavirus patients in the moderate stage of the illness has been included under "investigational therapies".

ABO compatibility and cross-matching of the donor plasma is a prerequisite while considering convalescent plasma, the health ministry has said.

"Refrain From Communal Incitement": India To Pak Over Ram Temple Remark



New Delhi: India today strongly rejected Pakistan's criticism of the launch of construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, and asked the neighbouring country to refrain from "communal incitement."

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava also asked Pakistan

to desist from interfering in India's affairs.

"We have seen the press statement by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on a matter internal to India. It should desist from interfering in India's affairs and refrain from communal incitement," Mr Srivastava said.

"While this is not a surprising stance from a nation that practices cross-border terrorism and denies its own minorities their religious rights, such comments are nevertheless deeply regrettable," he added. Pakistan on Wednesday criticised the foundation laying of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

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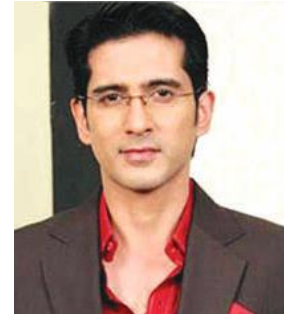
Television Actor Sameer Sharma Found Hanging At His Mumbai Home

MUMBAI: Television actor Sameer Sharma allegedly committed suicide at his home in suburban Malad, police said on Thursday.

Sharma, 44, who worked in serials like 'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi', 'Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki' and 'Yeh Rishtey Hain Pyar Ke', was found hanging from a ceiling fan in the kitchen of his flat at Neha building in Chincholi Bunder locality in Malad (West) on Wednesday night, a police official said.

No suicide note was found at the spot and it is suspected he hanged himself two days back, Malad police station's senior inspector George Fernandes said.

The incident came to light when the building's watch-



man peeped through the kitchen window and saw him hanging. He then alerted the other society members.

Later, the society members informed the police who rushed to the spot and took Sharma to a hospital where doctors declared him brought dead, another official said. The

actor was living alone in the rented flat since February, he said, adding the police were trying to get in touch with his family members.

"We have not found any suicide note at the spot. It seems to be suicide case. It is suspected that he hanged himself two days back. We have sent the body for an autopsy," Fernandes said. Based on primary information, an Accidental Death Report (ADR) has been registered, he said, adding that further investigation is underway.

Mumbai Police are also currently investigating the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, 34, who was found hanging at his apartment in suburban Bandra on June 14. PTI

Prone Position Reduces Need For Ventilators In Covid-19 Patients: DAK

SRINAGAR: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Thursday said prone position reduces the need for ventilators in Covid-19 patients. "We can save lives by this simple non-invasive technique," said DAK President and influenza expert Dr Nisar ul Hassan.

"In proning, patients are placed facedown onto their stomach or onto their side while lying down," he said. "By flipping over or to the side, you open up lungs that would otherwise be compressed when you are on your back," Dr Nisar said adding that "proning improves blood oxygen levels among Covid-19 patients struggling with abnormally low levels." He said when the pandemic first struck, proning was not a go-to intervention. Instead, Covid pneumonia patients with

severely low oxygen levels were often quickly put on ventilators.

Now, we are using this technique at SMHS hospital and the results are encouraging. Patients who are awake are placed in a facedown prone position along with supplemental oxygen. Many patients are improving with this technique and they no longer require a ventilator.

Dr Nisar said various studies have shown that proning prevents Covid patients from being ventilated. "A study published in the Journal 'Accident Emergency Medicine' tested proning in 50 Covid-19 patients who were struggling with dangerously low oxygen levels. The study found that after just 5 minutes of proning oxygen levels rose to the near normal level and in the end, about three-quarters of the patients never had to be put on a ventilator," he said.

"Researchers at Columbia University found that 76 percent of Covid-19 patients who were in respiratory distress improved with proning and they didn't need to be intubated," he added.

Dr Nisar said it is important to understand that mechanical ventilators are no panacea for critically ill Covid-19 patients.

"Most patients in our experience who end up on ventilators go on to die. And many of the patients who continue to live can't be taken off the mechanical breathing machines," he said. "We now have a risk free technique to avoid these machines. Proning is a therapeutic intervention and should be considered in all awake Covid-19 patients who are in respiratory distress not maintaining oxygen saturation levels," said Dr Nisar.

CUK Students Seek Course Fee Waiver

SRINAGAR: The students of the Central University have urged its management to waive off the course fee for the second semester.

A delegation of the students said the Central University Management has asked them to pay the fee for the second semester immediately.

"In view of the current pandemic, it is not possible for our parents to pay the fee. When the government should have started providing some sort of facilities for online education, it is warning the students on paying fees," said the students who did not want to be named fearing repercussions from the management.

The student said the Valley was under lockdown for a year and no one has been able to earn which has even made livelihood difficult under such circumstances.

"How can management and the government be so insensitive? Should they bother about providing education and engaging students through a proper online system or they should be collecting fees. It is ironic that the government has not thought about it and they are just seeking fees which are not possible for the students belonging to the middle class or lower middle class families," they said.

They urged the Government authorities and the university management to completely waive off the course fee so as to provide some sort of relief to their parents in these distressing times.